

The Republic of Estonia, presents its compliments and has the honour to submit their

position paper to the UNEP committe on the issue of Assessing the Current State of the Climate Crisis and Environmental Problems Regarding Cities.

**1.Assesing the Current State of the Climate Crisis**

Climate change is a significant environmental and social issue worldwide. Between 1916 and 2016, the Earth's temperature increased by 1.5F.

For that reason, rise in temperature, which is above the global average, decreased snow and ice cover, higher frequency of winter storms, changes in the habitats of species, and increased precipitation are the main impacts of climate change for Estonia.¹ For instance In the coastal area of Estonia, the relative sea level rise in the period 1995–2019 was −1.1 to 3.1 mm/yr (based on NKG2016LU) and −0.3 to 3.4 mm/yr (based on EST2020VEL), the difference between the land uplift models is −0.9 to 0.1 mm/y. In Estonia, the west and southwest area are most threatened by sea level rise, where the coast is quite flat.² Burning fossil fuels, increasing livestock farmsing, deforestation and fluorinated gases are increasing the level of climate change.³

As a representative of Estonia we are maintaining for a better future by 2030.Estonia's long-term goal is to transition to a low-carbon economy; This means gradually reforming the economy and energy system to be resource-efficient, productive and environmentally friendly.  
We aim to reduce fossil fuel use and CO2 emissions through energy savings in transportation, agriculture, waste management and industrial processes, and small-scale energy production, where energy is produced in facilities with a nominal production of less than 20 MWh.⁴

The National Energy and Climate (ENCP) Plan is a ten-year integrated document [mandated by the European Union](https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-climate-plans_en) to each of its member states in order for the EU to meet its overall greenhouse gases emissions targets.  In October 2020, the European Commission published an assessment for each NECP. Estonia submitted its NECP in December 2019. A high proportion of Estonians (67 %) expect national governments to tackle climate change.⁵

Estonia is one of the most energy independent countries in the EU due to its domestic oil shales, which accounted for 56 percent of Estonia's energy in 2020. Biofuels (mostly wood sawdust) account for 26 percent of the energy, gas 7 percent, and other renewable sources 26 percent of the energy. 6 percent, other fossil fuels 5 percent.

Following Russia's aggressive war against Ukraine, Estonians have slowed down their purchases of oil and gas from Russia and slowly increased their use of renewable energy.

To achieve renewable energy targets, we are planning two large-scale (1,000 MW each) offshore wind projects in Liivi Bay between Estonia and Latvia by 2030. Estonia is also exploring hydrogen and nuclear solutions to meet long-term clean energy commitments.⁵

Between 2005 and 2019, Estonia's greenhouse gas emissions per capita fluctuated above the EU average and remained among the highest in the Union. In the period 2005-2019, average emissions per capita decreased from 14.1 tons in 2005 to 11.5 tons in 2019, although they varied from year to year. According to Eurostat, approximately 1,324,820 people lived in Estonia in 2019. There is a decrease of 2.5 percent compared to 2005.

Many measures we have taken are effective in experiencing this decrease.Since we are a member of the EU, we collect taxes from our citizens on the amount of carbon they emit into the environment. This amount is 2 Euros per ton of carbon released into the environment in 2023.⁶

We do not take charge on some public transportation. Estonia is broadly following the same path and last year set the goal of becoming the first country where public transport is free nationwide. Buses are now free in 11 of 15 districts.⁷The share of renewables will be increased by changing fossil fuel boilers to renewable fuels, increasing electricity generation from fuel free sources and increased use of biofuels in transport. In the electricity and heating sector, the plan aims at increasing renewable sources.

Estonia ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 3 September 2002 to decrease the gas emissions.

The aim of the Kyoto Protocol is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions among the countries that have ratified the protocol by 5% in the period 2008-2012 compared to 1990 (the so-called base year). Three Flexible Mechanisms have been proposed to achieve this goal:

Joint Implementation (JI),

Clean Development Mechanism (CDM);

Emissions Trading (ET).

The first two flexible mechanisms are called project-based; This means that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is taken into account at the level of specific projects. They are aimed at reducing emissions in the most economically efficient way.

The third Kyoto mechanism – Emissions Trading – does not provide actual reductions but allows countries to meet their obligation to reduce their emissions with units of permitted emissions purchased from other countries.

The voluntarily accepted obligation to reduce emissions is characterized by the Kyoto target number. For Estonia, this rate is 8%. The number of targets varies by country, and the industrial and economic development of the countries has differed.⁸

**2.Enviromental Problems Regarding Cities**

Many factors contribute the problems in regarding cities such as Overpopulation Traffic Congestion Pollution Housing Issues. These environmental problems are turning into a threat for countries. To give an example, common environmental threats include floods, tropical cyclones (to which coastal cities are particularly vulnerable), heat waves, and epidemics.⁹

Due to the physical density and population density of cities, such threats often cause both devastating financial losses and deaths. As a result of environmental issues such as overpopulation Cities need resources such as water, food and energy to be viable. Urban sprawl reduces available water catchment areas, agricultural lands and increases demand for energy. ¹⁰

Estonia, like many other countries, is facing a variety of environmental challenges that threaten the well-being of its ecosystems and its inhabitants. These issues have been caused by a combination of factors, including rapid economic growth, urbanization, and climate change¹¹.Estonia has several future plans related to sustainability and affordability issues in environmental issues in regarding cities.

We do not have a clear national urban policy per se. Urban development issues are addressed in the Regional Development Strategy (Eesti Regionaalarengu Strateegia) 2014-2020 (RDS). In March 2014, a new RDS was approved, providing the framework for national regional and urban development policies until 2020. RDS responds to urban problems such as the concentration of population in major cities and the weakening of secondary cities.

RDS distinguishes between larger urban areas and district centers and envisages different roles for each type of region. Policies related to larger urban areas focus on creating a sustainable and internationally competitive living environment.

District centers are seen as providers of jobs and services to their hinterlands. RDS envisages strengthening transport links between centers and their hinterlands, developing educational and sports infrastructure to serve the entire region, and developing urban public space. Investments in the public infrastructure of industrial and business areas mostly target district centers.

The national competitiveness strategy, Estonia 2020 Action Plan 2016-2020 (2016), does not contain a specific goal or objective related to urban areas, but is addressed to a range of activities contributing distinctively to the development of urban areas. For instance: improving railway connections, implementing measures to attract foreign specialists and enhance their adaptation, and linking several actions to the EU Structural Fund measure of “sustainable development of urban areas” (Government of Estonia, 2016).

National Spatial Plan Estonia 2030+ (adopted in 2012) sets up the basis for national spatial development and planning, e.g. envisioning and targeting the development of general settlement structure; mobility, accessibility and transport infrastructure (also within and between urban areas); urban planning and living environment.¹²

In addition, our capital Tallinn became the 2023 European Green Capital and won the title of sustainability and innovation champion, due to its systematic approach to green governance and interconnected strategic goals reflecting the goals of the European Green Deal. Tallinn's main themes during the Green Capital Year will be biodiversity, sustainable management, climate and green innovation.¹³

As a UNEP delegate, we closely monitor UNEP's solutions to environmental problems in cities. Raising awareness, organizing workshops and trainings, developing evaluation tools and including cities in international meetings on climate change are just some of these.¹⁴

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