

President of Estonia, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, met yesterday with infantry company ESTCOY-9 and the support unit, NSE-8, which will soon depart for Afghanistan to participate in a NATO operation.

“To leave now before the required stability has been achieved and to hand the security situation over to the control of the Afghan army and police would result in an explosive outburst of violence in Afghanistan. But not only that. It would mean the same in Pakistan, a country with a nuclear arsenal, which, if overtaken by extremist fanatics, would mean a catastrophe for the whole western world. Furthermore, the violence would probably spread to many other countries also, and extremism would spread to Central Asia and beyond,” said President Ilves. “We do not want a world like that. Therefore, the operation in Afghanistan is also an operation that will ensure the security of ourselves, of Estonia.”

According to the Estonian Head of State, NATO’s plans must become increasingly better, more efficient, accurate and flexible.

“All of us – both military men and civil servants – must learn from the previous eight years and introduce changes both in the military sphere and in promoting the development of the country under civil plans and programmes,” President Ilves added, listing the key words, which could be the foundation of NATO’s success: “Patience. Innovativeness. Courage. Understanding of the local situation. Trust wherever possible. The continued contribution to both the military and civil spheres, enhancing, above all, the sustainable initiatives of the Afghan people and providing them with support. Relieving the Afghan authorities of both the acquired and learned dependency on assistance. An uncompromising attitude towards corruption, which spreads its roots and undermines the faith of local people in Kabul and the provinces. And, especially – which is really appropriate at the moment – stressing the invincibly mandatory nature of honest elections.”

According to the Head of State, Estonia must do everything possible – and even more – to ensure maximum protection for our soldiers in Afghanistan.

“All the members of ESTCOY-9 are equipped with night vision equipment. And I am glad to hear it. I am also glad of the decision to supply our soldiers with ground penetrating radars, which help to detect mines with low metal content.,” said the Head of State.

Full text of the speech by President Ilves is available here: <http://www.president.ee/en> .

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