

“We are united by honesty and respect for each other, as well as pride in our countries and people,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today in Kadriorg, where he and Mrs. Evelin Ilves received Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan who arrived in Estonia on an official visit.

President Ilves recalled that Japan recognized Estonia as an independent country in 1919 and again in 1991. “We will not forget this and we are thankful,” said the Estonian Head of State.

“Now, when our peoples have firmly converged around common and everlasting understandings in their countries, we can acknowledge with satisfaction that relations between our two nations have become increasingly frequent,” said President Ilves.

“In the 21st century, Estonia and Japan are cooperating in various international organizations and it is not longer important that we are located thousands of kilometers apart—we are united by a concern for the preservation of the environment on our home planet,” said the Estonian Head of State. “Understandably, global warming is everyone’s common concern.”

In his conversation with the Japanese Emperor, President Ilves acknowledged all the people who have established a cultural bridge between Estonia and Japan.

“With its rich history and traditions, Japan is a unique world, with a distinctiveness that has survived for centuries,” said the Estonian Head of State. “The same can be said for Estonia. A connection with one’s culture and traditions is something that unites us and something we can be proud of.”

According to President Ilves, Estonian-Japanese cultural exchange is a part of a global process, in which various conceptions and ways of thinking meet. “This creates understanding and brings our people closer together,” said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves presented a glass sculpture by glass artist Ivo Lill, entitled “Memory Pattern”, to

Japanese Emperor Akihito, in which a fragment of an Estonian folk costume waistband is reflected. According to the artist's explanation, the people's history is preserved in waistband patterns, which can be read and understood by empathic people who understand the subject and have broad horizons. "Such a means of expression is protected from evil eyes, because strangers see only innocent decorative elements, nothing more," wrote Ivo Lill in his accompanying letter.

As a gift, the Estonian presidential couple presented Empress Michiko a shawl by Elna Kaasik, to which the following haiku was added: "Estonia's sun reflects the cherry blossom time in a snowfall."

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