

Dear people,

As we are standing at the threshold of the New Year together, I am asking you to take a quick look at the path we have walked separately and together. I am inviting you to take a look at this path, where it leads and where we might slip.

The words of poet Artur Allikssaar might offer us some support:

there are no times lived without a purpose/
we may not understand the purpose just yet.

The facts of the year that's coming to its end are pleasantly clear – more people were born and fewer people died in Estonia than in many earlier years. We were more careful on the roads; we were wiser in how we lived our lives. This means that 2008 was a good year for our people. We have to wish the same from the New Year.

We felt each other's supporting shoulders on many occasions: when we worked together, when we sang together, when we celebrated the victories of our sportsmen and women.

We cannot measure the joy of being together and the will to meet each other in money or percentages of growth. You either have it or you don't. We do. Estonia is therefore a happy and healthy society. This is our real power and we are the only ones who can give it up or give it away.

But we will not give it up and we will not give it away. Our will to be together is proven by the community and voluntary activities that have become parts of our everyday lives.

We celebrated the 90th birthday of our state together and expressed our gratitude to those who established and looked after our state. They had no doubts 90 years ago and we have no doubts today that Estonia has the strength and wisdom it needs to cope with its everyday problems, including those that may emerge in the future.

Because we admit to ourselves that we are stepping into the New Year with hesitation rather than confidence. The times that lie ahead make many of us anxious and insecure.

Our economic indicators show that the next year may be one of the most complicated for Estonia in this century. We are still on the way to the bottom of the valley of economic crisis. How deep the valley is and how far the way up is – I do not know. Nobody knows.

The concerns of the Estonia of our dreams – the successful and hard-working Estonia – have thrown many of us into despair and self-pity.

We cannot create a better future for ourselves if we give up and waste our time on looking for culprits inside and outside Estonia. 2009 is also the year of innovation: the year of new ideas, creative thinking and doing things differently. We are the only ones who can decide how to go further.

We all know that a new rise will come in Estonia if we manage to keep our strength of mind and our faith in these two main things: our state and our own skills. The New Year will be another test for Estonia. It will show us what we are worth; how clever and foresighted we are; whether our spirit will stand the pressure of hard times.

Yes, we can stand the pressure. We do not want anyone to have any doubts about this.

My dear compatriots,

It has been a good tradition to wish for something at the start of the New Year. We know that these wishes come true if we believe in them and work for their achievement. Our tomorrow is for us to create. We will not see it in a crystal ball; it will not fall into our laps.

As the head of state and a citizen, I have three wishes for each of us this New Year's Eve.

First of all, let us not allow economic difficulties to shake our common belief in the foundations of the state of Estonia – democracy, the primacy of laws and freedom. Once we start doubting these beliefs, our independence will come under threat.

No difficulty justified looking for alternative paths to honest government, honest business and citizen's honesty. What we should do is rid ourselves from excessive vanity, greed, lust for power, envy and other sins.

As free people, we have to stand up against the flood of aggressive vulgarity and pseudo-choices. Instead of trying to trod each other down and harbouring poisonous thoughts, we need understanding, thinking and helping each other more than anything else in the new year.

Secondly, I wish along with all of you that in the next year, our government would feel its responsibility to act as a team that is able to make decisions and, if necessary, sacrifice its partisan interests in the name of the future of Estonia. Only by justifying difficult decisions, trusting the people and talking honestly can the government hope that people will appreciate its choices.

Today is not the time for bringing each other down or sticking tightly to promises made in the past. We all have to adjust our plans today and postpone our dreams and promises until the times have changed. The government and the state have to do the same. The reserves collected in better times allow Estonia to survive the economic turmoil better than those who simply spent.

And thirdly: look around you – and see your family, your friends, your colleagues; everyone who is with you at the moment. And with me, tell each other, one another: we will do it, we will manage. Just as we have always managed.

I hope we will all be in good health, have lots of love for the people in our lives and that all our

Greetings of the President of the Republic on the Eve of 2009

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biggest wishes will come true. This will turn these difficult times into nothing more than a chapter in the history book of Estonia.

Happy New Year, dear Estonia!