

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves:

“I thank and acknowledge the Riigikogu, who decided today, by amending the Constitution, that in this democratic, parliamentary country, and NATO member state, the Defence Forces will be subordinate to the executive power and there can be no space for alternative interpretation.

While, in general, the Constitution of 1992 provides that Estonia has a parliamentary organisation of state, in the sphere of national defence, the Constitution imposing the presidential organisation of state, effective as of 1938, has been observed. The conflict in our Constitution, which also includes the opportunity for conflicts to emerge in our national defence, has never been justified until now, 20 years later.

The amendment to the Constitution, approved by two consecutive parliaments, which I initiated four years ago, relies upon parliamentary NATO member state principles in commanding the defence forces. This is a direction we have been moving towards since the adoption of the Peace-Time National Defence Act and the Defence Forces Organisation Act in 2002.

The procedure for appointing the Commander of the Defence Forces has prevailed as the sole probable source of conflicts. Of course, the amendment to the Constitution does not represent the subordination of the Defence Forces to political parties or diminishing the importance of the position of the Commander of the Defence Forces and the requirements thereto. Professionalism and loyalty to the Republic of Estonia and the Constitution must remain the foundations for commanding the Defence Forces going forward.

Today's amendment to the Constitution will not deprive the President of the Republic of the functions of the highest commander of national defence – which I intent to use, in the future, primarily through the National Defence Council – to assure Estonia the best possible protection.”

Office of the President  
Public Relations Department  
Phone +372 631 6229