

The National Defence Council, summoned by the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, convened today at the General Staff of the Defence Forces and was provided with a substantial overview of the new, ten-year National Defence Development Plan, the risk assessment scenario that was used as the basis for its development and the main steps to be taken to ensure Estonia's defence by the Minister of Defence, Urmas Reinsalu, and the Commander of the Defence Forces, General Brigadier Riho Terras.

For President Ilves, it is important that the reservist army, based on the conscript service, will remain the foundation of the Defence Forces and that the national defence of Estonia will rely on its primary independent defence capability and NATO's collective defence principle.

The Head of State highlighted as positive the fact that the National Defence Development Plan for 2013-2022 provides for the enhancement of the rapid response abilities of the Defence Forces, increasing staff numbers, the leading role of the Defence League in territorial defence, new weapons and equipment, and the development of reconnaissance and communication abilities.

"All of this is based on genuine threats and the real possibilities that Estonia must take into consideration in order to anticipate threats with its allies and, if necessary, to defend itself. It is important to examine, as accurately as possible, the opportunities contributed by our taxpayers towards national defence; unrealistic dreams have no place in these discussions," told the Head of State. He acknowledged the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces' planning staff for devising an efficient military defence solution for Estonia. According to President Ilves, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Forces have grown wiser by developing a new development plan and are now in a better position to assess the real costs required to create and maintain military capabilities for Estonia and establish objectives that are more realistic than before. The new development plan represents the first step for the contemporary development of a wide-based approach for Estonian national defence, stated the Head of State. He also emphasised the importance of the development of wide-based threat scenarios and general concepts of actions that also describe the activities of other civilian institutions in the event of different threat scenarios.

"According to the wide-based approach to national defence, the same work now needs to be done with respect to other ministries – in terms of which capabilities will be required and how many of these can be created and also maintained. This is a work that still needs to be done," told President Ilves.

The National Defence Council is a body with advisory capacities for the President of the Republic. It includes the Chairman of the Riigikogu, the Prime Minister, chairmen of the national defence and foreign affairs committees of the Riigikogu, the ministers of foreign affairs, defence, internal affairs and justice, and the Commander of the Defence Forces.

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