

Estonian Review

E E S T I R I N G V A A D E

VOLUME 19 NO 24 JUL 8 - 14, 2009

FAREWELL VISIT OF NATO SECRETARY GENERAL



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves presenting NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer with the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana 1st Class, 9 July.

Estonian Head of State Presented Outgoing NATO Secretary General with State Decoration

9 July - **Today in Kadriorg President Toomas Hendrik Ilves met with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, who arrived in Estonia on a farewell visit.** The president presented him with the Order of the Cross of Terra Mariana 1st Class in recognition of his services to the alliance and its member states.

"You have done great and productive work as the NATO Secretary General and you have been a good friend and ally to Estonia in the post-accession years," President Ilves said. "You have also fixed the principle that there are no large or small, old or new members in NATO, but rather all NATO members are equal."

At today's meeting, the Estonian head of state and NATO Secretary General recognised the importance of the alliance's members contributing to foreign missions both militarily and with civil projects, especially in Afghanistan. At the same time, the defence of NATO's own territory continues to be very important, and the readiness to do so must be visible, credible and, as a result, formidable.

"While stressing the importance of foreign operations, we cannot make concessions regarding the security of our own territory and vice versa - the challenges of the 21st century do not allow us to focus only on local problems," President Ilves said.

The preparation of the alliance's new strategic concept was also discussed at the meeting between the Estonian head of state and NATO Secretary General.

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Thank NATO Secretary General for Exemplary Work

9 July - **Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and Minister of Foreign Affairs Urmas Paet met with NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer.** Ansip and Paet thanked Scheffer for his success as NATO Secretary General.

"Thanks to your work, the world is a safer place," Ansip said. According to him, membership in NATO is very important for Estonians, being supported by more than 80% of the people. Ansip regarded the safeguarding of Estonian airspace by NATO as especially important; over the past few years, various significant trainings have also been organised to this end and the visibility of NATO can be felt.

According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, significant steps have been taken in the development of cyber defence under the leadership of Scheffer. "Estonia appreciates the strong support also given during difficult moments, for example during the cyber attacks," Paet said. Paet stressed that over the past few years the visibility of this topic at the international level has increased, and in several international organisations the treatment of the topic has become specific. As of today, the NATO Cyber Defence Centre is operating successfully, with the aim of providing analysis and expert opinions to NATO and its member states.

At the meeting, Scheffer declared that the expansion of NATO has been successful and that the doors of the Alliance must remain open for all candidates who meet the requirements. Also, work towards shaping the relations between NATO and Russia must be continued.

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NATO Secretary General

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At the meeting, the stabilisation and reconstruction of Afghanistan were also discussed. According to Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, Estonia, as a main contributor to the ISAF mission, plays a great role. In the prime minister's words, the presence of Estonia in Afghanistan is our moral obligation. "Our country has been helped during difficult moments, now it is our turn," Ansip said.

FOREIGN NEWS

Foreign Minister of Botswana Announced Implementation of Visa-Free Travel for Estonian Citizens



Prime Minister Andrus Ansip with Foreign Minister of Botswana Phandu Tombola Chaha Skeleman, 10 July.

11 July - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and Prime Minister Andrus Ansip had meetings with Foreign Minister of the Republic of Botswana Phandu Tombola Chaha Skeleman, who was in Estonia on a visit. In his meeting with Urmas Paet, Chaha Skeleman informed the Estonian foreign minister that Botswana has implemented visa-free travel for Estonian citizens travelling to Botswana.

While discussing bilateral relations between Estonia and Botswana, relations in international organisations, developments in the region, and co-operation between the European Union and African nations, Foreign Minister Paet emphasised that after joining the European Union Estonia has done increasingly more diplomatic work directed towards Africa. "The development of Botswana is one of Africa's success stories, and Botswana has one of the most dynamic economies in Africa. This is why Estonia is interested in exchanging information and finding opportunities to intensify bilateral relations," said Paet.

Paet stated that Estonia is looking forward to visa-free access to Botswana for Estonian citizens. "This will increase the interest of tourists and create better conditions for entrepreneurs," he noted.

Chaha Skeleman also met with Prime Minister Andrus Ansip. Their discussion focus was mainly on the field of IT and on opportunities for developing tourism-related co-operation. At the meeting, it was also noted that regardless of the differences between the two countries and nations, there are

also important joining aspects, such as the colours of the national flag.

"Although our nations are different, we are emotionally connected by the colours of our flags," said Prime Minister Ansip.

The prime minister introduced the e-government to the guests and described other popular e-services in Estonia, such as e-Tax Board, e-School, online banking and the use of the ID-card.

President Ilves Met with President of Italy



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano in Rome, 14 July.

© Chancellery of the Italian President

14 July - "The successful functioning of the European Union Neighbourhood Policy and Mediterranean Union help to increase stability in the southern neighbourhood of the European Union and sets a good example for the development of the Eastern Partnership," President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said today in Rome at his meeting with Italian President Giorgio Napolitano.

The Estonian head of state, who is on the second day of his official visit to Italy, said that the European Union Eastern and Southern Partnerships must be in balance because both are equally important.

President Ilves thanked Italy for its participation in the work of the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn. "It is good that you have joined Estonia and our other allies to organise cyber defence and that you understand the importance of cyber security as a problem that transcends national borders," Ilves said.

According to President Ilves, Estonia places great importance on increasing the effective use of information technology in the field of internal European Union security. For this reason Estonia supports the creation of an IT Agency for EU Justice and Home Affairs and hopes that the Council will reach a consensus regarding its creation. "Since information technology is one of Estonia's trademarks, our government has already made the decision to apply to be the host country for the IT agency, if its creation is approved by the member states," the Estonian head of state said.

The heads of state also discussed the future of the European Union and expressed their hope that the further ratification of the Lisbon Treaty will progress without problems.

President Ilves also met today with Gianfranco Fini, the President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and Franco Frattini, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. At the meetings, the European Union's energy security was discussed at length with great emphasis being placed on the need to guarantee a reliable energy supply for Europe and independence from individual energy suppliers.

Russian Visa Application Process Simplified for Border Residents

8 July - **As a result of co-operation between the Estonian and Russian foreign ministries, the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation notified the Estonian Foreign Ministry today that it will begin issuing visas to the Russian Federation by a simplified process to residents of border areas whose travel is related to science, cultural or art events, including university and other exchange programmes.** To this end Russia will issue free multiple-entry visas to residents of border areas visiting Russia.

Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet confirmed that Estonia is interested in continuing to cultivate good relations in the cultural and education fields, including developing cultural ties between Estonia and Russia's border areas. "Facilitating border crossing for border residents is an essential step for active cultural co-operation. This is also supported by the cultural co-operation agreement between Estonia and Russia signed at the beginning of this year," said Paet. For an example of good cultural co-operation, Paet mentioned the Estonian cultural days that took place this summer for the first time ever in St. Petersburg.

In addition to participants in science, cultural and art events, those border residents planning to visit the burial sites of loved ones can also apply for a visa to the Russian Federation using the simplified process. In such cases, the border resident applicant is issued a free single-entry Russian visa.

Scientist Jaan Einasto Receives Marcel Grossman Award



Jaan Einasto with his Marcel Grossman Award, 14 July.

14 July - **The distinguished Marcel Grossman Award was presented to Estonian cosmologist Jaan Einasto in the UNESCO headquarters in Paris for his pioneering contributions in the discovery of dark matter and the cosmic web and for fostering research in the historic Tartu Observatory.** UNESCO has named 2009 the year of astronomy. The Marcel Grossman Awards Ceremony

is one of the most festive events of the astronomy year, and over 500 delegates of the 12th Marcel Grossman Meeting participated.

During the formal ceremony, Einasto thanked all those present for the honour presented to him and added that although the award is personal the astrophysicist still sees it as an award for the entire Tõravere crew.

The award has been given out by the International Centre for Relativistic Astrophysics (ICRA) and the International Network of Science Institutions (ICRANet) since 1985 to recognise outstanding achievements in theoretical physics and cosmology.

Tallinn University Finds Co-operation Partner in Moscow

14 July (BNS) - **As a result of a visit to Moscow by leaders of Estonia's Tallinn University in May, Rector of Tallinn University Rein Raud and Yefim Pivovarov, Rector of Russian State Humanitarian University, signed a framework co-operation agreement between the two institutions.**

The aim of the document is to develop co-operation in the education sphere in areas of mutual interest. The signing of the contract was also triggered by the need to strengthen and promote co-operation between Estonian and Russian scholars and development work in the sphere of research papers and curricula. The co-operation agreement also provides the opportunity to speed up the bilateral exchange of information, professors, researchers, administrative and technical personnel and students.

Professor Rein Raud said the Russian State Humanitarian University was a university of humanitarian bias promoting free thought and was traditionally the place where academics in disgrace found refuge during the Soviet period and as a result, they were always open for discussion. "It is a university that is similar in its world view to Tallinn University and we are glad that the process of negotiations ended with the signing of an agreement," Raud added.

Further co-operation between the contractual partners will be specified in co-operation programs to be established for a concrete period after the definition of conditions, topics and participants of the co-operation. Mutual meetings in Tallinn and Moscow are being planned for the next academic year.

For the time being the institutions signed the agreement for five years, but after expiry of that date it is possible to extend it.

DEFENCE NEWS

Aaviksoo: The Words of Estonians Match Their Deeds in Afghanistan

8 July - **Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo said today, at the dispatching of the ESTCOY-E Infantry Company, that sending an additional company to safeguard elections in Afghanistan is a sign of how the words of Estonians match their deeds in Afghanistan.**

"We are proud of you for having accepted this challenge," said the minister of defence. The minister of defence expressed his gratification for the good preparation of ESTCOY-E and for the

best available training and equipment given to the unit. "It is the least we can do for you. Know that in our thoughts, we will be with you the whole time you are far from home," stated Aaviksoo.

Karen B. Decker, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the US Embassy, was also present at the dispatching of ESTCOY-E and expressed her gratitude to Estonians for accepting the challenge of sending an additional company and assured that Estonia and the USA are standing side by side, so that nations could be free to choose their futures.

ESTCOY-E is an infantry company of 134 members that Estonia is sending to Afghanistan to safeguard the elections held there in August. ESTCOY-E will be following orders in Helmand Province along with the US marines.

NATO Carries Out Airspace Security Exercise Over Estonia

13 July (BNS) - **A NATO air space security operation with the participation of Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Czech and US airmen will take place in the Baltic countries' air space on Tuesday, 14 July.**

The aim of the two-day exercise is to train co-operation between the air forces of NATO member countries and to polish air security and procedures of air space defence operations with increased linking of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania through NATO's NATINADS air space system.

The exercise will include elements of electronic warfare, making it possible for airborne and ground units to exercise anti-aircraft defence in as realistic a situation as possible. The exercise is part of the electronic warfare capabilities integration programme.

Taking part in the exercise are Czech Gripen fighters and a US transport aircraft C-130 Hercules. The transport aircraft will perform an aid delivery exercise above Nurmsi Airfield and will then land on Tallinn Airfield.

The airborne activity of the exercise will be co-ordinated and the aircraft sighted by the Estonian Air Forces command post at Ämari and the Baltic countries' joint command centre at Karmelava, Lithuania.

The exercise will be a sequel to the previous exercise on 21 October last year and air space security exercises carried out in the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian air space on this 7 April. The air security exercise will be controlled by the NATO airborne component headquarters in Ramstein.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Estonia Ahead of Other Baltic Countries in Global Enabling Trade Index

8 July (BNS) - **Estonia ranks 22nd, Lithuania 40th and Latvia 44th in the Global Enabling Trade Index drawn up by the World Economic Forum.**

In the case of Estonia, the Forum underlined its strong IT and telecommunications infrastructure and the simplicity and effectiveness of border processes. Among other things, Estonia had a higher ranking in the index than Japan, which placed 23rd.

Singapore ranked first in the index, with Hong Kong in second and Switzerland in third place.

Tallinna Kaubamaja Sees Five Percent Sales Growth in H1

13 July (BNS) - **Unaudited consolidated sales of the listed Estonian retailer Tallinna Kaubamaja in the first half of the year totalled 3.2 billion kroons (EUR 204.5 mln), up by 5.1% against the same period of 2008.**

The growth in the conditions of economic crisis was mainly due to the expanded chain of Selver grocery stores, whose sales exceeded the year-earlier turnover by a fifth, the company said.

Tallinna Kaubamaja CEO Raul Puusepp observed that consumers have in the present situation understandably started to behave more rationally, looking for better prices and more advantageous offers.

Port of Tallinn's Passenger Numbers Up 15 Percent Month-on-Month

14 July (BNS) - **Ports of Estonia's Tallinna Sadam (Port of Tallinn) served 766 845 passengers in June, which marks a growth of 15% compared with May.**

Compared with June 2008, the number of passengers decreased by 6 493, it appears from the figures released by the state-owned port company.

Some 402 355 passengers, or 52%, arrived or departed on ships of the listed Tallink group. Tallink's share of the passenger traffic declined by six percentage points in comparison with May.

Viking Line had a market share of 21% and Eckerö Line 14%.

Cruise ships carried 99 638 passengers in June, an increase of 22% against the same month last year. The market share of cruise ships at the port of Tallinn was 13%.

ESTONIAN REVIEW (ISSN 1023-1951)

Is issued by the
Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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Estonian Review is compiled in co-operation with
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