

"Tajikistan is an important partner for the West in achieving success in the Afghanistan operation and combating the illegal narcotics trade in Central Asia," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said at a meeting with Emomali Rahmon, the Tajikistan Head of State who arrived on a working visit to Estonia today.

The Estonian Head of State acknowledged Tajikistan's long-standing support for the battle against the extremist Taliban forces operating in Afghanistan, and said their contribution was strategically very important.

"Also important is your recent decision to open an air corridor for non-military transit, which could be used to supply the NATO forces operating in Afghanistan, Tajikistan's neighboring country," President Ilves said. "The success of the Afghanistan operation is in the interests of both the NATO member states and Afghanistan's close neighbors. After all, this would mean that the world would gain another stable country, and an important barrier would be established to the spread of extremism in the region."

The Estonian Head of State stressed that this is not an endless "foreign project". "We hope to see Afghanistan established as a nation that is able to cope with the maintenance of stability and the guarantee of domestic security. However, this assumes that we all pay greater attention to political issues in Afghanistan."

The topics discussed at the meeting between Presidents Ilves and Rahmon also included the common efforts of the international community and Tajikistan to prevent the narcotics trade originating in Afghanistan and ending in Russia and Western Europe. Several countries and international organizations, including the European Union, are supporting the efforts of the Tajikistani authorities to prevent narcotics smuggling.

"Tajikistan as a border country has a special role to play, because your efforts and the international assistance provided to you will essentially determine the success of the attempt to restrict the narcotics trade based in Afghanistan," the Estonian Head of State said.

President Ilves confirmed that a politically stable and economically successful Tajikistan, which

is increasingly interested in democratic reforms, is in the interests Estonia and the rest of the European Union.

The Estonian Head of State recalled that Tajikistan places second among Estonia's trading partners in Central Asia, after Kazakhstan. Thus far, this is based on transit trade in aluminum, but this is the time for entrepreneurs in the two countries to think about diversification.

"If you feel that Estonia has experiences that are useful to Tajikistan, we are naturally willing to share them with you," the Estonian Head of State said to President Rahmon. President Ilves mentioned information technology as a field where Estonian enterprises are interested in closer cooperation with partners in Tajikistan.

Speaking about the general economic situation, President Ilves said, "Currently two universal recommendations apply: governments must act to alleviate and decisively overcome the economic crisis. Populism and politics as usual must be scrapped. Secondly, we must learn to look beyond the current economic crisis and to look for opportunities where we have not looked for them before."

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229