

In France today, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with President Nicolas Sarkozy to discuss the priorities of the French presidency of the European Union, the results of the NATO Summit, as well as issues related to the European Union's common energy policy and Neighborhood Policy.

President Ilves wished Nicolas Sarkozy success during the French presidency of the European Union and offered Estonia's multifaceted support for the achievement of the objectives for the French EU presidency. "Estonia wants a strong and active European Union, which is not possible without the participation of France. The success of the French presidency is the joint success of all the member states," President Ilves said.

The Heads of State recognized that in the world context Europe is a strong partner as an integrated union, not as individual member states with special interests, and therefore, it is important to commit oneself with renewed vigor to the challenges facing the Union, such as the global competitiveness of the Community, climate change, energy security, and a stronger voice on the international arena. "This is self-evident to small nations, but the interests of large countries are also better protected by acting together," President Ilves said.

Speaking about the priorities for the French EU presidency, both Presidents asserted that there is need for strengthening cooperation in the development of the European Union's common energy policy.

"Energy policy is directly connected to security issues and the use of energy resources as foreign policy tools by certain countries is a reality that is apparent to everyone," said President Ilves. According to the Head of State, agreement on uniform rules, the liberalization of the energy markets, and implementation of renewable energy sources are important for the protection of the energy markets of large as well as small and insulated states from the adverse impact of third countries. The possibilities of nuclear energy were also discussed at the meeting.

The operations in Afghanistan were discussed during a summary of the results of the NATO Summit in Bucharest. President Ilves expressed his satisfaction at France's decision to send additional forces to Afghanistan. "NATO cannot be the loser in Afghanistan, therefore I feel it is important that consensus was demonstrated on this issue at the Summit," President Ilves noted.

The Heads of State also spoke about NATO Membership Action Plans (MAP) being provided to Georgia and Ukraine. "In order to motivate Georgia and Ukraine to continue democratic reforms, the alliance must give a clear message that the question in respect to receiving MAP is not "if" but "when"," the Estonian Head of State stressed.

The Presidents also spoke about bilateral military cooperation.

President Ilves will arrive back in Estonia tomorrow, April 8th.

Photos from the meeting are available at: <http://www.elysee.fr/photos/?mode=gallery&datepage=1&month=4&year=2008>

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