

Statement on behalf of Estonia

Mr Arto Aas

Minister of Public Administration

Distinguished Chair, Ministers, Excellencies

Dear ladies and gentlemen

Estonia highly appreciates the work done for agreeing upon the global New Urban Agenda.

Cities and urban areas surrounding them are places where nowadays majority of our citizens live and work. They are also the places that lead societal and economic progress of our countries. However, urban areas face various emerging challenges.

The New Urban Agenda will lay down the main principles of sustainable development of urban areas around the world.

During last years, the European Union Member States and cities, together with the European Commission, have been engaged in agreeing on the Urban Agenda for the EU. It sets the main action-oriented approaches to move towards the joint vision – sustainable, socially inclusive, innovative and economically powerful European cities. Like other EU Member States, Estonia is on a position that the Urban Agenda for the EU will be the key delivery instrument of the New Urban Agenda in Europe.

We have agreed in the EU to launch twelve EU wide thematic multi-level partnerships that engage the member states, city authorities and European Commission as well as other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the urban dimension is strengthened in EU policies. Estonia has committed itself to be

one of the coordinators of the partnership on digital transition. The objective of this partnership is to promote better public services to citizens and better business opportunities for entrepreneurs, by using modern digital technologies and processes.

My country has made a quick progress on digital transition over the last two decades. There are numerous new digital solutions that have been introduced to and can be further developed in public governance.

At present, a wide use of ICT in all parts of society is already a reality in Estonia. We have developed necessary technical infrastructure covering the entire nation. We have fully functioning e-governance, where public services on national as well as local level are more and more digitalised. And we have large community of ICT companies.

Our public data registers are communicating with each other electronically. We have introduced electronic identity card and electronic signatures with equal right to paper signatures already more than a decade ago. We are using i-voting at national as well as local level. We are declaring all our taxes electronically. We use mainly mobile parking solutions and electronic tickets in public transportation of our cities. Various e-health services, for example patients' health records and medicine prescriptions, are fully digitalised...

We, in Estonia, have witnessed that digital technologies can remarkably improve the accessibility of various public services. They can also highly contribute to larger citizen involvement, inclusion and transparency of public decision making. New ICT solutions in public sector as well as open public data accessible for all, will reduce administrative burden; enable safe and convenient exchange of information; improve business and boost new start-ups in private sector. And last but not least, digital solutions can bring along additional economic growth and savings.

We have also experienced that digital transition of our cities can only be achieved by strong cooperation among national and urban authorities as well as business sector and citizens.

Estonia believes that digital transition of urban areas around the world is an important element in achieving the objectives of New Urban Agenda - promoting more inclusive, greener, more prosperous cities and better urban governance. Therefore, digital knowledge, technologies and processes should not be seen as a separate priority theme merely for economic development and innovations, but as a horizontal and cross-cutting aspect of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Thank you for your attention.