

"Estonia has supported, and will continue to support a democratic Georgia, as well as your country's aspiration to integrate with the European Union and NATO," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves confirmed today at a meeting with Georgian foreign minister Maia Panjikidze.

"Georgia's readiness to join these organizations must be judged solely on Georgia's own performance and achievements, opinions from outside the European Union and NATO cannot influence this," said President Ilves. "Estonia continues to pursue an open door policy and proceeds from the principle that each state has the sovereign right to decide which organizations it wants to belong to."

The Estonian head of state was pleased that last year's free and fair parliamentary elections and the proper handover of power confirmed Georgia's dedication to democratic values.

"At the same time, what I said five years ago in Tbilisi at a meeting with the then government and the then opposition still holds true: Estonia's, as well as the European Union's and NATO's support belongs to Georgia's pursuit of reforms, not to any specific individuals; relations between the authorities and the opposition must be characterised by cooperation, mutual respect, and the avoidance of steps that would push society beyond the limits of a peaceful political contest," President Ilves repeated his words from January 2008.

Speaking about Abkhazia and South Ossetia, President Ilves expressed Estonia's continued support for Georgia's territorial integrity. According to the Estonian head of state, the best guarantee to reach a solution in this complex matter is a democratic and politically stable Georgia that is successful in its external relations and that continues its strong and impressive economic growth.

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