

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who spoke on the panel of an international security conference, entitled "Europe's Future: Is Expansion Still on the Agenda-What if It Is Not?" during the NATO Summit in Riga, supports the further expansion of the European Union, but conceded that so-called expansion fatigue has developed in the alliance.

"One can speak of expansion fatigue in the European Union, but not in NATO, where there are no signs of fatigue," said the Estonian Head of State.

According to the President, the expansion of NATO and the European Union need not go hand-in-hand, and the countries pursuing membership in these organizations should set their goals realistically.

"The European Union needs more courage and vision in dealing with neighborhood problems, while understanding that a danger exists that the European Union's neighborhood policy may become a mechanism for exclusion," said President Ilves. "The European Union's neighbor states should not have to feel that they are not really like us," he added.

"NATO and the European Union are the main grounds for solving problems in our vicinity," said the Estonian Head of State. "For us, these problems are moral, philosophical, political, as well as economic."

In Riga, the President of the Republic also met with Nino Burjanadze, the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, who talked about the CIS Summit that took place in Minsk, and the Estonian Head of State told her about the visit of the President of the United States George W. Bush on the previous day.

Today, President Ilves will fly from Riga to Stockholm, where tomorrow he will meet with H. M. King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden, Parliament Speaker Per Westerberg, Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, and Minister for EU Affairs Cecilia Malmström. President Ilves will give a press conference, visit the Stockholm Estonian School, and meet with local Estonians at the Estonian House.

The Estonian Head of State will return to Estonia on the evening of November 30.

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