"I am deeply saddened by the news of the tragic accident on the Yangtze River on Monday where a cruise ship with 450 passengers sunk," wrote President Ilves to President Xi Jinping of China.

"My thoughts are with you, with your people and with those who lost their loved ones. Please also accept and pass on my condolences addressed to the families and loved ones of those hundreds who are still missing, " wrote President Ilves.

Office of the President Public Relations Department