

Dear conferees, and your loved ones!

A state decoration denotes Estonia's highest recognition to her citizens and our foreign friends. It is the most eloquent expression of our gratitude to those who have done more for our country than required by their profession.

It is a token of gratitude for your commitment, self-realisation and courage. You have made Estonia solid, given Estonia substance. You have been true to human values, realised that we need to have more fellow feeling, give more consideration to each others' joys and sorrows.

I feel truly privileged to stand before you today, my fellow countrymen and dear friends from abroad.

You do not have much in common when background and experience are concerned. Yet you share a common consideration for those around you and the desire to make the world better.

Consideration and commitment are especially important today, when we can see so much uncertainty and confusion around us. We must not surrender to our troubles, but face them with clear eyes and a peaceful mind. For this, we need a strong mind and a firm spirit. If we cast aside ethical values and try to get by with guile and greed, we are bound to lose our way, to lose our freedom and the paths open to free people. It is by spiritual strength that freedom is best protected. And you have that strength, as your lives amply prove.

Your lives will be entwined into the history of Estonia and Estonia's friends. They will be entwined into the history of our country with all its joys and sorrows; and your actions, your choices, your work will make beautiful chapters in that history. Your determination and steadfast actions set an example to all of us; you have contributed to a better Estonia.

I thank you, for owing to you we have a wiser, greater, better and more considerate Estonia. Congratulations upon your distinguished decorations, congratulations also on the 91st anniversary of the Republic of Estonia.

You merit the gratitude and esteem of the people of Estonia.

Thank you!