

At yesterday's meeting between President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and General Abdul Rahim Wardak, the Defence Minister of Afghanistan, the discussions focused on the situation in Afghanistan and international community support projects for setting this country on its feet.

Defence Minister Wardak thanked Estonia for its contribution to increasing the stability of Afghanistan, and recalled the successful service of more than a hundred members of the Estonian Defence Forces in the NATO-led operation in Helmand Province.

"The West must not tire or give up, other operations that appear on the agenda must not decrease our dedication to dealing with the development of Afghanistan, the success of which would result in a more peaceful existence not only for one country or one region, but rather a much broader sense of security," President Ilves affirmed. "If we do not tire and do not give up, then in the future we, like the Afghans who wish for positive changes, will not have to ask ourselves why the West lost Afghanistan."

However, according to the Estonian Head of State, it is also very important that the Afghanistan government increasingly strengthen its presence in the provinces and accept greater responsibility for the security situation in the currently unstable country.

"I see positive developments here: I see how the efforts of the Afghan government are gradually reducing violence and increasing people's security," said President Ilves. "At this point, it is necessary to recall that 70 percent of the attacks on Afghan forces or NATO units take place on ten percent of the territory."

Speaking about the international assistance for Afghanistan, the Estonian Head of State considered the effective and well-planned cooperation of NATO, the European Union, and the UN to be important.

"The stabilization of Afghanistan is not only a NATO military operation, but the European Union and the UN also have a large role to play—especially in the implementation of civil projects to improve people's lives," President Ilves said. "Therefore, only voluntary cooperation between international organizations will guarantee our success and eliminate needless duplication."

At the meeting with Defence Minister Wardak, the Estonian Head of State stressed his serious concern regarding the fate of journalist Sayed Parwiz Kambakhsh, who was sentenced to death by an Afghan court.

Defence Minister Wardak affirmed that he understands President Ilves's concern and added that the court judgment is not final.

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