

Dear friends,

Thank you for granting us young people an opportunity to speak up at this seminar and to reflect the progress towards sustainability from our perspective. Looking back to this second Voluntary National Review process, it is great to see that to progress with the global goals, both countries have made efforts to include a wide range of actors from civil society organisations to other stakeholders. After all, to reach the SDGs, it is central that everyone is included in the efforts.

Without common ownership of the goals, we cannot reach our targets - therefore it is very important to empower people to actively participate in the process. One such group is the youth. We are the present and the future of the marathon towards a more sustainable world, and the policies made now will have great effects on the rest of our lives.

Since 2017 the Finnish Agenda2030 Youth Group has worked alongside the Expert Panel and the Commission for Sustainable Development to implement the global goals in Finland. This spring, our group was recognised in the UN Human Rights Council's report of good practices regarding the right to a healthy environment. It is clear that institutional innovations such as these are keys to ensure youth participation and ownership in the joint effort to reach the goals. We want to encourage both Estonia and Finland to use the existing structures and to innovate new ones to ensure the active participation of young people.

Although Finland and Estonia have both been very successful in progressing towards the goals, the work is not yet done. Our countries face similar challenges in the terms of gender equality, disability rights and biodiversity in particular, but in many areas we are also different, in both our successes and our challenges and there are many things we in Finland can learn from the successes of the Estonian digital inclusion. We must take this as an opportunity to learn from each other and to innovate together to conquer common challenges. We welcome the creation of long-term strategies for sustainability and the employment of a rights-based approach in policymaking that emphasises inclusion, and hope to see ambition and new innovations from both countries in the near future.

Thank you.