

The Estonian Head of State, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, warned at the so-called European Dinner of the Munich Security Conference that we are currently witnessing changes taking place in the world in a matter of hours and no longer days, in reference to the foreign aggression in Ukraine, war in Syria and wave of migration in the Mediterranean region.

"Because the world is changing too fast for many of us, we can see some who wish to respond to globalisation and increasing mutual dependence by national withdrawal. However, detachment is no longer an option in today's world. In fact, it is just the opposite; the co-operation of all the powers that think likewise is the only meaningful response to the current challenges," emphasised President Ilves, who also spoke about free trade between the EU and US and security at the Munich Security Conference.

He also said during the trade discussion that closer Trans-Atlantic co-operation would be in the interests of both the European Union and the United States of America and should definitely be seen as part of the foundation for improved security.

As expected, the need for communication between the West and Russia to avoid further aggravation of conflicts was one of the most discussed topics at the Munich Security Conference. On the one hand, enhanced deterrence, and dialogue on the other hand – this was the approach that was promoted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, and the Secretary General of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, among others. However, there are also countries that think the West should adopt a more defined policy to deal with Russia as an aggressor. Dialogue and only dialogue is not policy was a statement that was voiced several times in Munich.

"Russia, the activities of which have caused the world several conflict issues and problems resulting from the violation of international law, now presents itself as an unavoidable part of the solutions to these problems," stated President Ilves, in commenting on the various approaches.

"The Geneva peace negotiations of various parties to the conflict in Syria had only just begun when they were suspended on 3 February because one of the participating countries decided to start bombing Aleppo. Russia has started to use peace negotiations as a hybrid weapon, which is extremely cynical," said the Estonian Head of State.

When commenting on the truce in Syria that the foreign minister of the USA and Russia agreed upon in Munich, President Ilves admitted that although 17 countries have made some serious efforts to calm the situation, he still has no full confidence in the implementation of the agreements.

"The truce that is about to be implemented in a week means that several events can take place during the interval and the determined bombing of the opposition stronghold may mean many thousands of new refugees for Europe," he said.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department