

“Our co-operation must focus on today’s issues in what is the 20th year since the restoration of the independence of the Baltic states. The most important tasks include linking the Baltic states with Europe via Via Baltica and Rail Baltica and developing an effective electricity market in the Baltic states as part of the common electricity market with the Nordic countries,” said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at a meeting of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian heads of state, which began this afternoon in Riga.

President Ilves encouraged those present to view the joint efforts of the three countries as a component of co-operation between the Nordic and Baltic Sea countries.

“This is our shared time and history, our shared experience,” said the Estonian Head of State. “And the closer our links are to shared interests, the easier it will be for us to overcome our difficulties and become successful.”

According to President Ilves, the Baltic states, as with all of the other Baltic Sea countries, are currently living in the most secure period in their history.

“We have adopted the right decisions and made some serious efforts in achieving these. Today, we all need to use equally creative thinking and strict self-discipline to emerge from the current recession, and one of the pre-requisites for achieving this objective is more efficient economic co-operation in the Baltic Sea region,” said the Estonian Head of State.

“Here, in Riga, I would like to express my greatest acknowledgement to the efforts of the Latvian government and parliament, which has helped the economy of your country to overcome what has been the most trying period in your recent past,” President Ilves added.

When speaking of the economy of the European Union in general, the President assured that Estonia is interested in working on a common internal market, which supports the contemporary and competitive development of the EU.

“And besides, the objective is rather simple: everyone, regardless of their size at their time of joining the European Union, must be accorded fair treatment, which also means the alignment of various supports and subsidies,” the Estonian Head of State said.

The presidents of the Baltic states – Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Mr. Valdis Zatlers, and Ms Dalia Grybauskaite – and the Polish Head of State, Mr. Bronislaw Komorowski, who joined them this evening, discussed trans-Atlantic relations aside from regional co-operation.

“The European Union’s partnership with the United States of America is its most important strategic partnership,” emphasised the Estonian Head of State. “Some decisive steps must be taken concerning the long-term strengthening of the economies of both Europe and North America, such as making further progress in creating a trans-Atlantic market zone.”

When speaking about NATO’s operations in Afghanistan and the role of the UN and the European Union in stabilising the situation there and building up the country, President Ilves mentioned co-operation with the people of Afghanistan as the most important issue, as the Afghan people must, at the end of the day, take over responsibility for the political and security situation themselves.

“We knew from the very beginning that success would not come fast in Afghanistan. Development assistance and civil reconstruction work will contribute to the success, apart from the military contribution, but all of this must be embraced by our patience and commitment to building up an Afghanistan that is safe for its own people and for other countries,” the Estonian Head of State assured.

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