

"Estonia and Finland are like two sons of the same family, always looking out for their brother and willing to support each other, and our meetings are always open-minded and straightforward," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who arrived in Finland for a state visit and met today with the President of Finland, Sauli Niinistö.

"We are connected by dozens, even hundreds of thousands of human relations; close co-operation in the sphere of economy, trade and culture, e-governance, Estlink power cables, soon the Balticconnector gas pipeline and in the future, hopefully, also the Rail Baltic railway, together with shared responsibility for the Baltic Sea and the security of the region," relayed the Estonian Head of State, in wishing for a quick solution and decision regarding the location of the planned LNG terminal.

"The depth and closeness of relations between Estonia and Finland should set an example of internal integration within the European Union," confirmed President Ilves.

Presidents Ilves and Niinistö focused on the changed security situation caused by the disregard of international law by Russia through its annexation of Crimea and its encouragement and support for separatism in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Ukraine.

"Russia has destroyed the Helsinki Accords of 1975 and any written and unwritten agreements that the security of Europe has relied since the end of the Cold War," stated the Estonian Head of State. "Therefore, defending and maintaining our shared values upon which organisations that bring together democratic countries rely is becoming more and more important."

With the Deputy Prime Minister of Russia admitting that "the European Union is an alien block" for his country, he is showing us a new reality that has arrived and that we all must learn to live with, side by side, President Ilves told.

When speaking about the situation in Ukraine, he stressed the importance of abiding by the Geneva Conventions, which will involve some efforts from Russia in de-escalating the situation and restraining the separatists.

"A peaceful Ukraine, where the people can take an important step in shaping their own future with the elections to take place on 25 May, serves the interests of Europe in general and demands some contribution from Europe, giving Ukraine both political and economic support," told the Estonian Head of State.

He described Baltic-Nordic defence co-operation as "regular and building up", with closer partnership between the countries that do not belong to the alliance with NATO being one of its components.

"This year, we are expecting two Finnish experts at NATO's Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn; Finnish defence force members are always welcome at exercises conducted by the Estonian Defence Forces," said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves, who arrived in Finland for a state visit, will also meet with the Speaker of the Finnish Parliament, Eero Heinäluoma; the Prime Minister, Jyrki Katainen; and the Minister of Education and Communications, Krista Kiuru.

Presidents Ilves and Niinistö will open the Estonian-Finnish business seminar. The Estonian Head of State will give a public lecture entitled North Europe After the Destruction of the Finnish Accords in Ukraine at the Finnish National Opera, his audience being the alumni of the Finnish Higher National Defence Courses. He will also pay a visit to several companies in Helsinki, including Vuosaari Harbour, which is a partner harbour of Tallinn Harbour, and also Suomenlinna. The Finnish presidential couple will give a state dinner to honour their guests, while President Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will hold a reception on the Silja Europa Tallink ship.

The official delegation accompanying the Estonian Head of State consists of the Minister of Foreign Trade and Entrepreneurship, Anne Sulling; the Minister of Cultural Affairs, Urve Tiidus; the Commander of the Defence Forces, Major General Riho Terras; Secretary General of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Paavo Nõgene; members of the Riigikogu, Marko Mihkelson and Rein Lang; Head of Eesti Disainikeskus (Estonian Design Centre), Jane Oblikas; and the Head of the Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic of University of Tartu, Assistant Professor Eve Unt. The business delegation, consisting of 40 members, is headed by the Chairman of the Management Board of the Estonian Chamber of Trade and Industry, Toomas Luman.

Evelin Ilves will pay a visit to the Helsinki Sports Medicine Research and Training Centre, an exhibition to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tove Jansson at the Ateneum Museum, enterprises Marimekko and Suunto and will open an exhibition of textile items by Anu Raud at the Estonian Embassy in Helsinki.

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