The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Estonia to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in response to the Latter's letter from 22 November 2011, has the honour to forward the reply of the Government of Estonia to the enclosed questionnaire on the efforts to eliminate maternal mortality and morbidity.

The Permanent Mission of Estonia to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 15 December 2011

Enclosure: 2 pages

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

GENEVA
Response of Estonia to the questions on preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights

1. Does your Government or organization currently rely on existing technical guidance related to applying a human rights-based approach to policies and programmes to reduce preventable maternal mortality and morbidity? If so, please share such these tools.

Measures of prevention of maternal mortality and morbidity are assembled in the Estonian National Health Plan. The Estonian National Health Plan (hereafter referred to by its Estonian acronym, ERTA) is designed to ensure that the people of Estonia live longer, happier, healthier lives. That can only be achieved with close cooperation of residents in the country, the state, local municipalities and the third sector.

ERTA 2009-2020 provides recommendations and indicates the directions which should be taken in the name of good health. It also assembles a large number of strategic documents (action plans) which have already been implemented or which are soon to be implemented in other fields that affect the achievement of ERTA’s objectives. ERTA is implemented by different partners and stakeholders e.g. different ministries and other state institutions, local governments, NGOs etc. In the field of morbidity elimination and maternal mortality prevention, we would like to point out some actions to be taken to achieve ERTA’s objectives.

Current measures are regularly revised, renewed and complemented:

- High quality health care, support services and counselling is free of charge for pregnant women and families with infants, to ensure accessibility. Midwives can independently counsel women of different ages and young families on matters of reproductive health.

- In order to raise parents’ awareness, crisis pregnancy counselling, phone counselling (free of charge), information and advice on different websites like www.rasedus.ee are available.

- Informing pregnant women on healthy lifestyle during pregnancy and after giving birth. Counselling mothers on benefits of breast feeding.

Upcoming developments in 2012:

- Contemporary monitoring of women during pregnancy and childbirth, and fetal monitoring are developed under the advisory guidelines (pregnancy monitoring instructions, instructions for birth control) of the Estonian Association of Gynaecologists. Each service provider has developed additional guidelines responding to the specific needs of the context and conditions the service is provided. The high quality services are important measures to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

- Regulating home birth is envisaged to improve maternal and children’s health. Specific risk assessment procedures will be established to identify mothers at risk, who should prefer to
give birth in hospitals. During 2012 the conception of regulations are developed, the regulations themselves will be adopted by the end of 2013.

2. Does your Government or organization rely on technical guidance related to applying a human rights-based approach to policies and programmes in other areas of health? If so, please share these tools.

- Supporting activities of counselling on HIV through website www.hiv.ee;
- Supporting activities of counselling on risks of overconsumption of alcohol through website www.alkoinfo.ee;
- Supporting activities of family education, like through website www.perekool.ee.
- Cancer screenings for early detection of cervical cancer and breast cancer is free of charge for everyone.

All the measures mentioned under questions 1 and 2 are guided by the principles of human rights, like free and undiscriminatory access to information.