

"It is not Crimea that has been lost, but Russia has lost its current relations with democratic countries following its aggression in Ukraine," confirmed the President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who met today in Warsaw with the Vice President of the United States of America, Joe Biden.

"Russia has violated all the written and unwritten rules of international law that form the foundation for relations between countries, throwing its current relations with the Western world back into decades and harming the security situation in Europe in general," stated the Estonian Head of State.

The time has come to review the relations between the Western world and Russia, told President Ilves and Vice President Biden. They both confirmed that Russia's aggression in Ukraine and supporting the fake referendum in Crimea, combined with the presence of its military forces and distribution of Russian passports will result, inevitably, in counter steps to be taken by NATO and the European Union Member States.

"The democratic countries must now prove that we have the decisiveness required to respond to those who replace diplomacy for armoured vehicles and negotiations for military pressure. The European Union and the USA have already reached an agreement about the first sanctions," told President Ilves, in describing the co-ordinated, uniform and effective actions of the European Union and the United States of America in choosing the specific sanctions as important.

"We must put our common values and the defence of these values above narrow-minded and often short-term economic interests," emphasised the Estonian Head of State.

President Ilves and Vice President Biden also spoke about ensuring security in Europe, which forms a part of NATO's collective defence. Collective defence does not only show NATO's will; it also shows the organisation's ability to defend all its allies from any threats, confirmed the Estonian Head of State and Vice President of the USA. The United States of America will resolutely stand behind all the allies of NATO, confirmed the Vice President of the USA, Joe Biden: "Article 5 is inviolable."

"The need to find permanent and sustainable solutions that would considerably enhance the presence of the USA and NATO in general, in the Baltic region, has become evident," told President Ilves.

He used the landing of six F-15 fighters jets of the United States of America in Lithuania on 6 March, as an additional force for the air security mission in the Baltic states, as an example of reinforcing solidarity and improving collective defence. The same applies for the decision of the United Kingdom to additionally allocate some Typhoon fighters from the end of April, to guard the air space of the Baltic states.

The Vice President mentioned the willingness of the US to further increase its military presence in the Baltic states.

President Ilves and Vice President Biden both emphasised that now is not the time to discuss decreasing defence expenditures in the capital cities of the NATO allies; 2% of GDP spent on the defence budget should still remain the goal of all members.

The Estonian Head of State and the Vice President of the USA described the continued and visible support of democratic countries to the reform attempts of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia as important.

"Diversified, well-considered and efficient co-operation with those countries that have chosen to approach Europe will help to mitigate the current security crisis and will add to the atmosphere of security and confidence in Europe in general," told President Ilves.

He also added that international observers much be dispatched to Eastern Ukraine, as soon as possible.

"In general, Ukraine needs the political and economic support of the European Union and NATO to become a democratic, uniform and economically successful country," told President Ilves.

Office of the President
Public Relations Department
Phone +372 631 6229