

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves received Israeli Ambassador Avi Granot in Kadriorg yesterday, who presented his credentials to the Head of State.

“Israel is a significant strategic partner for Estonia in the Middle East,” President Ilves said at the meeting and added that the mutually good relations are confirmed by many high-level visits. For instance, the current Israeli President, Shimon Peres, visited Estonia last spring.

Ambassador Granot provided an overview of the situation in the Middle East and confirmed that Israel wishes to intensify dialogue with the European Union member states on a political level, as well as develop cooperation in economics and science.

President Ilves praised the capable and competent Estonian Jewish community, saying that the local Jewish community is not very large, but they have a significant place in our economic, scientific and cultural life. “As a country, Estonia has been a good and secure home for Jews and the Estonia’s Jewish community has always been a good and collaborative partner for the Estonian state,” said the President. A representative of the Jewish community also participates in the President of the Republic’s National Minorities Roundtable.

At the meeting, the enlivening of Estonian and Israeli economic relations were discussed at length and both parties saw great potential here. In May 2006, an Israeli economic seminar took place in Estonia and in September 2007 an Israeli business delegation visited Estonia. In 2006 the turnover of trade with Israel totaled 158.2 million kroons.

Estonia plans to open an embassy in Israel during the 2008-2009 year, and preparations for this are already underway.

**The President of the Republic received the credentials of the Israeli Ambassador**

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