

"Invasion and de facto occupation by Russia are taking place on the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine. Russia's military activities or threatening with military activities are influencing the security of Europe in general," stated the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who had asked for an extraordinary summoning of the National Defence Council in light of the crisis in Ukraine.

The Estonian leaders were given a detailed overview of the situation in Ukraine as well as the current activities of the Russian military forces, and they discussed the co-ordinated and strong counter-measures by NATO and the European Union that would help Ukraine to maintain its territorial integrity and avoid military escalation of the situation.

"This is most serious crisis that has taken place recently in Europe. Although the Estonian people have currently no need to feel concerned about the security of the Republic of Estonia, this crisis will definitely have an influence on relations in Europe and dealings between Russia and the EU, Russia and NATO and Russia and the large countries of the world," President Ilves told. "Russia's current activities are undermining its international credibility."

The National Defence Council supported the most powerful measures that the European Union and NATO are currently discussing as possible counter-measures to Russia's military activities in Ukraine. Like the United Nations Security Council, Estonia supports sending observers of international organisations to Crimea.

"Stability and international support are needed by the people and new government of Ukraine more than anything else right now in order to emerge from this conflict. Restoring operating central power and security are the first priorities for the new government and the pre-requisites for further political and economic reforms," President Ilves told.

"The session of the National Defence Council showed that the appropriate authorities of Estonia have the required overview of the situation in Ukraine; the events are being monitored around the clock and all activities are well co-ordinated with each other," acknowledged the Head of State.

The National Defence Council is the advisory body of the President of the Republic. The

Speaker of the Riigikogu, Prime Minister, Chairman of the National Defence Committee of the Riigikogu, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Riigikogu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence, Minister of Finance, Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Justice and Commander of the Defence Forces all sit on the Council.

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