

Yesterday in Tallinn, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves spoke at the opening session of the first Lennart Meri commemorative conference "Remember the Future". Lennart Meri was the first President of Estonia after the restoration of independence.

The Estonian Head of State spoke about the choices facing Europe and the present and future of the Old World.

"An apathetic or outright negative attitude toward the (European Union) Constitutional Treaty forces many members of the union to search for new solutions and pushes us in the direction of a core-Europe being created," said President Ilves. "There is no sense in thinking that the world's most successful economic union will stop short; the question is rather whether all its members will be able to participate equally in the European Union success story."

President Ilves emphasized that a strong Europe cannot exist without the European Union having common foreign and security policies. "We will remain hostage to energy suppliers, if we have no common energy policy and a common understanding of energy security," said the Head of State.

According to the President, the international community has to view Russia from a special point of view, since Russia regards democracy on its borders as a threat and non-democracy in its neighborhood as a guarantee of stability.

Besides President Ilves many opinion leaders from all over the world take part in the conference: current and former ministers, ambassadors and policymakers, analysts and journalists from Europe and USA. Among others Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, and Wesley Clark, retired four-star General of the U.S. Army take the floor.

Yesterday evening, the President of the Republic and Mrs. Evelin Ilves hosted a dinner for the guests of the Lennart Meri commemorative conference.

“We must understand that we have not gathered only because Lennart Meri was our friend, but also to acknowledge that without him we would not be sitting here, and without his activities, the hotel where our conference is taking place would probably not even exist,” said President Ilves.

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