



**Statement of H.E. Mr. Raimonds Vējonis, President of Latvia
at the UN summit for the adoption of
the post-2015 development agenda (25 - 27 September 2015)**

Mr. President,

Today we, the world leaders, take on a great responsibility.

The people we represent want to see that we are capable to transform our actions, to make our world more just and more sustainable.

The new Agenda for sustainable development is designed together by all countries and all stakeholders. It gives us not only a common destination but also comprehensive means to achieve it. It reflects the immense challenges shared by all humanity. The scope of these challenges is too broad and our common vision is too grand to be achieved by any single country alone.

Mr. President,

I am a biologist by training. However, one does not need to be a biologist to be concerned about climate change, biodiversity loss, air pollution and access to safe drinking water.

One does not need to be a statesman to know that quality education, healthcare and social protection, as well as good governance, justice and respect for human rights, will benefit everybody.

It is a great collective achievement that the rule of law and good governance are recognized in the new development agenda as universal principles. From our own transitional experience, Latvia has seen that these principles are the back-bone of social and economic transformation and should be entrenched in the national value systems promoting zero tolerance for corruption.

If justice systems do not work, if public administration is inefficient and lacks transparency, if a government disregards human rights, the very foundations of a peaceful and safe society are undermined.

Modern technology and e-governance offer a unique opportunity to build trust between policy makers and civil society. In Latvia, each citizen can propose an initiative to the Parliament through an online petition platform, and if it gathers enough signatures, the initiative can be enacted into law.

Inclusive political processes and responsiveness to public needs are woven into the fabric of just and stable societies. This particularly refers to women and girls who represent half of the world's population.

The new agenda provides us all with an opportunity to end persistent inequalities, discrimination and violence that the world's women and girls confront on a daily basis. Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not only a matter of social justice, it also contributes to economic growth and sustainable development.

In Latvia, we have seen this in action. Women become senior government officials and reach top positions in business management. Latvia has the 7th highest percentage in the world of women occupying middle and senior management positions.

The empowerment of women in Latvia has happened because the Constitution, the education system and public opinion support this goal. When men and women have equal rights and equal opportunities, societies function better and nations become stronger.

Mr. President,

Today we come to terms with a simple truth: social, economic, and environmental challenges that face our planet today are interlinked. Voices around the world are demanding our leadership on addressing them. Every country and every stakeholder has a decisive role to play to shift our world onto a sustainable path.

We must unite our efforts in an ambitious and collaborative spirit. So fifteen years from now we can proudly say that we have done our best to combat climate change and ensure a decent life for all.

Thank you