

“Estonia fully supports the granting of candidate member status to Serbia by the European Union and the launch of accession negotiations with Serbia,” confirmed President Toomas Hendrik Ilves during his meeting yesterday with Serbian head of state Boris Tadić. “We are 100% certain that the EU needs Serbia and that Serbia needs the EU.”

President Ilves said that Serbia was a key without which problems in the Balkans could not be unlocked, and praised the country for its success in implementing the reforms needed to integrate with the EU.

“Estonia is more than willing, as a true friend to Serbia, to share with you our experience in accession negotiations with the EU,” he said. “Of course, alongside the effort being made by the country’s political leaders towards European accession, it is very important that the majority of the population understand and support what the EU is about, and that the country’s officials are fully prepared for accession negotiations.”

Touching upon the subject of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, the Estonian head of state remarked that here too, as in the EU, the key words were: constructive neighbourly relationships; a desire and ability to reduce tension; regional cooperation; and dialogue.

Presidents Ilves and Tadić also spoke about economic relations between Estonia and Serbia, where for example cooperation in the field of the development and use of oil shale processing technology is very important.

President Ilves, who is in New York for the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations, also attended the receptions yesterday held by Lebanese president Michel Sleiman and Finnish president Tarja Halonen.

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