

NATO's new strategic concept, which is built on the principles of collective deterrence and collective defence, was discussed at the meeting. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met yesterday in Kadriorg with Mr. Bernard Kouchner, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs.

NATO's new strategic concept, which is built on the principles of collective deterrence and collective defence, was discussed at the meeting. The Estonian Head of State stressed that the support and acceptance of the concept by all the members of the alliance is highly important for the new concept.

"This cannot be just a document that is drafted somewhere and accepted by the members of NATO as a mere formality, as the new strategic concept of the alliance can only be effective if it has been previously discussed and embraced by all of us," President Ilves said.

The Estonian Head of State and the French Minister of Foreign Affairs also discussed defence-related partnership between the two countries; Estonia attaches the highest importance to even closer co-operation. President Ilves thanked France for its co-operation in preparing for any possible renegade plane incident during the meeting of NATO foreign ministers in Tallinn.

The Estonian Head of State also thanked France for its support and assistance in improving the French language among Estonian civil servants.

"I'm quite sure that this will contribute to greater political and economic co-operation; we're also planning to establish an international French school in Tallinn, which would be beneficial for enticing French-speaking investors and specialists into Estonia and would be highly useful for foreign diplomats who wish for their children to pursue their studies in line with French curricula," told President Ilves.

Estonia has filed an application for acquiring observer status in the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), President Ilves reminded. This would allow Estonia to develop closer ties with a large number of countries, which share the same goals and values for ensuring stability, security, and economic success as well as promoting education and research.

When discussing the issue of Iran's nuclear programme, the Estonian Head of State said that the development of a peaceful nuclear programme to a military one would endanger the stability of the whole world.

"Iran must know and feel that it is opposing the uniform ranks of all those countries that are not interested in increasing tensions in this region specifically or in general, and we will remain steadfast in our unity in resisting its nuclear ambitions," said President Ilves.

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