

**Statement by the Vice- minister of the Republic of Lithuania
H.E. Mr. Neris Germanas**

**At the High Level Event of the General Assembly
“The Contributions of Women, the Young and Civil Society
to the Post-2015 Development Agenda”**

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New York

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking you for convening this important debate.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and in addition would like to contribute to the debate with **some of its national experience**.

The future development agenda should be based on the mobilization of all capacities and resources, and all stakeholders – governments, civil society, private entities, academia, should have their role and take responsibility for formulating and achieving the future sustainable development goals.

Through our history we have learned that citizens’ collective action can make a difference and help achieve significant outcomes. **Civil society** is an indispensable power and an independent actor of the development process. The role of civil society and its organizations is growing.

In the last decade in Lithuania the number of nongovernmental organizations, especially local community organizations in the rural areas and small towns, has been constantly rising. Strong local neighborhoods, where people know each other and are united by common interest could address the most relevant issues in most effective way. The legitimization of local neighborhoods as the stand-alone administrative units could be an important step towards citizen empowerment for their present and future.

Women's empowerment is part of new global landscape of citizenship. It has never in the history happened to the extent that we are witnessing now. The empowerment of women has an immense domino effect for the advancement of a society.

Lithuania today is proud of its well-educated women, their role in country's economic, social development and in political decision making. To illustrate the latter, two out of three highest state positions are held by women: Woman-President and Woman-Speaker of the Parliament. Good governance, strong and sustainable institutional mechanisms are needed for developing and implementing relevant policies and keeping gender equality prominent on the political agenda. Also, full and effective participation of women and men in all areas of life is vital to economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness.

Beijing Platform for Action, relevant UN Conventions, the Millennium Development Goals and the Security Council resolutions from the historic 1325 to the last one 2122 adopted just few months ago, provide a powerful framework for promoting women's empowerment, protection of women's rights, fighting violence against women and girls and ensuring gender equality. On the other hand, **gender equality** is not just women's issue. Further progress in this area will benefit men and women, our societies as a whole.

Mister President,

Our future is **youth**. Youth is one of the focus areas of the Programme of the Government of Lithuania. Self-governance, independence and voluntariness are among the key principles of our youth policy. Youth interests are represented through the Lithuanian Youth Council composed of politicians, municipal administrative staff and representatives from youth organizations, uniting almost all existing 60 municipalities in Lithuania.

The National Youth Policy Strategy and youth-related programmes in Lithuania seek to ensure the development of adequate social security, education and health care systems, for example, better conditions for housing, encouraging youth wellness, physical activity, promotion of youth entrepreneurship and providing services, which meet the needs of young people.

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last two decades Lithuania has undergone an impressive period of reforms. We could share our experience and best practices with states undergoing transition.

Finally, worldwide women, youth and civil society are vibrant and important threads of social and economic fabric and need to be given a prominent place in the post-2015 development agenda. Lithuania is convinced that gender equality and women empowerment shall be clearly featured on the post 2015 agenda and be a stand-alone sustainable development goal.

I thank you.