

Today in Kadriorg, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves welcomed Turkish President Abdullah Gül who arrived in Tallinn with his wife on an official visit to Estonia at the invitation of the Estonian Head of State.

“The relations between Estonia and Turkey are very good and our friendly mutual contacts in the fields of economy, politics and culture are continuously consolidating,” President Ilves stressed.

The Heads of State expressed their gratification that the trade turnover between Estonia and Turkey has increased almost twelvefold since 1999; last year, more than 20,000 Estonian tourists visited Turkey, which is more than four times as many as in 2003; and in 2010, the Turkish national airline plans to start flights between Tallinn and Istanbul, which will further intensify mutual relations.

According to President Ilves, the field of information and communications technology provides the best opportunities for mutually beneficial economic cooperation.

“We want to share our experiences in building an information society with Turkey and to encourage mutual cooperation between the companies of both countries in the corresponding fields,” the Estonian Head of State said, and added that the exchange of IT students between the two countries is important.

Speaking of the enlargement of the European Union, President Ilves affirmed that Estonia continues to support the accession of Turkey to the Community, as a very important country internationally and a firm ally of Europe, and expressed gratification regarding Turkey’s progress to date.

Presidents Ilves and Gül spoke of the changed security situation in the South Caucasus and the wider role of NATO.

“Russia’s invasion and unconstructive behaviour signifies a change in the security architecture, since values, which are the foundation of the democratic world and NATO, were attacked,” the Estonian Head of State stated.

The visibility of NATO is extremely important in the world as a whole as well as for the citizens of the member states, President Ilves stressed, while also recognising Turkey’s contribution to the safeguarding of the Baltic countries’ airspace.

President Gül announced the decision to send a Turkish expert to the NATO Cyber Defence Centre located in Tallinn.

Speaking about energy security and extremely important junctions for energy transport in the Turkish context, President Ilves stated that projects to help increase energy supply security, including the diversification of transport channels, are very important. “From a European Union point of view, we consider one of the most important projects to be the Nabucco Gas Pipeline project planned from Turkey to Austria, which would enable the export of gas from the Near East and the Caspian region to Europe,” the Head of State continued.

At the meeting, President Gül also explained the Turkish initiative to conclude a Stability Pact for the South Caucasus, with the goal of bringing the region’s countries—Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Russia—to a common table, which would help to restore normal relations and dialogue between the countries.

In Tallinn today, the Heads of State also opened an Estonian-Turkish business forum, and later today will open an exhibition reflecting relations between the two countries. In the evening, President Ilves and Evelin Ilves will host a formal dinner in honour of President Gül and Mrs. Hayrünnisa Gül.

The Estonian Head of State met with the Turkish President

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