

“The State of Israel is a strategic partner for Estonia in the Near East,” confirmed President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at yesterday’s meeting with Vice Premier of Israel Shimon Peres.

The Estonian Head of State said that Estonian-Israeli relations are very good and close—cooperation is taking place in various fields of activity, regular reciprocal visits occur, and regular political consultations are conducted between the foreign ministries of both countries.

President Ilves confirmed that Estonia feels it is important to open an embassy in Israel, and it will soon send its diplomat to Tel Aviv for this purpose.

“The Estonian Jewish community is not large, but it has an important place in our economic, scientific and cultural life,” said the Estonian Head of State. As a country, Estonia has been a good and secure home for Jews and the Estonian Jewish community has always been a good and collaborative partner for the Estonian state.”

“Our nations have a mutual interest in each other’s culture,” said President Ilves. “However, our economic relations could be closer, and in this regard, the visit of a distinguished Israeli business delegation and meetings with Estonian entrepreneurs planned for September is positive.”

Speaking about the problems in the Near East, President Ilves said that Estonia supports the role of the so-called Quartet (UN, European Union, USA, and Russia) in the regulation of the Middle East crisis.

“We favor many of the ideas recently proposed in this regard, for instance, the idea to organize expanded Quartet meetings with the Arab countries, with the participation of President Abbas or Prime Minister Olmert,” said the Estonian Head of State.

He affirmed that the Palestinian government must fulfill generally accepted international

requirements—refrain from violence, observe all current agreements, and recognize the State of Israel.

“We are very glad that meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian Presidents have become regular events,” said President Ilves. “We hope that a dialogue between the new Palestinian government and Israel will also become a reality, which would increase stability in the Near East and bring us closer to a resolution of the problems in the region.”

The Estonian Head of State and Israeli Vice Premier also participated in the inauguration of the Jewish synagogue in Tallinn.

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