

Saturday evening, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is in the United States on a working visit, accepted the Baltic Statesmanship Award from the U.S.-Baltic Foundation.

“The Baltic countries are not longer transition societies; they are not “new democracies,” President Ilves said upon accepting the award. “We are sooner restored democracies.”

According to the Estonian Head of State, it is not surprising that an organization like the USBF was founded in the United States. “The United States was one of the countries that did not recognize the occupation and annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Throughout the Cold War, your non-recognition policy maintained hope for Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians that you had not forgotten us,” President Ilves said.

“If we examine the transatlantic ties of the United States and Europe more broadly, it is clear that the three Baltic countries are among the most dedicated allies in NATO,” the Estonian Head of State noted. According to the President, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania may have small populations, but proportionally, they contribute more than many of the largest nations.

“Why do we do this, because the rule of law and consideration for human rights, as well as the freedom of speech and expression, are very important values for us,” President Ilves concluded.

USBF is a nonprofit organization that deals with the promotion and development of relations between the United States and the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

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