

“Through Estonia’s experience, we can assure you that the skills to listen and have dialogue are pre-requisites for building up a successful, democratic country,” said the President, Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at a meeting with the leaders of Georgian opposition parties, which took place yesterday evening.

President Ilves reiterated that Estonia supports European reforms in Georgia but not individual politicians or parties. “Estonia is Georgia’s friend and ally and supports your country’s integration with Europe, but only the Georgians themselves can make internal choices of both a political and economic nature.”

If the opposition parties can offer the electorate, the Georgian people, a clearly defined and well-argued action plan in the form of a governance strategy, everyone will gain something, said the Estonian Head of State, adding: “You may or may not win the elections, but most definitely, Georgian society and public in general will only win from this debate.”

““Dialogue” is the very word that should characterise relations between the ruling parties and the opposition in European politics,” emphasised President Ilves. According to him, politics is not made by fighting with sticks in streets in the same way that public order cannot be achieved by using excessive force and imaginary political stability cannot be established with journalists – subordinate to the governing powers and wallets of businessmen – who are dependent on orders coming from the government.

“Everyone loses when there is national conflict – the opposition and demonstrators as well as the law enforcement bodies and the government. But the biggest losers will be the state of Georgia, its people and democracy,” confirmed the Estonian Head of State.

The President met the leader of the New Right Wing political party, Mr. David Gamkrelidze, the leader of a Our Georgia – Free Democrats political party, Mr. Irakli Alasania, Chairman of the Republican Party, Mr. Davit Usupashvili, the leader of National Forum, Mr. Kakha Šartava, and Mr. Levan Vepkhvadze, one of the leaders of Christian democrats.

President Ilves also held a meeting in Tbilisi with Mr. Nika Gilauri, Georgian Prime Minister,

where they discussed economic reforms in Georgia, expressing his hope that the economy of this country and participation in its economy will become more open for everybody, foreign investors included.

The Estonian Head of State also met with twenty representatives of the Georgian third sector to discuss the strengthening of civic society.

“Citizens’ society represents the free will of citizens to make us all better and our country more successful without attempting to take the role of the government or the parliament. Working to achieve this goal is, for every democratic country, a support base as important as, for example, free journalism. The function of the government here is not to interfere but rather to encourage all of this,” President Ilves told.

On Monday and Tuesday morning, the Estonian Head of State had meetings in Batumi with the Georgian President, Mr. Mikhail Saakashviliga ([see the press release](#)).

President Ilves will arrive back in Estonia this morning.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone 631 6229