

"An important way to promote the rule of law requires the well-organised involvement of all concerned parties in matters important for public life. A strong response is required for every violation of human rights and such cases must be made public," emphasised President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at the event organised by Estonia, Austria, Japan and Tunisia and the high-level meeting on the rule of law held within the General Assembly week of the United Nations (UN).

"Securing human rights is the main principle for a state based on the rule of law. The United Nations, in fulfilling the task of promoting and defending the global human rights system, will also be required to take additional measures in the future to anticipate and disclose violations of human rights and to respond to such cases. Estonia is looking forward to becoming a member of the UN Human Rights Council and the opportunity to work actively towards achieving these objectives," told President Ilves in the presentation that he gave at the high-level meeting on the rule of law.

President Ilves said that the principle of a state based on the rule of law is a governance method that ensures the independent administration of justice and requires everyone, the state included, to comply with publicly proclaimed, uniformly enforced and independently implemented legal acts.

"The honest administration of justice, regardless of whether we are talking about national or international institutions, is a prerequisite for sustainable development and security. Indemnity prepares the soil for the re-emergence of conflicts and it feeds instability," stated the Estonian Head of State.

According to President Ilves, we have recently reached some important milestones in international criminal law that will increase confidence in the international administration of justice: the former warlord of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Thomas Lubanga, was the first individual to be found guilty at the International Criminal Court; the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was found guilty by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"None of those who were charged by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia remain free and many have been found guilty. This – plus the fact that the most serious international crimes will never expire – serves to show that the concept of leaders not taking responsibility is about to abate," noted President Ilves.

The focus of the event on the same topic, organised by Estonia, Austria and Tunisia, was entitled "Strengthening the rule of law: the fight against corruption and its impact on sustainable economic growth". For Estonia, this was the first time it organised an event within the framework of the UN General Assembly high-level week.

According to the Estonian Head of State, compliance with the principle of a state based on the rule of law does not solely mean bringing criminals to justice – the importance of this principle also includes inclusiveness, the fact that it affects society in general.

"This is an important principle for entrepreneurs, trading companies and foreign investors," President Ilves told.

"Today, more than twenty years have passed since Estonia restored its independence and market economy. Over these years, we have implemented the principles of good governance practice, combined with extensive use of information technology. E-governance, e-health, electronic elections and pre-completed tax returns online are both innovations introduced by Estonia and citizen-friendly public services that both enhance transparency and help to anticipate corruption," told President Ilves.

"Based on our very own experience, we can say that open markets with a predictable legal environment are the prerequisites for the rapid and sustainable stimulation and growth of the economy," President Ilves added.

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