

At today's meeting between President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and German President Horst Köhler, the discussions focused on the problems of international relations, security, the general financial crisis, as well as on bilateral relations.

"Germany is a very important partner for Estonia—equally important are the historical and cultural ties that unite us as our cooperation in the European Union and NATO, which is based on solidarity and common values," President Ilves said.

Speaking about security guarantees, Presidents Ilves and Köhler agreed that, in the 21st century, NATO means unconditional protection for the countries that are members the organization, as well as operations that are essential for world security and, especially important, providing motivation and encouragement to the alliance's neighboring countries to carry out democratic reforms, which, if successful, will expand the security zone in Europe.

"NATO does not have the right to abandon or tire of Afghanistan," President Ilves said, speaking about the alliance's largest operation. "We can be successful, if we can garner more allies among the local population, which would increase security in this ever turbulent country. At the same time, we must strengthen the will to participate of the countries involved in the ISAF operation, which would make our activities more vigorous and believable, and, if we succeed, would demonstrate that NATO means business."

Speaking about NATO's possible enlargement, President Ilves supported the open door policy, stressing that the acceptance of new members is an independent decision of the alliance, which third countries have no right to veto.

"NATO's doors continue to be open to those who have opened themselves to democratic reforms and the rule of law, who are consistent and successful in pursuing these aims, and wish to join the alliance," President Ilves affirmed. "Today, NATO is not against any country, it is in favor of common values and principles, it is for democracy."

Speaking about the August war between Russia and Georgia, President Ilves stressed that Russia must fulfill the obligations it accepted under the Sarkozy-Medvedev peace agreement of

August 12th and withdraw its forces to the pre-August 7 positions.

“The return of refugees, the unimpeded access of humanitarian aid, and the unobstructed access of international observers to the conflict territory, especially South Ossetia, must be guaranteed,” President Ilves said.

Heads of State Ilves and Köhler also spoke about energy policy, including energy security, where business interests cannot be allowed to smother our common values.

“Energy connections are not just business projects, but are primarily a means of guaranteeing energy security and the functioning of the internal market,” President Ilves said. “Therefore, an opportunity must be found for the European Union to finance the creation of significant energy connections from a security standpoint. The creation and development of a more cohesive internal market and international energy connections is in the interests of all European Union states.”

Presidents Ilves and Köhler spoke at length about global financial crisis and its effects. Both recognized that it must be, and is, in the interests of the European Union states to restore the trust of the banks and citizens and a general balance in the world’s financial market.

“On the global scale, there are currently at least two problems; in addition to the stabilization of the financial markets, it is important to prevent the financial problems growing into a general economic crisis,” President Ilves said. “This requires coordinated action at the European Union level and also on the more general international plane.”

So far, Estonia has been relatively untouched by the financial crisis, thanks largely to the integration of Estonian banking with the financial sector of the Nordic countries, which has coped well in the current financial crisis, the Estonian Head of State confirmed, adding, “Adjustments in the Estonian economy started already a year before the financial crisis reached Europe, however, the next few years will surely be complicated for Estonia in the economic policy sense.”

The Estonian President met with the German Head of State

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President Ilves invited Federal President Köhler to make a state visit to Estonia.

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