

Today, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves spoke to a special session of the Georgian Parliament commemorating the third anniversary of the Rose Revolution.

“We are proud of the reforms you have undertaken that have produced such dramatic growth in your economy,” said the Estonian Head of State. President Ilves emphasized that it is a great honor to speak before a Georgian Parliament that represents democracy and the rule of law. “Democracy and the rule of law are the prerequisites of European values, so rare, alas, among the countries that emerged from the prison of nations that was the Soviet Union,” said the President of the Republic.

President Ilves noted that Estonia has experienced something similar to the current Georgian situation 10-15 years ago, and therefore, we share Georgia’s concerns, “that your neighbor sees democracy as a security threat and the lack of democracy as the model of stability.”

“We know from experience that restraint and patience, along with a rapidly growing economy, can put an end to separatist rhetoric,” stated the Estonian Head of State, recalling the unsuccessful attempts at secession in Northeast-Estonia at the beginning of the 1990s.

In his speech, President Ilves noted that Estonia has offered multifaceted assistance to Georgia, bringing as an example our assistance in promoting Georgia’s version of the Tiger’s Leap program, and the training of Georgian officials and officers in fields related to the European Union and NATO.

The President of the Republic remarked that Estonia is a true friend to Georgia in NATO. “During a recent meeting with NATO Secretary-General Jaap Hoop de Scheffer, I urged him to include the strongest possible language on Georgia in the final communiqué of the upcoming NATO Summit in Riga and I plan to speak with U. S. President George W. Bush about this next week,” said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves spoke today at a special session of the Georgian Parliament, which was also attended by Georgian Head of State Mikheil Saakashvili, and Ukrainian President Viktor Juštšenko.

The Estonian Head of State also compared Georgia after the Rose Revolution to West Berlin, when it was the easterly outpost of democracy. Paraphrasing John F. Kennedy's famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech, President Ilves said, "We are with you. I am with you. And I feel that I can say today and here-Me Qartveli var." ("I am a Georgian.")

Public Relations Department of the Office of the President
Kadriorg, 23 November 2006