

“The objective of the Georgian Government and the opposition should be the same—to make sure that the upcoming parliamentary elections take place in an environment of freedom, equity, and democracy,” President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said today at a meeting with representatives of the Georgian opposition, who arrived in Tallinn at the invitation of the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves met with Kakha Kukava, who belongs to the Conservative Party and leads the Democratic Front faction in the Georgian Parliament, and David Usupashvili, Chairman of the Republican Party, who provided an overview of the latest developments in Georgia, which is one of the main target countries for Estonia’s cooperation efforts.

“Estonia, which is a firm supporter of the reform aspirations of the Georgian state, wishes to see a spirit of compromise among all the politicians in Georgia and a repudiation of ultimatums,” President Ilves stressed at the meeting. “Hopefully, both President Mikheil Saakashvili, as well as the opposition leaders, will focus on the parliamentary elections, in order to avoid the shortcomings that we saw during the presidential elections in January.”

At that time, the Estonian Head of State pointed out the following shortcomings: administrative weakness, problems with equal access to media, as well as a very slow vote count and weak procedures for dealing with complaints.

“Estonia does not want to teach another country how it should organize its affairs, but Estonia, as strong supporter of Georgia’s NATO aspirations, knows very well that parliamentary elections must be free and fair, because if any doubts remain in the air, it can strike a great blow to the international credibility of the country,” President Ilves noted, supporting the principle that the opposition be represented in the Georgian election commissions at all levels, including the regional level, in order to increase confidence in the elections and their transparency.

“Also important are the democratic and parliamentary control of security institutions, the creation of public television, and equal access to it,” President Ilves said, recalling that Estonia will soon send its representatives to Tbilisi to advise Georgia on the development of public broadcasting and the institution of a chancellor of justice.

The Estonian Head of State recommended that the Georgian politicians think a few steps ahead—for instance, about how to create a professional and independent officialdom in Georgia, who would work confidently and dedicatedly for the good of their country. One of the reasons for the current opposition is distrust in many institutions and government agencies, and therefore, the creation of a loyal officialdom, which is not affected by political winds, is one of the keys to success in Georgia, said President Ilves.

“However, once more—during the campaign for the parliamentary election, smooth cooperation between those in power and the opposition is extremely important, along with mutual respect and the avoidance of steps that might disrupt society and push it away from a peaceful political contest,” said the Estonian Head of State.

“I am sure that all the forces that are interested in Georgia’s welfare wish to have free, fair and democratic parliamentary elections, which will reduce the tensions in the society, increase the internal confidence of the society, and help to guarantee success for your country in the future—this means a strong economy, concern of the government for its citizens, and an unconditional respect for democracy,” President Ilves said.

The Estonian Head of State also expressed his hope that the Estonian Riigikogu, which is interested in the welfare of Georgia, will send its observers to the Tbilisi for the Georgian parliamentary elections.

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