

“The unity of the Baltic states, which 20 years ago we used to describe the shared struggle of the three countries to restore their independence, today stands for the co-operation between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in shaping the future of the European Union and NATO,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at the meeting with Mr. Aivis Ronis, who recently became the Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs. “The Baltic states are good partners for each other and as allies in these organisations.”

President Ilves and Minister Ronis expressed their pleasure with the fact that the documents establishing the foreign service have strongly defined the need for observing geographical balance, and they described as positive the work to date in preparing NATO’s strategic concept.

When speaking about relations between Russia, a neighbouring country of the European Union, President Ilves spoke of the importance of a new treaty between the European Union and Russia, which would involve all of the important issues and be legally binding.

“For Estonia, it is important to open lines of communication between the European Union and Russia in the real meaning of the word – the border should operate smoothly,” the Head of State emphasised. “This is our shared problem, as is co-operation between Estonia, Russia and Latvia, and not just Estonia and Russia, to make the legal crossing of borders as simple and smooth as possible, while eliminating any option for illegal crossing.”

President Ilves also congratulated the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ronis, on the 20th anniversary of Latvia regaining its independence, which will be celebrated tomorrow in Riga. As President Ilves will be hosting the Finnish Head of State, Mrs. Tarja Halonoen, who is arriving for a state visit the same day, the Speaker of the Riigikogu, Ms Ene Ergma, will represent Estonia in Riga.

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