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64th UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN NEW YORK



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves addressing the 64th UN General Assembly, 25 September.

UN Photo/Marco Castro

President Ilves Discusses Important Global Concerns at General Assembly

25 September - **President Toomas Hendrik Ilves delivered a speech at the 64th Session of United Nations General Assembly today, focusing on Estonia's view in world politics.**

In his speech, the head of state drew attention to the fact that even a year later the global economic crisis influences all of us on both the domestic and international level. "Today, a year after the collapse of the financial markets, cyclical indicators point to economic stabilisation. The crisis is not over, however, and the need to restore confidence and repair the financial system remains. Moreover, each of us should make an effort to refrain from raising new barriers to avoid laying the foundations for new global imbalances in the longer run," said President Ilves.

When speaking about the economic crisis, the head of state also said that we should not forget other important global concerns: climate change, utilising green and renewable energy, international security, including cyber security, ensuring stability in Afghanistan, providing equitable humanitarian aid, and gender equality.

President Ilves also recalled the last year's conflict between Russia and Georgia. "I would like to reiterate our firm support for the security and stability of Georgia, based on full respect for the principles of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity." According to the Estonian head of state, all nations should uphold the core principles of the UN Charter, making it possible for this organisation to fulfil its unique role in safeguarding international security.

"Compliance with the basic principles enshrined in the UN Charter, including the obligation of all Members to refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, needs to remain the fundamental basis of the United Nations agenda," stressed President Ilves.

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Paet: Creation of EU-USA Energy Council Would Increase Security

23 September - **The European Union foreign ministers met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton within the framework of the 64th UN summit and emphasised that ensuring European security is an important matter of EU-NATO co-operation.** "Co-operation between the European Union and the United States is a priority," emphasised Foreign Minister Urmas Paet. "In order to deal with today's security challenges, we hope NATO-EU co-operation and co-ordination will increase on our territory, in foreign missions, and in international organisations, including the UN and OSCE," he added.

Paet stated that Estonia strongly supports the USA's proposal to create an EU-USA energy council. "Energy supply issues are clearly also security issues. Establishing new energy connections with different European countries as well as creating new supply channels into Europe will increase Europe's security, and it's essential that the United States contributes to this as well," emphasised Paet.

"The meaningful development of EU Eastern Partnership is also in the interests of the EU and the USA," Paet stressed. "For the target countries, Eastern Partnership is an effective opportunity and means for reforms through which they can grow closer to the EU and the USA," he added.

The foreign ministers also discussed activities in Afghanistan. "Our reasons for being involved in Afghanistan and contributing to Afghanistan's reconstruction have not gone anywhere. We must continue to address the sources of narcotics and terrorism," stressed the Estonian foreign minister. "A pre-requisite for achieving results in Afghanistan is the co-ordination of the EU and USA's activities. We should especially work together to build up rule of law in Afghanistan," added Paet.

Ilves

(continued from page 1)

The President especially drew attention to cyber attacks, which are a wider international issue and can be fought through the cross-border co-operative efforts of governmental institutions and the private sector. President Ilves said that one important cornerstone for cyber security was relevant legislation which would help create a cyber culture. When speaking about the situation in Afghanistan, the Head of State mentioned the recently held elections there, acknowledging that only the Afghans themselves can change their situation and the international community can and should support Afghanistan. Estonia is a country that has continually contributed to the development of Afghanistan, supporting it with military and civilian missions, added President Ilves.

"The future of Afghanistan lies in the hands of the Afghan people; we, the international community, can only help," said President Ilves.

The president called upon states to change humanitarian aid systems to become more flexible and needs-based. He also expressed a concern that in conflict situations aid might not always reach the victims.

Within the framework of the General Assembly, President Ilves will meet with the heads of state of Pakistan, Turkmenistan and New Zealand to discuss bilateral relations as well as security and economic issues. President Ilves will also participate in a representative international climatic conference in New York and visit the panel discussion of one of the world's most influential economic newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal*.

The Estonian head of state and Mrs. Evelin Ilves will also attend the reception held by President of the United States Barack Obama and Mrs. Michelle Obama for the heads of states and their spouses who participate in the United Nations General Assembly.



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Evelin Ilves with President of the United States Barack Obama and Michelle Obama, 23 September.

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EU Foreign Ministers Met with Russian Foreign Minister

26 September - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and his colleagues in the European Union met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov within the framework of the UN General Assembly to discuss international and EU-Russia co-operation topics.

One subject of discussion was negotiations for a new EU-Russia framework agreement, which all parties agreed were progressing well.

During their meeting, the EU and Russian foreign ministers also discussed the situation in the Southern Caucasus. Foreign Minister Paet said that the parties still have differing opinions on the matter of Georgia's territorial integrity. "The European Union recognises the territorial integrity of Georgia and does not support the recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia," Paet added.

Paet Participates in High-Level UN Climate Summit

22 September - At the high-level UN climate summit meeting that took place on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet emphasised that the world community does not have much time to finish preparations for the climate agreement to be concluded in December in Copenhagen. The goal of the agreement is that the average temperature on earth will not rise by more than 2°C by 2020 and that consequently the level of the ocean will not rise more than 0.7-1.4 meters.

Paet noted that this week's meetings in the UN are some of the final preparatory meetings before the renewal of the Kyoto protocol in Copenhagen. "The Copenhagen climate agreement must guarantee the financing of our fight against climate change, as well as the system's simplicity and transparency so that we can alleviate climate change in a practical way," said Paet. "Reaching a post-Kyoto climate agreement in Copenhagen is essential; the greatest challenge in reaching an agreement is determining the level of responsibility to be given to each country by the agreement," he added.

European Union member states have pledged to reduce emissions by up to 30% compared to 1990 levels by the year 2020, assuming that other industrial nations will take on comparable obligations and developing countries with emerging economies will also make adequate contributions. "All nations, except for the least developed ones, must accept ambitious and binding commitments. Efforts made by developing nations in the climate sector and the financial support given to those nations must be connected," Paet added.

Paet also mentioned Estonia's contributions to battling the consequences of natural disasters and emphasised that humanitarian aid alone is not enough for combating natural disasters—an agreement must be reached that helps to prevent these disasters, for example by realistically limiting greenhouse gas emissions. "The need for real results is being emphasised by the leaders of many small island nations, who have gathered at this UN climate conference and whose nations and people suffer first as a result of climate changes," he added.

The world leaders will continue to weigh possibilities for achieving an agreement in working groups during the 64th UN summit meeting, which is focusing on the battle against climate change. The Estonian foreign minister is participating in the UN climate change roundtable on the first day of the summit along with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, European Commission Chairman Jose Manuel Barroso, and the heads of government of Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, the Federated States of Micronesia, Mongolia, Chile, the Comoros, Denmark, Ecuador, Ethiopia, the Marshall Islands, Nigeria, Peru, Syria, and Zimbabwe. "The active representation of these nations at the climate change summit is promising, but regardless, the situation prior to the Copenhagen climate conference is tense," Paet noted.

In speeches given at the UN climate meeting, Chinese President Ju Hintao confirmed that China would increase its usage of non-fossil fuels by 15% compared to 2005 levels by the year 2020, and it would also increase its forests by 40 million hectares. Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, in his speech, promised to reduce Japan's emissions by 25% by the year 2020.

Baltic Countries Anticipate Further NATO Enlargement

26 September - **When he met in New York with Undersecretary of State of the United States of America William Burns, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stressed that the further enlargement of NATO and co-operation with countries striving to become NATO members continues to be very important.** "We would like for the circle of countries that share values with NATO member states to grow and for the Western Balkan countries, Georgia and Ukraine to have a clear goal of joining NATO," Paet emphasised.

The foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, who met with Undersecretary of State William Burns in New York, also addressed matters related to security in the region—energy security and the preparation of a new NATO strategic concept. "The NATO strategic concept must be based on the basic principles of the Washington Treaty—Article 5 is still at its heart," Paet emphasised. "NATO's new strategic concept must guarantee its implementation and NATO's functioning both on its own territory and in outside operations, for example our common mission in Afghanistan," said Paet.

Paet added that Estonia is preparing to address the new version of the NATO strategic concept at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting to be held in Tallinn in April.

The foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania also talked to the USA undersecretary of state about issues of European energy security. The Baltic foreign ministers stressed that the most important step for the Baltic countries in the near future is the diversification of energy connections and connecting more strongly to the common European energy market.

Paet also met with representatives of the American Jewish Committee in New York. The foreign minister described the essential role the Estonian Jewish community plays in Estonia's economic and cultural life. "Estonia's Jewish community has made significant contributions to the

development of the economy, research and culture in Estonia. Cultural autonomy for Jews existed in Estonia before the Second World War," said Paet. "Since December 2008, a museum depicting the history of Estonian Jews has been operating in the space that belongs to the Jewish community of Estonia," Paet added.

Estonia Established Diplomatic Relations with Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Mozambique

26 September - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, along with Foreign Minister of Saint Lucia Rufus Bousquet, signed a joint communiqué for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Estonia and Saint Lucia in New York on 24 September.** Foreign Minister Paet also signed a joint communiqué with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis Denzil Douglas to establish diplomatic relations between Estonia and Saint Kitts and Nevis. Paet emphasised that it is in Estonia's interests to have diplomatic relations and co-operation with as many nations as possible.

Saint Kitts and Nevis is an island nation in the Caribbean Sea with a total area of 269 km². The population is about 40 100 and the official language is English. Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis Denzil Douglas highlighted the importance of tourism to the country and emphasised that visitors from the European Union are very welcome on the island.

Saint Lucia is an island nation in the Caribbean Sea with a total area of 616 km² and a population of about 160 000. The official languages used in Saint Lucia are English and French patois. Paet expressed his satisfaction over the fact that Saint Lucia has already implemented visa-free travel for Estonian citizens.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet proposed closer co-operation in the UN to both Rufus Bousquet and Denzil Douglas. "Small nations can certainly accomplish more in the UN when they stick together," said Paet, letting them know about Estonia's candidacy to be a member of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) from 2012-2015 and a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC) from 2020-2021. Paet also gave an overview of co-operation opportunities with Estonia in the information technology sector, through both entrepreneurs and the Estonian Information Technology College.

On 26 September Foreign Minister Paet also signed a joint communiqué in New York that established diplomatic relations between Estonia and Mozambique. In his meeting with Foreign Minister of Mozambique Oldemiro Baloi, Paet emphasised that Estonia wishes to find a suitable candidate for an honorary consul in Mozambique as soon as possible.

"We would like for Estonia's interest in communicating with Mozambique to be supported by the future honorary consul," said Paet. Paet spoke with his Mozambican colleague about co-operation opportunities in international organisations, information technology, and the tourism sector. Mozambique is located in south-eastern Africa on the shore of the Indian Ocean, bordered by Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, and the Republic of South Africa. The population of Mozambique is 20.9 million people and the official language is Portuguese.

Paet Signs Agreements for Avoidance of Double Taxation with South Korea, Serbia

25 September - **Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet and Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea Yu Myung-hwan met in New York and signed an agreement between the two nations for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion on 24 September.**

Paet stated that the goal of the agreement is to help enliven economic and trade relations between the two nations. "One factor of closer economic co-operation is the active introduction of co-operation opportunities in the two countries," said Paet. "The Korean side has earlier showed interest towards Estonia's information technology capabilities and the Cyber Defence Centre in Estonia. In co-operation with the Republic of Korea, we plan to help arrange reciprocal meetings of business delegations within the framework of potential visits," Paet added.

Paet extended an invitation for his colleague Yu Myung-hwan to visit Estonia. Paet also made a proposal that the next political consultations between the Estonian and Korean foreign ministries should take place soon in Tallinn.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet signed an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation between Estonia and Serbia on 25 September during a meeting with Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić in New York at the UN General Assembly.

While signing the agreement, Paet emphasised that the agreement offers additional opportunities to enliven economic co-operation and business between Estonia and Serbia. "Estonian entrepreneurs have already invested in very different sectors in Serbia—from wholesale and retail trade, construction and real estate to transport and the manufacturing industry," said Paet. "The agreement for the avoidance of double taxation strengthens the co-operation potential for Estonia and Serbia even more," he added.

Paet stressed to his Serbian colleague that Estonia continues to support Serbia's movement towards the European Union. "We expect that Serbia will have visa freedom with the European Union as of 1 January 2010," said Paet.

Estonia Concludes Agreements for the Protection of Investments with Vietnam, Morocco

26 September - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet signed an agreement for the protection of investments between Estonia and Vietnam with his Vietnamese colleague Bui Hai Hoa on 25 September.**

Foreign Minister Paet noted that the decision to conclude the agreement, which will help to enliven Estonia-Vietnam economic and trade relations, was made last spring during a meeting in Hanoi. "Relations between Estonia and Vietnam have become more active, but there is still a great deal of untapped potential in economic and trade relations. Utilising these will be facilitated by the conclusion of the agreement for protecting investments," said Paet. "The conditions of the economic downturn favour the finding of new ideas and co-operation partners. A delegation from Estonia's transport and logistics sector will visit Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City in November," he added.

Paet stressed that in the interest of creating closer communication between Estonia and Vietnam, Estonia would like to find an honorary consul in Vietnam as soon as possible. "With the help of an honorary consul, relations between the two nations would become more active on the level of individuals, and Estonian citizens would have help while travelling or doing business there," said Paet.

On 26 September Foreign Minister Urmas Paet signed an agreement for the protection of investments between Estonia and the Kingdom of Morocco and also established diplomatic relations with Mozambique, signing a joint communiqué with Foreign Minister of Mozambique Oldemiro Baloi. While signing the agreement for the protection of investments with the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco Taieb Fassi-Fihri, Paet stressed that that Estonian entrepreneurs' interest in investing in Morocco has grown noticeably during the last few years.

Paet stated that the agreement for the protection of investments is a necessary base for strengthening economic relations between Estonia and Morocco. "We expect that the agreement for the protection of investments will give a greater feeling of security to Estonian entrepreneurs doing business in Morocco and create more opportunities for Moroccan investments to come to Estonia. We will continue to prepare an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation for the same reason," said Paet. "Another factor that supports economic relations and contacts between the nations is the Moroccan honorary consul in Estonia Margus Reinsalu, who is very active in intensifying Morocco-Estonia relations," Paet added.

Estonia also has an honorary consul in Morocco. Ali Benkirane, the Estonian honorary consul in Casablanca, has been working since 2003.

Paet noted that Estonia is also interested in developing cultural relations with Morocco. "Estonian universities have expressed interest in a student exchange programme with Morocco," said Paet. Urmas Paet and Taieb Fassi-Fihri acknowledged that the development of relations between Estonia and Morocco would be promoted even more by the organisation of reciprocal high-level visits. Paet invited his colleague Fassi-Fihri to visit Estonia.

Estonia Signed Information Technology Agreement with Azerbaijan

27 September - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadiarov within the framework of the 64th UN General Assembly in New York.** The Estonian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers signed an information and communication technology co-operation agreement between the two countries.

"Azerbaijan and its economy are of interest to Estonian entrepreneurs," said Paet. "In order to raise our entrepreneurs' feeling of security, the economic agreement base with Azerbaijan could be expanded even more," he added.

Paet noted that further co-operation opportunities are also offered by the European Union Eastern Partnership initiative. "We hope Azerbaijan will actively use the co-operation opportunities with the European Union that Eastern Partnership provides," Paet added.

During the meeting, Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadiarov informed Estonia that

Azerbaijan plans to open an embassy in Tallinn as soon as possible.

Many Bilateral Meetings Held During UN General Assembly

26 September - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet had many bilateral meeting with colleagues within the framework of the UN General Assembly. On 24 September Foreign Minister Paet met with Foreign Minister of Cape Verde Victor Borges and Montenegrin Foreign Minister Milan Roćen. At the meeting with Borges, the parties discussed co-operation between the two countries in the IT sector and opportunities for developing relations between the countries. Paet stressed that Estonia sees co-operation opportunities with Cape Verde primarily in the area of higher education in information technology. "We are also prepared to share our experiences developing an e-state with Cape Verde," said Paet.

In addition, Paet and Borges talked about visa issues that affect the citizens of both countries. According to the foreign minister of Cape Verde, the nation plans to simplify the visa process for tourists coming to Cape Verde.

While meeting with his Montenegrin colleague Milan Roćen, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet emphasised that Estonia supports Montenegro's efforts to become closer to the European Union and its goal to achieve visa freedom with the European Union by 1 January 2010. "Montenegro's efforts in the integration process are noteworthy," said Paet. "Estonia's experience can confirm that the European Union and NATO accession processes complement one another—they are both a part of euro-atlantic integration and co-operation. We are prepared to share Estonia's experiences with merging EU and NATO integration," he added.

Paet and Roćen confirmed that Estonia-Montenegro bilateral relations are good and deserve to be intensified in all areas. "We consider both defence and economic co-operation to be essential, as well as direct contacts between Estonian and Montenegrin administrative agencies and sharing Estonia's experiences in the information technology sector," said Paet, listing areas of co-operation. "We must make Estonia-Montenegro political consultations a tradition; we also expect high-level visits soon," he added. "Estonia's interest is to specify investment opportunities and the relevant regulations in Montenegro in order to help Estonian entrepreneurs interested in doing business in Montenegro," stressed Paet.

On 25 September Foreign Minister Urmas Paet had meetings scheduled with Filipino Foreign Minister Alberto G. Romulo and Belarusian Foreign Minister Sergei Martynov.

Paet emphasised to his Belarusian colleague how active Estonian entrepreneurs are in Belarus. "Estonian entrepreneurs are become more and more active in Belarus. Taking into consideration the interests of businessmen, we are working towards signing an agreement for the protection of investments between Estonia and Belarus soon," Paet stated.

Paet and Foreign Minister of the Philippines Romulo discussed co-operation in international organisations, visa discussions between the two nations, and opportunities related to economic and research co-operation.

Paet stated that Estonia is interested first and foremost in creating contacts with research-heavy sectors in the Philippines such as information, bio- or genetic technology. "Co-operation opportunities will also be facilitated by the Philippines' recent decision that allows Estonian citizens to spend up to 21 days in the Philippines for business and tourism without a visa," he noted.

Also on 25 September, Paet met with Foreign Minister of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdallah Bin Zayid Al Nahyan in New York. Paet and Al Nahyan, who visited Estonia in summer of this year, discussed co-operation opportunities for entrepreneurs of the two nations in order to help along the preparation work required for concluding an agreement for the protection of investments between Estonia and the United Arab Emirates, as well as an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation and an aviation agreement.

"The United Arab Emirates are Estonia's largest trade partner in the Persian Gulf region. For this reason, we are very interested in widening our treaty base with the United Arab Emirates," said Paet. "Our universities have also expressed interest in developing contacts with universities in UAE," he added.

Sheik Abdallah Bin Zayid Al Nahyan confirmed the United Arab Emirates' desire to intensify ties with Estonia, which is also demonstrated by the decision to appoint a non-residing Estonian ambassador to the United Arab Emirates. The non-residing ambassador to the United Arab Emirates resides in Berlin.

FOREIGN NEWS

Estonia Wins CO₂ Quota Dispute Against European Commission in European Court of First Instance

23 September - On 23 September the European Court of First Instance ruled in Estonia's favour to cancel the decision of the European Commission according to which the Commission reduced Estonia's CO₂ emissions quota for the period 2008-2012 by 47.8%.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that Estonia is satisfied with the decision of the European Court of First Instance. "Estonia actively participates in protecting its interests in the European Union, and this was a normal process in the decision-making model of the Union," he added.

Estonia issued a claim against the European Commission because it felt the Commission made significant errors and surpassed its jurisdiction in approving the decision. The court agreed with Estonia's position and found that the Commission did not have the right to replace Estonia's data with its own data in the evaluation of the distribution plan. Among other things, the Commission's data did not sufficiently take into account Estonia's energy policy and was not based upon the correct GDP growth prediction. The court also ruled that the principle of fair administration had been violated.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that the environmental political decision to gradually reduce greenhouse gas emission is upon all EU member states and emphasised the necessity to reach an ambitious climate agreement that includes all the countries in Copenhagen. "We have already fulfilled the obligation we accepted with the Kyoto Protocol

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8% compared to 1990 levels," Paet noted.

According to the national Estonian greenhouse gas inventory, in 1990 Estonian greenhouse gas emissions totalled 42 million tons, and in 2007 the total was 22 million tons. This reveals that Estonia, compared with other member states, has succeeded in making one of the greatest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 1990, more precisely by 47.5%.

The Commission may issue an appeal of the decision of the European Court of First Instance to the European Court of Justice within two months.

Estonia's representation in the European Court of First Instance is organised by the Foreign Ministry and Estonia was represented by the director of the office for the European Court of Justice Lembit Uibo.

The Europe Union member states were responsible for preparing and presenting for the Commission's approval an emissions quota distribution plan for the period 2008-2012, in which the trade system for greenhouse gas emissions would be set up for the emissions of participating businesses.

Foreign Minister Paet Welcomed Results of German Parliamentary Elections

28 September - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet welcomed the results of the parliamentary elections of the Federal Republic of Germany announced today, 28 September, which revealed that current Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel received a mandate from the people for a second term at the head of the new centre-right coalition.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that the elections have created conditions for setting up a strong government, which is essential at a time when Europe faces such difficult challenges. "I welcome the results of Germany's parliamentary election and hope that Estonia and Germany's previous good co-operation will continue in the era of the new government," said Paet.

Foreign Minister Paet noted while talking about Germany and Estonia's co-operation areas to date that in the European Union Estonia has many similar views with Germany in priority sectors such as interior security, IT and research-based development, Baltic Sea region co-operation, and Neighbourhood Policy. "Estonia and Germany have productive co-operation in the area of foreign and security policy as well, including the issues of developing transatlantic relations through NATO, resolving international crises, and cyber security matters," said Paet.

Estonian Ambassador to Spain Presents Credentials

28 September - Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia to the Kingdom of Spain Toomas Kahur presented his credentials to King of Spain Juan Carlos I on Monday, 28 September.

In the discussion following the credential-presenting ceremony, Ambassador Toomas Kahur and King Juan Carlos I talked about the good relations between Estonia and Spain. Ambassador Kahur passed a greeting from President of the Republic of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves along to the Spanish king, and the two parties exchanged reciprocal words of thanks for the bilateral state visit

that recently took place. King Juan Carlos I asked for his warmest regards and best wishes to be relayed to the Estonian president as well as the people of Estonia.

They discussed Estonia-Spain economic relations and opportunities to intensify business contacts. "I am pleased that the Spain-Estonia Chamber of Commerce created in January of this year by Spanish entrepreneurs has started working actively and that Spanish entrepreneurs' interest in doing business on the Estonian market is growing," said Ambassador Kahur.

Another topic discussed at the meeting was opportunities to create more cultural contacts between Estonia and Spain. The ambassador stated that there is growing interest in Estonia towards studying Spanish language and culture. "Both Tartu and Tallinn Universities work in close co-operation with Granada University," said Kahur.

Estonian Ambassador to Spain Toomas Kahur was born in 1963. Kahur has worked in the Estonian foreign service since 1992. Kahur has worked in the Foreign Ministry's political department and foreign economic policy department and has served as the economic diplomat at the Estonian Embassy in Vilnius. From 1998-1999 Toomas Kahur participated in the OSCE Kosovo Control Mission. He has been an advisor in the Estonian Embassy in Madrid and the director of the division for Asia, Africa and Latin America in the Foreign Ministry political department. From 2003-2006 he was an advisor at the Estonian Embassy in Helsinki and from 2006-2007 Kahur led the Estonian Special Mission in Afghanistan. Before becoming ambassador, Toomas Kahur was the director of the division for Nordic and Baltic countries in the Foreign Ministry political department.

Estonia, Russia to Open Regional Co-operation Talks

28 September (BNS) - Estonian Regional Affairs Minister Siim-Valmar Kiisler, at a meeting with Russian Regional Affairs Minister Viktor Basargin, agreed on the re-opening of talks on the Estonian-Russian intergovernmental cross-border co-operation agreement.

The proposal for the reopening of the talks came from Basargin. The first such meeting will take place within this year in Tallinn, a spokesman for the Interior Ministry said.

At the meeting, Kiisler underlined the need of development infrastructure in the border areas.

"The most important thing is that life in the border areas would not disappear but would develop and that new jobs would be created. For this it is necessary to agree what infrastructure objects need priority development. For us, for example, the Narva bridge and Lake Peipsi ports are the most important," Kiisler said.

The regional affairs minister said that his Russian colleague's confirmation that the agreement to finance the Estonian-Latvian-Russian cross-border co-operation program for 2007-2013 would be signed during October on the precondition that the programme will be geared at the beginning of next year was very welcome news.

Kiisler spoke to the Russian minister about the initiative to set up a Seto House in Pechory—a place for cultural co-operation, business consultancy, and exchange of contacts.

Kiisler's and Basargin's meeting took place in the framework of the international cross-border co-operation conference taking place in St. Petersburg on Monday and Tuesday.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonians Among EU Nations Most Fluent in Foreign Languages

25 September (BNS) - **Estonia is one of the European Union member states having the largest percentage of residents speaking at least two foreign languages, it appears from a report by the EU statistical office Eurostat.**

Of Estonian residents of ages 25-64, 55.9% said they spoke two or more foreign languages. By this criterion Estonia ranks fifth among EU nations.

One foreign language is spoken by 30.4% of residents in Estonia while 13.6% speak no second language, shows the study published on the occasion of the European Day of Languages celebrated on 26 September.

The table of self-perceived language knowledge of adults was topped by Slovenia, where 71.8% of residents said they spoke at least two foreign languages, followed by Slovakia with 68%, Finland with 67.9% and Lithuania with 66.1%. Latvia was in sixth place after Estonia with 54.9%.

According to the survey, English is the most commonly spoken foreign language in two-thirds of EU member states. Russian is the most widespread foreign language in the three Baltic countries, Poland and Bulgaria. Of these countries, Lithuania has the highest ratio of speakers of Russian as foreign language.

In the UK the most commonly spoken second language is French, and in Slovakia, the Czech language.

The poorest command of foreign languages was reported in Hungary – three in four Hungarians said they spoke no foreign language at all. The percentage of such people was 51 in Portugal, 47 in Spain, 44 in Bulgaria and 43 in Greece. The survey was based on data for 2007.

The Economist Ranks Estonia's Kallas Among Best Performing Commission Members

25 September (BNS) - **In its end-of-term assessment, The Economist places Siim Kallas of Estonia among the top ten European Commission members deserving merit for their performance in the Commission led by Jose Manuel Barroso during his first term as Commission president.**

It specifically said that some commissioners made the grade for telling the truth in public.

Siim Kallas from Estonia, the commissioner in charge of administration, has published the fat sums handed by the Commission to think-tanks and 'non-governmental' groups around Brussels, it said.

DEFENCE NEWS

Sea Surveillance Co-operation Would Improve Security in the EU

29 September - **At the informal two-day meeting of the EU defence ministers in Gothenburg,**

Estonian Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo said that security in the European Union would improve if member states were to increase the level of co-operation in the area of sea surveillance.

Minister Aaviksoo stated that he is pleased to acknowledge that current EU presidency holder Sweden has taken the issue up as a priority and that Spain has promised to further advance this issue during its presidency.

"Information exchange in the area of sea surveillance is needed, and the co-operation in this area already taking place in the Baltic Sea serves as an example to all other European member states and regions," Aaviksoo emphasised in his speech.

"Co-operation between countries of the Baltic Sea has also provided strong momentum for closer national co-operation within Estonia on sea surveillance, which our European partners have also acknowledged," Aaviksoo explained.

In Gothenburg, a demonstration of the Sea Surveillance Co-operation Baltic Sea (SUCBAS) was also held for the attending defence ministers, where Estonia was represented by Commander Indrek Hanson, Chief of the Operations Section of the Estonian Naval Headquarters.

In addition to sea surveillance, the defence ministers also discussed civilian-military capability development in the EU, issues relating to the European Defence Agency and battle groups of the EU, and the current military operations in Somalia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Liviko Beverage Maker to Launch Export to Japan

24 September (BNS) - **The Estonian AS Liviko alcoholic beverage maker is going to start exporting its products to Japan.**

Export of Liviko's products to the Japanese market became possible thanks to a new weak beverages line, which makes it possible to follow a complicated production technology that differs from European requirements and meets those of Japanese laws and health protection authorities, the company said.

The company has been making preparations for the export of its output to Japan since 2006 by carrying out market research and working out products and tastes acceptable to the Japanese market.

Last year AS Liviko exported three million liters of alcoholic beverages, one quarter of its own output. Until the present, Liviko's most important export markets were Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, Finland and the United States.

The first consignment of beverages will be dispatched to Japan on Thursday.

Liviko invested 20 million kroons (EUR 1.29 mln) in the new weak beverage production line.

Liviko provides jobs to 201 people in Estonia, 110 in Latvia and 76 in Lithuania.

Government Endorses Sale of Holding in Eesti Telekom

24 September (BNS) - **The Estonian government Thursday decided to give its consent to the sale of shares in Eesti Telekom at 93 kroons (EUR 5.94) per share.**

Eesti Telekom has also convened a general meeting of shareholders in order to decide the payment of additional dividends of nearly 7 kroons per share.

It is also planning to endorse for three years a dividend policy according to which Eesti Telekom will pay out in dividends in the years 2010-2012 the whole net profit over the preceding period, the government communications office said.

In considering its decision, it was decisive that the Estonian state had no strategic interest of continuing as shareholder in Eesti Telekom and in 2009 the state would be paid more than four billion kroons, which would contract the loan need of the country and improve the government sector budget balance by 518 million kroons.

It is also important for the state to ensure in the next few years a guaranteed inflow of income tax that will be enabled by the agreed-on guaranteed dividend policy.

The Estonian government currently has a 24% and the Estonian Development Fund a 3% holding in Eesti Telekom.

Glamox to Shift Production to Estonia

28 September (BNS) - **The Norwegian industrial group Glamox is about to shut down one of its four plants in Norway and relocate production into the Keila, Estonia-based light fittings producer Glamox HE, the business daily Äripäev reports.**

The facility in Keila will create 15 new jobs and the production volume is estimated to grow by a third.

Glamox produces and markets professional lighting solutions. Its subsidiary Glamox HE was founded in 1992. Last year the company netted 37.1 million kroons (EUR 2.4 mln) on sales of 270.6 million kroons. The Keila-based plant employs 100 people at present.

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