

Yesterday in Brussels, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and spoke to the representatives of the alliance's member states in the North Atlantic Council (NAC).

The Estonian Head of State spoke at length about cyber security and the need to confront cyber attacks with a united front.

"The cyber attacks against the institutions of governmental power, the private sector and the media, which we have seen in the case of several countries, including Estonia, are a serious security risk, not just a crime," President Ilves stressed, while thanking the allies for their support for the NATO cybersecurity center to be established in Tallinn. "I am pleased that NATO views this topic as a security, not just technical question."

Speaking about the NATO mission in Afghanistan, the Estonian Head of State said that the alliance's possibilities for success in its largest military operation increase, if along with guaranteeing of the security situation, a greater contribution is made to the civil projects in this country torn by chaos and violence.

"Therefore, in Afghanistan we simultaneously need two important contributions: a strong military presence, using units of the alliance member states that are strong, effective and look as far as possible from their bases, and secondly, very well coordinated civil aid projects, which demonstrate the possibilities of a peaceful and successful tomorrow to the Afghans," said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves noted that the role of the European Union and the UN is very important in this regard.

"Both these organizations must increase their contribution and support alongside NATO's efforts in order to increase Afghanistan's security for their population as well as the international community," the Head of State stressed, promising to help the Afghanistan operation to achieve broader international support.

President Ilves also touched on the future of Kosovo, saying that no country should be allowed to hinder or block the peaceful solution of this important problem for Europe for their own selfish reasons.

“Moreover, the only precedent that the recognition of Kosovo would create is that genocide and ethnic cleansing will end in defeat,” the Estonian Head of State emphasized.

President Ilves also spoke about the enlargement of NATO, repeating Estonia’s support for issuing accession invitations to Croatia, Albania, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia at the Bucharest Summit meeting in April.

“In respect to providing Georgia and Ukraine with a Membership Action Plan or MAP, then I repeat what I said two weeks ago in Tbilisi: we are firm, but exacting supporters of Georgia. This means that if the reform efforts of Georgia do not subside, neither will our wish to help them, although we will not make any concessions in the attitude toward democracy and adherence to fundamental freedoms and rights,” said the Estonian Head of State.

He affirmed Estonia’s support for the wish of Ukraine and Georgia to join the MAP program, which would be a stimulus for both Kiev and Tbilisi to promote democracy as well as civil society and market economy reforms.

President Ilves also discussed the issue of air security for the Baltic countries. He recalled that Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are preparing a future scenario for their allies, which would guarantee the air security of this region for the long-term future.

“It is still too early to say whether this will mean a joint Baltic air force unit or another solution,” the Estonian Head of State said.

At a meeting at the North Atlantic Council, he also dealt with the energy security issue. “Unfortunately, we see countries today that wish to use energy as a weapon,” President Ilves

said. "This is a serious problem for the NATO countries and a great challenge. The NATO energy security concept will be completed for the Bucharest Summit, which is very necessary and which Estonia has helped to prepare."

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229