

Yesterday, the National Defence Council that convened in Kadriorg discussed the proposal of President Toomas Hendrik Ilves to amend the national defence chapter of the Constitution and gave the plan its unanimous approval.

“The idea behind this proposal is simple and clear—in parliamentary countries, the defence forces are subordinated to the government and the appointment of the commander of the defence forces is within the jurisdiction of the government,” said President Ilves opening the meeting of the National Defence Council.

“Currently the appointment is made by the Riigikogu upon the proposal of the President, which—as I have already said—is a ceremonial solution and does not increase the clarity of the civil management chain of command,” said the Head of State. “Quite the opposite—the current system produces fuzziness and vagueness, which are called to mind by the successive disagreements between the Minister of Defence and the Commander of the Defence Forces, whoever has occupied these positions.”

President Ilves has previously met with the representatives of all the Riigikogu factions regarding this question, as well as with the Board of the Riigikogu, the parliamentary National Defence Committee, the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, and Commander of the Defence Forces. Shortly, a meeting will take place with the Riigikogu Constitutional Committee.

“I will do my best to achieve the broadest possible consensus,” affirmed the Head of State.

According to President Ilves, the national defence chapter of the Constitution should be amended to prevent the theoretical possibility of politicizing the leadership of the Defence Forces.

“I hope that the National Defence Act will very exactly specify the qualification criteria for the Commander of the Defence Forces and the superior officers belonging to the leadership of the Defence Forces,” said the Head of State.

President Ilves plans to submit the draft of the law to amend the Constitution to the Riigikogu at the beginning of May.

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