

Estonia will support Iceland in beginning accession negotiations with the European Union as persistently and decisively as Iceland supported the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States 20 years ago, said the President Ilves. “Estonia will support Iceland in beginning accession negotiations with the European Union as persistently and decisively as Iceland supported the restoration of the independence of the Baltic States 20 years ago,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at his meeting with the Icelandic Head of State, Mr. Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson.

President Ilves, who has begun his state visit to Iceland, confirmed that both Icelanders and Europeans will only gain from Iceland becoming a member of the European Union.

“I do believe that the accession negotiations, which are to start soon, will stand to prove to even the most hesitant Icelanders, who have, despite everything, so far contributed to the UN, NATO, the European Council, OSCE, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Schengen Area while still maintaining the strength and uniqueness of their country,” said the Estonian Head of State.

“Just like the experiences of Iceland in these influential organisations helped Estonia to regain its position within the international community, we are now ready to share the experiences that we have gained in the process of joining the European Union,” he added, recalling the first seminar on the topic, organised by the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which took place in April of this year.

President Ilves acknowledged the attitude of the Icelandic Government – they are not asking for any exceptions to be made in the accession process, but they look forward to the regular and honest process that has been pursued by all the other countries.

“Estonia also emphasises the importance of the Icesave case not interfering with the accession negotiations in any way, as this is an issue to be settled in the due course of negotiations between Iceland, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom,” stressed President Ilves.

President Ilves will visit the Icelandic Parliament today and give a presentation entitled “Two Decades of Independence – Estonia as a Part of the International Community” in Reykjavík.

Tomorrow, he will meet with the Prime Minister of Iceland, Mrs. Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir, and visit the Hellisheið geothermal station, Þingvellir National Park, and the Hella volcanic area to get acquainted with the work of the rescue centre.

Mrs. Evelin Ilves will bring posters to the National Olympics and Sports Association of Iceland of one of the world’s best discus throwers, Mr. Gerd Kanter, and his coach, Icelander Vesteinn Hafsteinsson, to hand out for Icelandic schools. Mrs. Evelin Ilves will also visit the Hallgrímur Pétursson Church, the Public Health Institute of Iceland and examine local design and handicraft at the Design Museum of Iceland.

President Ilves and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will return to Estonia on 12th June.

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