

Honourable *Rector Magnifice*,
Dear academic family,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends.

In a few moments it is my gratifying duty to present the Rector of Estonian University of Life Sciences with his medal of office. Fulfilling this duty, I am confident that Rector Mait Klaassen will carry on the work of his predecessors. I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the previous Rector, Professor Alar Karis, and the Acting Rector, Professor Hardi Tullus.

Also, we are witnessing a historic moment. For the first time in the history of the Republic of Estonia, the chair of the Rector is assumed by a man who has held the same office in the same university once before, although he has had other occupations in the meantime.

As we are all familiar with the wisdom of ancient Greek philosophers: *panta rhei* – everything flows, or you cannot step twice into the same river – we see the assuming office of Rector Mait Klaassen as a new beginning rather than a comeback. Especially considering that ten years is a long time – and in Estonia today, it seems an eternity.

If you excuse the informality, I would now like to turn to the new Rector as a dear old colleague from my days in the Government of the Republic of Estonia and the Riigikogu:

Dear Mait, from all my heart, I wish you strength and perseverance in your new office. As an alumnus and a patriot of the University of Life Sciences, you are well aware of the present situation and the merits and faults of your *Alma Mater*. The academic family has confidence in your vision of the future.

With a strong, integrated and motivated team of leaders, I am sure that the University of Life Sciences will reach the goal it seeks to attain – to be a serious and modern centre of education and research, with many co-operation partners all over Estonia and abroad.

Highly qualified agriculturalists, foresters, cattle-breeders and promoters of rural life have been valued in Estonia through the ages. Yet some changes are irreversible. Our ancestors tilled the soil with horse and plough, and their sons and grandsons carried on their work in the same manner.

Today, it would be quite unimaginable to manage farming successfully with the tools, know-how and technology that were used 20 years ago. Innovation and new knowledge have become part of our everyday life. Of course, Estonia will learn from the experience of others. On the other hand, also Estonia must propose innovative solutions. And the University of Life Sciences is the innovative environment where the Estonian solutions will be found.

I wish everybody, and especially the new Rector, the strength and wisdom to make good use of all the opportunities of today and tomorrow.