

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is the patron of the international Lennart Meri conference on foreign policy and security, held in Tallinn for the seventh time this year, met with former Serbian president Boris Tadić, a guest at the conference, and the special representative of the EU in Afghanistan, the former Lithuanian Foreign Minister Vygaudas Ušackas.

At the meeting with former president Tadić, the importance of a stable and successful Balkans to the whole of Europe was discussed. According to President Ilves, Estonia is interested in Serbia joining the European Union because without including that country, there can be no talk of a lasting peace in the Balkans. The Estonian head of state reiterated our continued support for Serbian reform policies and integration into the EU.

The meeting with the special representative of the EU in Afghanistan, Vygaudas Ušackas, included discussions about the ability of the Afghan authorities to ensure security in the country after 2014, when NATO concludes its mission there. President Ilves and Ušackas highlighted the importance of the patience of Afghanistan's allies so far in supporting the country in a way the Afghan government sees fit and concluded that in terms of co-operation, civil projects and the professional training of local security forces become increasingly important.

President Ilves presented Vygaudas Ušackas - the former Lithuanian Foreign Minister and the next head of the EU representation in Russia - with the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana, Second Class. President Ilves recognised with Estonian orders the contribution of several Lithuanians to both regional co-operation as well as advancing Estonian-Lithuanian relations and their professional dedication in connection to his state visit to the Republic of Lithuania, starting on 27 May.

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Yesterday, President Ilves spoke on the opening panel of the Lennart Meri conference, which focused on the relations of the North and the South, as the political, economical, cultural and military shifts of power take place - the issue is also one of the central questions on the conference agenda. Other members of the panel with the Estonian Head of State included economist Anders Åslund, the head of the Libyan women's movement Alaa Murabit, and Asia

expert Jiali Ma.

This afternoon, President Ilves, the former Serbian president Boris Tadić, the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, and the Counsellor of the European External Action Service, Robert Cooper, will discuss the future of Europe. Tomorrow, he will participate in a panel discussion on cyber defence.

The Lennart Meri conference, organised by the International Centre for Defence Studies, is one of the most important international foreign policy and security events held each year. In addition to the guests already mentioned, the conference is also attended by the Prime Minister of Latvia Valdis Dombrovskis, former Prime Minister of Lithuania Audrius Kubilius, the head of the French Centre of Strategic Analysis, François Géré, president of Freedom House David Kramer and many other well-known politicians, researchers and journalists.

You can watch a live stream of the plenary sessions of the conference on the website of the International Centre for Defence Studies imc.icds.ee/live .

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