

"We – secure allies in the most literal meaning of the world – have common interests as well as common challenges and we make joint efforts to resolve these challenges. This is also confirmed by Poland's strong support for the continuance of NATO's air policy mission in the Baltic skies," said the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at the meeting of Estonian, Latvian and Polish heads of state that has been taking place over the last two days in Warsaw and has focused on getting ready for the NATO summit in Chicago.

Estonia hopes that in Chicago the alliance will confirm, clearly and powerfully, that the principles of collective defence, deterrence and visibility shall remain the strengths of NATO; the training exercises that are taking part in different regions of the alliance shall represent one part of this programme and several large-scale field trainings are soon to take place in our region.

All of this must be supported by a willingness and readiness to stand against the new threats of the 21st century, assured the Estonian Head of State.

"Cyber defence, and cyber security in a more general sense, is undeniably one of the spheres in which NATO needs to deliver a more co-ordinated focus, by linking the skills of its allies and international co-operation with the European Union," President Ilves said.

When speaking about Afghanistan, where the defence force members of the Baltic states and Poland also take part in a NATO-led operation, the Estonian Head of State stated that only the powers of Afghanistan itself can say how long they will require the presence of foreign assistance to ensure their security and build up their country.

"This country was left alone, more than twenty years ago, and Afghanistan became a hijacked country that spread violence and chaos among its own people and in the world in general," President Ilves recalled. "The Chicago summit will give us all a clear overview of NATO's action plan and contribution to Afghanistan – in cooperation with the government – after 2014, when the majority of foreign forces have left the country."

Presidents Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Bronisław Komorowski and Andris Bērziņš also spoke in Warsaw about NATO's European neighbourhood and supported the openness of the alliance to

those countries that are ready for accession and have met all the required criteria.

"I have no doubt that the democratic world will need a strong NATO in the future. Both the United States of America and Europe need such a NATO as well as robust trans-Atlantic relations. However – and this aspect is of primary importance – regardless of the complicated financial status of some countries, Europe cannot sacrifice long-term security in Europe for some short-term political objectives," emphasised President Ilves. "This means that our national defence expenses are as important as funding for our social or educational systems." Estonia is ready to raise its contribution to the NATO air policy mission; two per cent of GDP is earmarked for defence expenses – for the first time – in our state budget this year; this is the level recommended by NATO to all its allies, yet reached by only a few.

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