

"I use the words annus horribilis to describe 2014 as opposed to annus mirabilis, which characterised the world 25 years ago following the fall of the Berlin Wall," said the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who opened the Annual Conference on Human Rights as a patron of the event.

"This year, we have witnessed the annexation of a territory and military activities that are demagogically justified with ideological excuses including the protection of citizens. Russia's activities in Ukraine have breached all the post-Cold War international agreements and conventions that have laid the foundations for peace since World War II," stated the Head of State.

Along with the annexation of Crimea, the President mentioned that the war in East Ukraine and accompanying rhetoric, the intimidation of neighbouring countries and threats aimed at western countries in general all show that Russia wants to lay down a new international order.

The new rhetoric of Russia, which relies on an orthodox and authoritarian regime, requires the interpretation of human rights as a civilisational phenomenon, according to the President Ilves. "This is in contrast to the allegedly weak western democracy, which relies on a state based on rule of law, human rights and dialogue. According to the new rhetoric, the world would be divided into civilisations where western human rights would govern in certain cultures and a different regime in others," admitted President Ilves but, according to the President, this would question the universal approach to human rights. "This, in turn, would result in the diminished importance of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights", he added.

Or, in other words, such an approach would assign a "civilisational" status to democracy, a state based on the rule of law and human rights, highlighted President Ilves.

"This would mean that an enlightened cultural sphere would prevail in Europe, North America and Australia, with a respect for human rights. To the East of us there would be a post-Soviet or orthodox Slavic sphere that considers the western approach to human rights unsuitable," he told.

According to President Ilves, we must never forget that one of the basic rules of the European Union is the protection of human rights and the foundations of a state based on the rule of law, which helps to ensure peace and security across the European continent. "We must return to this foundation," the Head of State stated.

This year, the Annual Conference on Human Rights in Tallinn, which is being organised by the Estonian Institute of Human Rights, is called "Dignity in the Context of Human Rights". The event will bring a large number of acknowledged proponents and experts from all over the world to Tallinn as keynote speakers and disputers. More information is available at: <http://www.eihr.ee>

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