

"NATO's visibility, credibility and deterrence make our alliance a strong shield that protects its allies and partners," assured the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at his meeting with General Knud Bartels, Chairman of the Military Committee of NATO.

"Even in the beginning of the 21st century, the task of NATO as a trans-Atlantic organisation is to send out the message in both Europe and further afield that we will not accept any pressure applied on either our allies or partners that share our common values and on attempts to influence the choices they make, whether the tools are in the form of aggressive rhetoric, demonstrative placing of weapons along the borders of the alliance or a real attack," told the Estonian Head of State.

He emphasised, at his meeting with General Bartels, his concern over the continued decrease in defence expenditures among NATO's European allies, saying: "The defence expenditure of allies that is required to maintain NATO's deterrence ability is an issue of the organisation's reliability."

President Ilves considered it important to integrate cyber defence with NATO's structures more than before as also confirmed by the Chicago Summit; NATO Cyber Defence Policy and the related action plan, which was adopted in 2011, need to be implemented to serve this purpose.

The Estonian Head of State acknowledged different NATO staffs in the Baltic Sea region for the organisation of a successful exercise, an important part of which also focused on practicing various Article 5 commitments.

"Apart from enhancing NATO's visibility, this exercise also contributed to developing the abilities of the allied forces and closer co-operation," President Ilves told.

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Background information

The NATO Military Committee is the highest military control body of NATO and includes the commanders of defence forces of all the member states. The Committee is in charge of the development of NATO's military policies and strategies, issues guidelines to NATO's Strategic Commands and advises political control structures of NATO on military issues.

The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee is the highest officer of the alliance.

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