

The Estonian Head of State, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, yesterday hosted Raimonds Vējonis, the President of Latvia who took office yesterday; the Latvian head of state was making his first official foreign visit to none other than Estonia, which President Ilves characterised as remarkable.

"This serves as confirmation of Estonia's and Latvia's closely intertwined relations in political, national defence and economic issues and also in the spheres of culture and education," remarked President Ilves, as he reminded listeners that the new Head of State of Latvia has also studied at Tallinn University of Technology.

The Estonian Head of State characterised Latvia's six-month Presidency of the European Union as outstanding and successful; this was an experience that is also important for Estonia and one which Latvians are happy to share openly with us.

In speaking of Greece, President Ilves admitted that the situation is critical, saying: "We expect the Greek government to suggest some rational proposals, realistic promises and that it lives up to these promises. We are running out of both time and trust, which is already crumbling."

Presidents Ilves and Vējonis agreed that despite Greece and the refugee crisis, which have required most of the attention of the European Union, we cannot push the war in Ukraine into the background, as this is one of the main security issues in Europe today.

"Ukraine faces continued aggression and resultant rapid deterioration of its economic situation. This is a problem that everyone in Europe shares," emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

The Estonian Head of State acknowledged the decisiveness of President Vējonis in enhancing Latvia's defence capability as a minister of defence; this was a part of his plan to raise the level of defence expenses to two per cent of GDP by 2018.

Unfortunately we can see today that Russia is not a friendly and reliable partner in the Baltic

Sea area, in Europe in general and within the trans-Atlantic situation, said President Ilves, who discussed the importance of defence co-operation with his Latvian colleague at today's meeting in terms of mutual and regional cooperation as well as within the framework of joint exercises with our NATO allies.

Office of the President
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