

Dear Chairman of the Riigikogu,
honourable members of the Estonian Parliament,
Prime Minister and members of the Government,
Ambassadors.

I am pleased to perform my honourable duty as the President of the Republic of Estonia and open the first session of the 2008 autumn season of the 11th composition of the Riigikogu.

As I do this, I am also wishing that you will have the wisdom and determination expected of statesmen. But this time, I would also like to emphasise the ability to look into the future and, most of all, responsibility.

I wish you the same foresight and decisiveness displayed by Estonian politicians 20 and 90 years ago, when they took advantage of the possibilities that became available to Estonia in the changed international situation.

My ladies and gentlemen.

We are facing a changed international situation today as well. We are living in a completely different Europe since 8 August 2008.

I do not know what to do with the Europe that until now was based on the understanding of Immanuel Kant of 'eternal peace', that if we are all democratic countries, then there is no place for aggression; that negotiations resolve everything. Just like things have been in the European Union for fifty years.

Instead, we feel like we have returned to Thomas Hobbes' world of a merciless struggle for existence governed by the principle described by Thucydides in the *History of the Peloponnesian War* : *The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.*

We do not yet understand the whole essence, extent and consequences of these changes. We are still getting to know this new environment. We are just starting to find answers to the questions about the meaning of the changed security paradigm for Europe.

The most important thing we have to acknowledge is that the security environment where the Republic of Estonia was restored in 1991 – where we have been building and reforming this state, become members of the European Union and NATO – this security environment exists no more.

We do not need to feel unreasonably unsecure about our future. I assure you that the efforts Estonia has made in 17 years and our membership in the European Union and NATO guarantees sufficient security for the independence of Estonia in the changed security situation as well.

Regardless of this, Estonia has to find effective countermeasures that allow us to spread possible new risks.

Our respected Parliament.

The changes around us keep getting faster, more constant and, most importantly, mainly global. They affect the whole world with a strength never seen before. For example, this is what has happened in economics.

Few of us could imagine the extent of the backlash for the economies of the world and Estonia a few years ago. We did not know the extent to which economic growth had slowed down or its impact on the state budget.

Now we know what it is like. We know that the recent habit of planning the state's politics in the conditions of 10 percent economic growth is no good in the current conditions. Instead, we have to figure out whether our economy will grow by 0 or 2 percent or whether it will even decrease; how and when our economy will start growing at a pace characteristic of developed countries; and, most of all – which sources new growth can be derived from.

It is our responsibility to maintain and develop the state of Estonia, to secure the preservation of our people and culture. Considering the dramatic change in the security situation in Europe, Estonia has to contribute to the international reliability of Estonia, the internal and external security of Estonia.

The state of Estonia cannot be built and its security cannot be guaranteed by the principle that we spend in good times and save in bad ones. Collecting and using the tax money of the state must be reasonable and justified every year. Being economical both on the levels of home and state is a basically correct and necessary principle of financial policy. But each choice must correspond to the needs of Estonia tomorrow and in ten years' time.

Therefore, we have to look further than the promises we gave at election time, the interests of political parties and the coalition agreement. Lift your eyes and look further. Believe me, your electorate expects you to be wise and responsible. No election promises should be kept at the cost of weakening internal security or decreasing the ability of national defence. A state that cannot perform the main task set by its people – to defend its population when necessary – is not a real state.

Honourable members of the Riigikogu.

We have to acknowledge the area that we must deal with or we will leave ourselves hostage to risks and evil intentions. I consider energy security one of the most important areas of security for Estonia. It is a subject that has been widely discussed in Europe, and also in Estonia, for some time now. We have to clearly define the essence of energy security for Estonia.

We have to know the interests of Estonia in the area of energy today and in the future. We have to find a solution to the energy needs of Estonia in a manner that saves the environment

and guarantees the security and independence of our state.

The security of Estonia, especially in the area of energy, will not be born in a vacuum. Complete self-supply and isolation from the rest of the world cannot be a goal in itself. Neither is it possible. We have to find long-term and reliable partners and to get from discussions to decisions.

We have to use our advantages, smallness and flexibility as an advantage and find solutions in new technologies.

The energy security of Estonia expects us to make decisions and requests answers: In what extent and from which reactor will Estonia soon be receiving nuclear power? What investments do we need in the renewable energy sector and what new connections to the energy systems of the Nordic countries are required? How do we increase the energy efficiency of our economy, how do we learn to waste less?

I believe that the answers to the energy security questions of Estonia must be given in this hall. This is why I urge you to discuss this issue as soon as possible as a question of national importance. Failure to answer them means that we will considerably reduce the choices of Estonia in the future.

Secondly, our financial security – introduction of the euro in Estonia is an inseparable part of this. It has not been discussed most recently due to our quickly increasing inflation. However, it does not mean that we could let one of our major goals fall off the political radar of Estonia.

Creating the conditions required for the introduction of the euro mainly means a reasonable economic policy. It means that our budget must remain under strict control in complicated times as well, because it is the only way we can curb the current rise in the cost of living ourselves.

Transition to the euro will reduce several risks according to the security logic. The euro will end all malicious speculations about the death and destruction of the kroon's exchange rate. The positive impact of joining the euro itself could temporarily increase the economy of the joining country by a couple of percentage points of the GDP.

The serious problems on the global money market or the increasing commodity prices are more than just economic indicators. They are very real concerns when we buy food, fill the fuel tanks of our cars with petrol or make the increased repayments of our home loans.

There is not much we can do to influence oil prices and this is something we have to understand. But we can influence the values and the readiness with which we try to conquer our economic difficulties. The wisdom of making the right decisions means increasing our financial security today.

Thirdly, our security is guaranteed by the common future of all the different nationalities living in Estonia. We need rational discussions, not emotions or force. Communication and involvement are the only things that help us overcome the barriers standing between ethnic and cultural identities in Estonia.

Fortunately, we have understood in a little more than a year that a thousand-odd rioters of different nationalities and citizenships do not give anyone the right to assess the loyalty of a nationality or culture to the Republic of Estonia. Everyone who treasures Estonia as their home today has the right to partake in our common opportunities, our joys and concerns, our common future as a democratic state based on the rule of law in Europe.

I believe that the Riigikogu understand their central role in resolving these issues. Stop treating integration as an orphan, contribute to discussions and together we will find the ways to support our civil society and a dialogue. Once we start talking to each other without interference and with open minds about an Estonia that belongs to all people who live here, we will some day be able to discuss our different pasts.

Honourable Riigikogu,

Please allow me to briefly talk about the debate from last spring about the role and the future of the Riigikogu. Many progressive ideas were offered in the course of the debate and there will be more in autumn.

Unfortunately, the subject of senior state officers has been the most predominant in public discussions. Your work group has offered freezing the salaries that are tied to the Estonian average on the level of 2008 as a solution.

One thing is clear: The Riigikogu can change the salaries of the President of the Republic, members of the Government, judges, the Auditor General and the Chancellor of Justice that are tied to the average salary. The Riigikogu is the only one that can change the basis for calculating these salaries and other remuneration. I welcome this initiative and hope that the new laws will be quickly and smoothly processed.

However, I still have to quote section 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, which says: The remuneration of members of the Riigikogu and restrictions on the receipt of other employment income shall be provided by law, which may be amended for the next membership of the Riigikogu. If the parliament starts making decisions that do not comply with the Constitution under populist pressure, hoping that the president would have to reject them anyway, then it means shifting the responsibility to someone else.

Honourable Riigikogu – now is not the time to shift responsibility. Now is the time to be responsible.

Honourable Riigikogu, good people of Estonia.

The independence of Estonia endures on the basis of democracy, a state based on the rule of law and civil society. These are our true pillars of freedom that we have to make higher and stronger every day.

I was not elected president and you were not elected members of the Riigikogu provided that we stick to the promises we gave before the elections at any cost, even when the circumstances have changed. To the contrary. The people have trusted us to make decisions on behalf of the state and the people in situations that nobody could imagine before the elections. This is what we need a parliament for. We do not have the right to confuse election promises, ruling and responsibility.

Almost one hundred thousand people gathered at the Tallinn Song Festival Ground in the night of 19 August to take part in a big concert. Tens of thousands of our people did not go and clean our forests and roadside ditches at the start of May because they had nothing better to do on a beautiful spring day.

The people, your electorate, are not interested in the small victories and losses that are important for politicians, which are celebrated or cursed in your blogs and statements. Such purposeful infliction of pain that under the false name of 'political discussion' is also working its way into the serious media clouds the vision and diverts our thoughts from the important issues to pointless squabbling.

People who elect parties and read the papers draw their own conclusions from such squabbles, vicious attacks and taunts. And they do not decide to elect another party or look for a better newspaper. No, they show their attitude by contemplating whether they will bother to elect at all. And whether they will even buy any papers in the future.

The things people in Estonia do are driven by their concern about the state we created together. They care about their fellow citizens and the environment they live in. They love Estonia and believe in a better future. And sometimes it seems to them that the people who sit here in this hall do not share their concerns and their care, their faith and love. Show them at your future sessions that this is not the case.

I wish everyone strength in justifying the trust that has been placed in us.

Thank you for your attention.