

"The Russia-fuelled crisis in Ukraine has now become a long-term global threat. Therefore, the NATO summit in September must convey a powerful signal to show that we can respond quickly to the increased threat and ensure the security of our people. Each East-European state must also treat the situation with the utmost seriousness and increase their defence expenditure," told the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, today at the meeting of the East-European heads of state to discuss the security of the region prior to the NATO Summit this autumn.

A meeting of the heads of state of the Baltic states, Bulgaria, Romania and the Visegrad group states (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary) took place today in Warsaw. The aim of the meeting was to develop a common position prior to the NATO Summit in September on the Russia-fuelled crisis in Ukraine and to assess its possible influence on global security.

The presidents discussed the steps that both the European Union and NATO should take in the changed security situation and will exchange their ideas about the goals of the upcoming NATO summit.

"The activities of Russia in Ukraine have fundamentally changed the security situation in Europe, particularly on NATO's eastern wing. Russia's behaviour is unpredictable and aggressive; therefore the focus has shifted to ensuring the security of NATO's own allies, on collective defence," President Ilves stated. "For Estonia, it is important for the NATO Summit to refresh the sustainable footprint of NATO forces in our region."

President Ilves added that NATO's defence plans require a major overhaul to deal with the new security situation. "These must be realistic and allow for quick implementation," the Head of State commented.

Within the framework of a working visit, President Ilves will also take part in a bilateral meeting with the President of Poland, Bronislaw Komorowski, and the President of Slovakia, Andrej Kiska.

President Ilves will return to Estonia on Tuesday, 22 July.

* The Visegrad Group, also called the Visegrad Four or V4, is an alliance of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The Group originated in a summit meeting between Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland in Visegrad, Hungary, on 15 February 1991, and its purpose is to further the European countries within the framework of co-operation between these three states. The Czech Republic and Slovakia became members after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. All the V4 states have been members of the European Union since 1 May 2004.

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