

“Estonia, like the other European Union states, continues to support Georgia’s reforms in the direction of democracy, civil society, and a market economy,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said on Sunday at a meeting with Mikheil Saakashvili, Georgia’s re-elected President, and Prime Minister Lado Gurgenidze.

The Estonian Head of State participated on January 20th in the inauguration ceremonies of Georgia’s President Mikheil Saakashvili.

“We believe that the reform aspirations of your people, and your approach to the European Union and NATO, are irreversible,” the Estonian Head of State stressed.

“I hope that the Georgian authorities have paid attention to the comments of the observers that referred to the technical organization of the presidential elections and will do everything possible to surmount these shortcomings during the parliamentary elections in the spring. Estonia is ready to provide thorough practical assistance, as well as send capable experts to Georgia,” said President Ilves. “Because, speaking metaphorically, if the presidential elections were the dress rehearsal for democracy, then the parliamentary elections will be democracy’s premiere.”

The goal of democracy is to unite the people, the Estonian Head of State stressed. “Democracy is not conceivable without an opposition, and without the freedoms of speech and press, and the authorities must respect this unconditionally. However, democracy also means responsibility, which must be recognized by the opposition, whose activities must not deviate from the constitutional framework,” said President Ilves.

He acknowledged Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili’s words from his inauguration speech that a strong and stable opposition deserves a greater role in the leadership and development of the state, and the time for internal conflicts is over.

Estonia is a firm, but demanding, supporter of Georgia,” President Ilves affirmed. “As a member of the European Union, we find that the Community must more vigorously support Georgia, and show its commitment to the reform wishes of the Georgian people. For instance, through visa simplification and free trade agreements, whereby the European Union will take a step closer to

Georgia, and Georgia to the European Union.”

In Tbilisi, President Ilves also met with Polish President Lech Kaczynski and Nino Burjanadze, Speaker of the Georgian Parliament.

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