

“Turkey, as a large country between Europe and Asia, is an exceptionally important balancing factor, not solely for the problems of its own region but in a much wider context,” said President Ilves, at today’s meeting with the Turkish President. “Turkey, as a large country between Europe and Asia, is an exceptionally important balancing factor, not solely for the problems of its own region but in a much wider context,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at today’s meeting with the Turkish Head of State, Mr. Abdullah Gül.

President Ilves, who arrived in Ankara for an official visit, assured Estonia’s steady support for Turkey’s convergence with the European Union and the reforms to be implemented for that purpose.

“The European Union will not be complete without Turkey,” emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

“All the friends of Turkey have two huge tasks – to prove to those who look upon enlargement with scepticism in the European Union that Turkey is committed to democratic reforms and to help the Turkish government show their people that these reforms are necessary, especially to improve the living standards of Turkish people,” said the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves made an entry into the book of honours in the mausoleum of Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic and its first President “I pay my homage to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, an outstanding statesman, who realised that only modernisation and reforms allow us to create a modern society. This is how he shaped the face of the world and paved a way for Turkey into today’s Europe.”

President Ilves reminded that Turkey is a good friend of Estonia and a strong ally in NATO: Turkey was the first member of the alliance in the South-Eastern Europe and Mediterranean region to secure the airspace of the Baltic states; now Turkey is ready to send its representative to the NATO Co-operative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn.

“I am sure that the economic and trade relations between Estonia and Turkey will bounce back in the near future; and we are certainly still interested in launching direct flights between the two countries,” the Estonian Head of State admitted.

Presidents Ilves and Mr. Gül also touched upon the crisis centres in the region.

“Estonia wants the issue of Cyprus to be resolved in the interests of the Cypriot people, Turkey, and Greece as well as also Estonia’s interests, as this is an issue that is hampering the very co-operation between NATO and the European Union,” President Ilves stated.

The Estonian and Turkish heads of state also discussed the developments in the search for solutions to the Mountain Karabakh conflicts and the situation in Afghanistan, where the defence force members of both countries serve in the NATO-led security forces.

“However, NATO’s success in Afghanistan is not solely dependent on the courage of the troops of the alliance but as much or even more on the ability of the Afghan government to

assume control in the country and to what extent NATO and our allies can increase their civil contribution. Of course, stability in Pakistan is also a contributing factor,” President Ilves said. “Here, Turkey has taken a leading role in initiating regional co-operation in this area, as well as organising top-level communication between Afghanistan and Pakistan.”

When speaking about energy security, the Estonian Head of State assured that Turkey plays a strategic role in ensuring alternative energy supply to the European Union.

According to President Ilves, this year and the next will be especially important for the cultural relations between Estonia and Turkey.

“Istanbul will be the cultural capital of Europe in 2010 and Tallinn will take over this role in 2011, which gives us a good opportunity for co-operation in the sphere of cultural projects. For example, the plans include the organisation of a week of Estonian culture in Istanbul, which would see the premier of “Adam’s Lament” by Arvo Pärt on 7th June of this year,” said President Ilves.

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