

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with former NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in Kadriorg today. During their meeting they discussed issues related to the future of NATO, including the new strategic concept which is set to be adopted for the alliance and also its operation in Afghanistan.

Speaking of NATO's strategic concept, the Estonian head of state said: "It's important that the draft concept, which is due to be presented to members for discussion shortly, follow, in general terms, the recommendations made by the group of experts led by Madeleine Albright. The key recommendation here maintains balance in the alliance between its primary task – defending the territory of its Member States – and NATO's missions further afield. In this case it will be easier to achieve consensus in terms of the new concept, which in turn will ensure that it's not a race against time ahead of the summit being held in Lisbon this November."

President Ilves and Mr. de Hoop Scheffer also discussed relations between NATO and the European Union.

"It's regrettable that cooperation between the two as organisations is so limited, and that as two unions, many of whose members overlap, they aren't capable of officially acting together on vital matters," President Ilves said. "It significantly weakens the ability of European countries to wield any influence in the international community."

The Estonian head of state and the former NATO Secretary-General confirmed that bold decisions needed to be made in order to solve this problem at the highest political level.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer served as NATO Secretary-General between 2004 and 2009, at the time Estonia joined the alliance. He was awarded the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana, 1st class by President Ilves last year. He was a participant in the annual security policy conference ABCD (The Annual Baltic Conference on Defence) held today in Tallinn under the aegis of the Estonian Ministry of Defence and the International Centre for Defence Studies.

President Ilves meets former NATO Secretary-General

Thursday, 16 September 2010 02:00

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