

“We must – I emphasise – we must strive for closer and more intensive co-operation,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves in his opening speech at the Baltic Sea Strategy Conference, organised by Sweden, the presiding state of the European Union, in Stockholm.

The Estonian Head of State, who initiated the Baltic Sea Strategy as a member of the European Parliament, in addressing the euro-ministers of the European Union Member states, reiterated that this is the first initiative of the European Parliament that can be considered to represent the official politics of the European Union.

“The environmental protection of the shallow Baltic Sea – practically the biggest inland sea in the European Union, avoiding any possible large-scale emergencies, recognisable enhancement of competitiveness of the region, and mitigating the mutual bureaucratic obstacles are challenges that serve the interests of all citizens and that are faced by all the Baltic Sea countries of the European Union,” said President Ilves. He considered the co-ordination of research efforts within the universities in the region towards the resolution of regional problems to be an issue of utmost importance, which would mean closer co-operation and less disunity in this sphere.

President Ilves also met with one of the most influential foreign politicians of the Nordic countries, the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Carl Bildt, today; the alternatives for giving specific substance to the Baltic Sea Strategy, as well as overcoming the global economic downturn and mutual investment opportunities and east-bound partnerships of the European Union were discussed at the meeting.

The Estonian Head of State also met with a number of representatives of the Swedish economic and financial communities today in Stockholm; they all expressed their hope that Estonia will take all the steps necessary to meet the criteria for adopting the euro as soon as possible.

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