

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves summoned a session of the National Defence Council for the last time as Head of State, with the headline issue to introduce the new security policy source document of Estonia.

"This serves to show that security is not a function of just one or two institutions, but the entire Government, all ministries and ministers, and society as a whole must work in tandem to ensure it," stated President Ilves.

He thanked the National Defence Council, which over the last ten years has been a useful and substantial source of information for the President of the Republic, who is also the highest commander of national defence.

"We probably all remember the emergency session of the National Defence Council on 2 March 2014, where the Russian aggression in Ukraine was condemned and the deployment and arrival of additional allied fighter aircraft to the Baltic states was achieved in less than 90 hours," said President Ilves, in recalling one of the most alarming international periods of his term.

He described the considerable strengthening of our independent defence ability as one of the most important of our national defence in 2006-2016: the improved functioning of compulsory military service and successful reservist trainings, the Defence League as an expression of willingness to defend, battlefield experiences received in the foreign missions of the Estonian Defence Forces, the visible and credible presence of NATO's collective defence ability in Estonia, and the better organisation of national defence and strengthened democratic control and commands as inseparable elements of the capacity.

President Ilves emphasised that the future national defence plans of Estonia must still remain ambitious, yet realistic, as we continue to become more effective in estimating the real costs that are required to establish and maintain military abilities.

"The goal is simple – to have real Defence Forces, real defence ability, real support of our allies," he stated.

"I am sure that the National Defence Council will also remain an important and substantial influence for national defence in Estonia under the leadership of the newly elected president, Kersti Kaljulaid," said President Ilves.

The National Defence Council is an advisory body to the President of the Republic. The members of the Council are the President of the Riigikogu, the Prime Minister, the Chairman of the National Defence Committee of the Riigikogu, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure and the Commander of the Defence Forces. The Council discusses key issues from the point of view of national defence and expresses its opinions on these issues. The Council meets in session. Sessions of the Council are held as often as required. The National Defence Council operates on the basis of rules of procedure approved by the President of the Republic.

Office of the President
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