

Dear people of Estonia.

We can sense the days growing longer, step-by-step, as we gaze into the sky now darkened by night. This darkness is about to dissipate.

We are about to leave behind a complicated year, brimming with confusion and even chagrin. So many things have happened, and so very fast, which have changed trends both in Estonia and throughout the world.

However, this has also been a year of recognition and learning. We saw that personal success cannot be measured by a loan balance. We experienced that a place in the economic growth ranking does not represent the success of a country. We realised that the size of gross domestic product may convey a rather deceptive picture under changing conditions.

The development of a society is neither a sports nor a song contest. The satisfaction of people and their faith in the future – these are the benchmarks of our success. Satisfaction may be expressed in a variety of ways: inner peace and confidence; a wish to link the future or our children and ourselves with Estonia. This satisfaction can also become apparent in the credibility and reliability of our country. In the general understanding that Estonia is an extremely pleasant and attractive place to live.

We should all strive for this target, this benchmark. This will help us to keep our heads cool when the economy begins rising again – possibly even in this very year that is about to begin.

Dear fellow citizens.

It is not the depth of the crisis but rather our behaviour during the crisis that will show us who we truly are. Any shortcuts to happiness often result in dead ends. In most cases, we find ourselves on a twisting and turning path if there is no secure ground under our feet. However, an

individual or a family can seldom find a direct road to happiness; the government and the state are no better off. Quite often, we are dissatisfied and angry with our politicians – the decision-makers. Today, I would like to give them some praise.

Once the difficulties arrived, it would have been easy – and rather enticing – to say that the rules of the games were all wrong. That everything should be blamed on democratic policy, which has served us loyally now for almost twenty years. None of our political parties has suggested abandoning the liberal market economy or restricting civil rights to overcome the economic difficulties.

Estonia did make such a mistake during the 1930s when it reached the peak of an economic crisis. We are wiser than that today.

We have also realised that as we are not alone or the only ones in trouble, we will not be able to snap out of it on our own – only with others, with each other's support.

The ultimate retaining of our constitutional order and solving problems through negotiation is the only reasonable and sensible way to overcome the difficulties.

Dear friends.

We – as a country and as a nation – must not think of ourselves as failures, as we look back on the year that is about to come to an end. But we have to recognise and admit that we have suffered some losses. One hundred thousand unemployed people means a tough struggle for Estonia. These people will definitely need help in focused attention from the state and local authorities.

Many of these jobs will never be realised again in the way they were. Every good thing we have lost will return, little by little, in a new form. Estonian entrepreneurs have not been defeated by difficulties. They are ready for innovations, a new beginning.

In these last minutes of the year, I would like to thank you all – my dear countrymen – from the very depth of my heart, for remaining swift and for maintaining your faith in tomorrow – regardless of the setbacks and everything we have had to give up. For encouraging and helping those in need.

Values manifested will come and go. We should not see them as anything else. The skills for cultivating integrity of heart and determination are much more important. And the ways for appreciating all this in fellow people.

One can always develop integrity, regardless of age. This can be expressed in any job and position. Here, in this small country, we are all important and necessary for each other. Let us never forget that.

Integrity begins with respect for ourselves, our home, our village, our people. Therefore, dear friends – let us wish each other a Happy New Year, sincerely and with warmth. These are not merely words, if we really believe and feel what we say.

Let us look at our family members, our next of kin, our friends. Let us agree, right now, on the first tasks we will undertake and complete in the New Year. Let us look at the light shed by the candlelight and the shine in the eyes of those we care for. And we will see the breaking of the dawn in the black skies above.

A Happy New Year, dear Estonia!