

“A stable, successful and financially robust Palestinian state is in the interests of all in the Middle East,” said Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves today at a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad.

“Achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East is only possible with a two-state solution – with both Israel and Palestine existing side-by-side,” the Estonian head of state said. “Put simply, it would mean security for both. What is most important in achieving this is that the approach to both the creation of the Palestinian state and the resolution of Israel’s security concerns remains constructive.”

President Ilves also emphasised the importance of direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and strong international support for such negotiations.

“A two-state solution does not mean choosing between Israel and Palestine, but between peace and a stand-off that could erupt into war again at any moment,” the Estonian head of state said.

President Ilves advocated a much bigger role for the European Union in order to bring about peace in the Middle East.

“The assistance provided by the European Union should reinforce the capabilities of the Palestinian authorities in such a way that they are able to meet the obligations of an independent state, which is to say building themselves a state that is sustainable,” President Ilves said.

The Estonian head of state praised the steps Palestine has taken in ensuring security on the West Bank, adding: “Estonia considers it very important to contribute to the enhancement of Palestine’s security forces and public service, which in turn will contribute to the building of a state based on the rule of law.”

Appearing at the e-government conference organised by the Estonian e-Academy in Ramallah

today, at which the possibilities of the X-Road data exchange system were presented to the Palestinians, President Ilves confirmed that Estonia is prepared to continue assisting the Palestinian Authority in developing its e-government.

“We will also continue to support the Palestinian Authority and offer our know-how in other areas so that your efforts in building yourselves a state are not only as successful as possible, but also as clear as they can be to your people,” President Ilves said.

“We are not here to teach you: we are here to share our experience with you,” the Estonian head of state remarked. President Abbas responded that that is exactly what the Palestinians need – Estonia’s experience.

President Ilves extended an official invitation to President Abbas to visit Estonia.

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