

Estonian Review

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

VOLUME 19 NO 36 OCT 7 - 13, 2009

NATO SECRETARY GENERAL VISITS ESTONIA



Foreign Minister Urmass Paet with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 8 October.

Paet and Rasmussen: NATO's Primary Responsibility is Still Collective Defence

8 October - **During their meeting at the Foreign Ministry today, Foreign Minister Urmass Paet and NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen emphasised that the primary foundation of NATO's activities will continue to be collective defence.** "The backbone of the new strategic concept must continue to be Article 5 and collective defence as well as NATO's visibility, trustworthiness, and the clear presentation of its abilities," Paet said at the meeting. "The other principles of the Washington Treaty, like joint crisis management, are also important. The NATO strategic concept must address new risks as well, such as issues related to cyber security," he added.

NATO's new strategic concept will be a central topic at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting being held in Tallinn in April 2010. "All of the members of the alliance must feel included in both the process and the outcome of the creation of the new strategic concept. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have appointed a joint representative to the group that is preparing the new strategy—former Latvian ambassador to the USA and NATO Aivis Ronis," said Paet.

Paet and Rasmussen also talked about the situation in NATO, including the mission in Afghanistan, which is the most important foreign mission for Estonia, NATO-European Union and NATO-Russia relations, and the further enlargement of the alliance. Paet emphasised that Estonia continues to support NATO enlargement and considered co-operation with nations striving to become members of NATO to be of the utmost importance.

At the meeting, Rasmussen highlighted Estonia's contribution in Helmand Province, one of the most difficult regions in Afghanistan, where Estonian soldiers work together with British, American and Danish forces. "Problems must be addressed at their roots," Paet emphasised. "In order to achieve success in Afghanistan, Estonia would like to continue working with civil projects as well. The development of Afghan society and the ability to manage their own nation is the goal of the presence of international forces," Paet added.

Continued on page 2

FOREIGN NEWS

President Ilves Meets with Lithuanian Head of State

8 October - **"We must all focus on the most important challenge: continued stabilisation of the economy while creating the prerequisites required for new growth,"** said President Toomas Hendrik Ilves at his meeting with Lithuanian Head of State Dalia Grybauskaitė, who arrived in Estonia for a working visit. "Today the economy of the European Union has reached a turning point which will also support the progress of our economy in the future, but only if we will be capable of keeping the revenues and expenditures of the state under control. So far, Estonia has met this objective," President Ilves stressed.

"The situations in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are very different and it's impossible to draw conclusion for the whole region based solely on one of the Baltic states; however, each of us will be responsible for the reputation of the region as a whole with either our efforts or negligence," the Estonian head of state emphasised.



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė, 8 October.

Continued on page 2

Rasmussen

(continued from page 1)

Paet stated that Estonia is prepared for long-term contributions, until conditions are reached that allow for the Afghans to independently ensure peace and safety in their nation.

Paet and Rasmussen agreed that the alliance's co-operation with its partners, including Russia, is very important. "In order to achieve NATO-Russia co-operation that is based on reciprocal interest, an essential component is active interest and participation from the Russian side," Paet stressed.

President Toomas Hendrik Ilves also met with Secretary General Rasmussen to discuss Afghanistan and NATO in general.

"In the course of the Afghanistan operation and directing it onto a path of success, all of us-- NATO and the alliance's partners-- must demonstrate patience, resolve, a belief in victory and an ever better plan of action," the Estonian head of state said. He considered it important to improve the effectiveness of the co-operation between NATO, the UN, the EU and other international organisations in resolving Afghanistan's problems. According to President Ilves, along with military steps it is important to pay increasing attention to civilian projects in Afghanistan, with the objective of strengthening the state and improving the daily lives of as many people as possible.

"However, it is also important that the projects are sustainable even after they are handed over to the Afghans, and that Afghanistan's dependence on external aid is not increased," President Ilves said.

While talking about NATO, President Ilves also emphasised the importance of continuing NATO's open door policy, adding that every country that aspires to membership should be examined individually, based on its progress.



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves holding a press conference with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 8 October.

Grybauskaite

(continued from page 1)

The new strategic concept of NATO and the most important mission of the alliance in Afghanistan, where the defence force members and civil officials of Estonian and Lithuania participate, were also discussed at the meeting of the two presidents.

The Estonian and Lithuanian heads of state discussed the energy problems of the region, including the establishment of the Baltic electricity market and a new nuclear power station.

"The creation of the Baltic energy market will be a part of the future Northern Baltic electricity market," President Ilves emphasised, seeing direct deliveries from the European Union suppliers to final consumers as an important aspect. "Otherwise, the situation would discriminate against the other European Union member states, including Estonia." President Ilves also emphasised the importance of learning as fast as possible whether the declaration of the three Baltic states on building a jointly funded nuclear power station in Lithuania is still eligible or whether Estonia should start searching for alternatives to create new electricity production capacities.

Presidents Ilves and Grybauskaite also expressed their satisfaction over the positive outcome of the Irish referendum.

The Estonian head of state stressed the importance of creating a joint foreign service of the European Union.

"However, this should be done in a way that would enhance the uniformity of the foreign politics of the European Union and contribute to better co-ordination of foreign undertakings," said President Ilves.

Prime Minister Ansip and Lithuanian President Grybauskaite Discuss Economic Crisis

8 October - **At their meeting held today, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip and President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė mainly discussed the economic situation of the Baltic States.** Both regarded the strict budget policy and the collection of reserves during the good times as being important.

"What we all could learn from this economic crisis is that during good times, reserves must be collected," Prime Minister Andrus Ansip said when meeting with the head of state of Lithuania. According to the head of government, the strict budget policy has been of great help to Estonia during the crisis. There are more than BEEK 20 in the reserves of the Estonian government sector and the deficit is one the lowest in the European Union. The President of Lithuania regarded Estonia as a good example for other states as well.

The Prime Minister also declared that the Estonian government has set the objective of joining the euro-zone in January 2011.

Prime Minister Ansip and Lithuanian President Grybauskaitė both expressed hope at the meeting that the NordBalt project (Lithuania-Sweden sea link) could progress quickly and that the support prescribed in the European Economic Recovery Plan could be used for implementing this project. It was also jointly admitted that preparations for the establishment of a common Baltic electricity market must be continued.

Ilves: Macedonia Moving Irreversibly Closer to European Union and NATO

13 October - **"I hope that the Macedonian flag will soon be raised among the flags of the current member states of the European Union, and thereby, the Community will become richer by one successful country,"** President Toomas

Hendrik Ilves said at his meeting today with Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia.

President Ilves, who is the first Estonian head of state to make an official visit to the Republic of Macedonia, acknowledged Macedonia's progress in updating its political system, economy, and public services.

"In the four years that Macedonia has been a European Union candidate state, you have carried out extensive reforms in your country, as well as strengthened democracy and moved irreversibly closer to the European Union and NATO," the Estonian president affirmed.

At the meeting between Presidents Ilves and Ivanov, the issue of Macedonia's name was discussed, whereby the lack of a compromise between Greece and Macedonia is hindering Macedonia's accession to NATO.

"Estonia encourages Skopje and Athens to find a compromise as soon as possible, which is necessary for normalising the relations between the two countries and for completing Macedonia's integration into the European Union and NATO," President Ilves stressed. "This assumes frequent and purposeful negotiations between Macedonia and Greece - both directly and brokered by the UN."

The Estonian president expressed his hope that the European Commission's progress report that will be made public tomorrow will propose that accession negotiations be started with Macedonia. "The name issue must not prevent the initiation of accession negotiations," President Ilves said. "The parties in bilateral problems must not overlook the general interests of the European Union."

During the last five years, Estonia has actively shared its own reform experiences and those related to its accession to the European Union and NATO with Macedonia, turning special attention to information technology.

"Hopefully, our excellent political ties will be expanded into close economic co-operation, which assumes that Estonian and Macedonian companies will take notice of mutually beneficial opportunities," President Ilves said. "Of course, this also assumes that conducting business is equally simple, transparent and clear on both sides."



Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Gjorge Ivanov, President of the Republic of Macedonia, 13 October. © Office of the President of the Republic of Macedonia

Estonia Wishes to Actively Participate in Updating of NATO Strategic Concept

12 October – Today Foreign Minister Urmäs Paet discussed preparations for the new NATO strategic concept with Aivis Ronis, a member of the expert group preparing the concept.

Foreign Minister Paet emphasised that NATO's new strategic concept must be based on the principle of collective defence and give a clear representation of NATO's visibility, trustworthiness and abilities. "We feel it is especially important that the new concept conveys a clear message about NATO's visibility and presence in nations in the alliance," added the foreign minister.

Paet noted that the creation of NATO's new strategic concept gives us a good opportunity to equalise NATO allies' understanding of the real security environment. "It is necessary to highlight the relationship between NATO collective defence and foreign missions, and the concept should address former as well as new threats," he added. In talking about new security threats, Paet mentioned the risks associated with cyber security.

Aivis Ronis gave an overview of the work done by the group preparing NATO's new strategic concept thus far. The Estonian foreign minister stated that working out the new concept should increase the unity of NATO. "We wish to actively participate in the creation of the new NATO strategic concept," Paet stated. The new concept will be a primary topic at the meeting of NATO foreign ministers this upcoming spring in Tallinn.

Aivis Ronis, the former Latvian ambassador to the USA and NATO and the candidate presented by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania was chosen to be a member of the group preparing NATO's new strategic concept. The expert group for the new concept is being led by Madeleine Albright.

Estonian Becoming More Conscious Contributor to International Development Aid Co-operation

8 October - On Thursday, 8 October, the government approved of the updated version of Estonia's Strategy for Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Aid for 2006-2010 and its 2010 implementation plan.

Foreign Minister Urmäs Paet stressed that the development problems and humanitarian disasters of some other nation do not affect only that nation, but the entire world. "The complicated situation in developing countries affects Estonia and Europe as a whole—for example, the strong pressure of immigrants from poorer countries on Europe, or the violence and terrorism stemming from poverty and desperation," said Foreign Minister Paet. "In today's rapidly changing world, countries rely on each other more and more, and everyone has a moral obligation to support those that are economically and socially less secure," he added.

Estonia has made the greatest contribution to its four priority countries of Afghanistan, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova. In 2008 Estonia's official sum total for development co-operation and humanitarian aid was 243 million kroons or 0.1% of the GDP. In 2007 it was 188 million kroons, or 0.08% of the GDP. The Foreign Ministry's budget for development co-operation and humanitarian aid last year was 60 million kroons and in 2007 it was 23 million. The dramatic jump in humanitarian aid resources from 6.9 million kroons in 2007 to 22.5 million kroons in 2008 was due to the sum for helping victims of the armed conflict in Georgia being added to the original planned humanitarian aid funds. This additional sum included 7.2 million kroons allocated to the Foreign Ministry from the government budget for the purpose of sending three

humanitarian aid shipments to the victims of the conflicts.

The expected total for Estonia's official development aid funds for this year is altogether 198 million kroons, or 0.09% of the GDP, and in 2010 it will be 174 million kroons, or 0.08% of the GDP. Estonia contributes most of its development co-operation and humanitarian aid funds through the European Union budget for development co-operation and humanitarian aid projects organised by the European Commission. In 2008 this sum for Estonia was 136 million kroons and in 2007 143 million kroons.

Netherlands Support Estonia's Aspirations to Join Euro-zone

12 October - At today's meeting in The Hague with Andrus Ansip, head of the Estonian government, Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende confirmed that the Netherlands supports Estonia's aspirations towards joining the euro-zone, provided that Estonia meets all the required criteria for joining.

"Estonia wants to join the euro-zone by fulfilling all the necessary criteria because it is our wish to join a strong euro-zone," said Prime Minister Ansip. The prime minister explained to his Dutch colleague that, in all likelihood, Estonia will meet the Maastricht inflation criterion by November of the current year. The loan burden of Estonia's government sector is already the lowest in the European Union. The biggest challenge at the moment lies in fulfilling the budget deficit requirement.

"The budget for the coming year has been drafted with the Maastricht inflation criterion requirements in mind," the prime minister added. The Netherlands estimates its budget deficit for 2010 at 6% of the country's gross domestic product. According to data from the Dutch central bank, De Nederlandsche Bank, the Dutch GDP will fall by 4.75% this year, while all efforts are being made to halt the fall in the coming year.

Besides bilateral relations and the economy, the prime ministers also talked about the Lisbon Treaty. Estonia and the Netherlands share similar views regarding the Lisbon process and the EU Budget Process. "The Lisbon Treaty will make the EU stronger, which is why Estonia ratified the treaty in 2008," said Prime Minister Ansip.

The bilateral relations between Estonia and the Netherlands are outstanding. In terms of the volume of direct investments, the Netherlands ranks third in the general ranking of the countries that have invested in Estonia. Direct investments by Dutch companies in Estonia as of the end of 2008 accounted for BEEK 12.4, which is 6.8% of the total amount of the direct investments made in Estonia.

Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, who has held office since 2002, visited Estonia in April 2004. President Toomas Hendrik Ilves visited the Netherlands in 2007, and the state visit by Dutch Queen Beatrix to Estonia took place in May of last year.

EU and Brazil Reach Agreement on Visa Freedom

7 October - During the European Union-Brazil summit in Stockholm on Tuesday, the European Union and Brazil approved the text of

a visa freedom agreement, which when implemented will allow the citizens of Estonia and the other EU member states to visit Brazil for tourism or business purposes without a visa. The agreement should come into effect in 2010, after its official signing and ratification by Brazil's Parliament.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet acknowledged the fundamental approval of the agreement and expressed hope that visa freedom would begin in 2010. "Some formalities must still be covered, but the discussion of the content of the agreement has ended today," said Paet. Paet stated that it has taken quite a bit of time to achieve visa freedom for Estonian citizens to Brazil. "Visa-free travel to Brazil for tourism and business purposes is a long-awaited opportunity for Estonian citizens," he added.

The foreign minister expressed gratitude to the foreign minister of the EU Presidency Sweden Carl Bildt as well as the European Commission, whose co-operation helped to wrap up the drawn-out negotiations with Brazil. "This agreement demonstrates that the common European visa policy works in the interest of small nations as well and provides clear results," emphasised Paet.

The foreign minister said that the Brazil agreement has symbolic significance. "For Estonia, this marks the final chapter in reciprocal visa negotiations. This means that after the agreement goes into effect Estonia will have achieved visa freedom with all the nations that have reciprocal visa freedom with all the other European Union countries," Paet asserted. "We have also gained visa freedom for our citizens to, for example, the United States, Australia and Canada," said Paet.

Upon accession to the European Union, the European Community regulation 539/2001/EC was applied to Estonia; the regulation prescribes the list of nations whose citizens are ensured visa freedom and of nations whose citizens require visas. Since many nations on the positive list, such as Australia, Canada, the USA, Brazil, and Singapore did not allow visa freedom for citizens of the new member states, a situation arose in which the new member states were required to allow visa-free travel for many countries without receiving it in return. To ensure the equal treatment of citizens of the EU, the reciprocal visa policy was implemented in the European Union. Every year the European Commission reports on nations that member states have problems with in terms of reciprocal visas and offers possible solutions. The fifth visa reciprocity report will be presented in October of this year.

Foreign Ministry Secretary General Met with Nordic and Baltic Colleagues

7 October - Foreign Ministry Secretary General Marten Kokk participated in a meeting of the secretaries general of the foreign ministries of the Nordic and Baltic countries (NB8 - Nordic-Baltic 8).

At the meeting, they thoroughly discussed the results of the Irish referendum and the Treaty of Lisbon coming into effect. Foreign Ministry Secretary General Marten Kokk expressed hope that the ratification process for the Lisbon Treaty would soon end successfully in Poland and the Czech Republic as well. "The Treaty of Lisbon helps to ensure a strong Europe, which is a requirement for Europe to be a considerable power and partner to other nations in

this globalising and rapidly changing world," Kokk asserted.

The secretaries general of the Nordic and Baltic foreign ministries also discussed matters related to climate change. Marten Kokk stated that his Danish colleague gave an overview of how preparations for the Copenhagen climate conference are going. "We must continue making an effort to ensure the meaningful content of the climate agreement to be signed in Copenhagen. It is also important to keep in mind each nation's ability to pay and its individual characteristics. Developing nations must also take on binding commitments and contribute to the fight against climate change as much as they are able," said Kokk.

Another topic addressed at the meeting was the effect of the economic crisis on the foreign service of the Nordic and Baltic nations. The Foreign Ministry secretary general confirmed that Estonia does not plan to close any of its foreign representations, but in today's circumstances it is extremely necessary to develop co-operation between nations for foreign services. "Estonia is currently holding negotiations with Latvia over sharing a joint embassy space in Cairo, Egypt," said Secretary General Kokk.

At their meeting, the secretaries general also talked about Iceland's economic situation and Iceland's application to join the EU.

Estonian Ambassador to Serbia Presents Credentials

7 October - Estonian Ambassador to the Republic of Serbia Rein Oidekivi presented his credentials to Serbian President Boris Tadić on Tuesday, 6 October.

In the discussion following the credential-presenting ceremony, one topic addressed was Serbia becoming closer to the European Union. Ambassador Rein Oidekivi stated that Serbia highly values Estonia's support for Serbia on the road to the EU, as achieving membership is a strategic goal for the country. "Estonia is a firm supporter of continuing the European Union's open-door policy and including nations that share the values and principles of the member states. We recognise Serbia's steps towards the European Union and completely support Serbia's reform endeavours. We hope that Serbia will achieve visa freedom with the EU on 1 January 2010," said Ambassador Oidekivi.

The two also discussed Estonia and Serbia's economic relations and opportunities to intensify business contacts. President Tadić expressed particular interest in Estonia's experiences with organising and implementing e-government and e-voting. They also discussed how the information technology solutions Estonia has developed could be used in Serbia. Ambassador Oidekivi stated that Estonian entrepreneurs have great interest in co-operation with Serbia and businessmen have already made investments in various different sectors of business. Economic co-operation and business contacts can be further motivated by the recent signing of an agreement for the prevention of double taxation between the nations.

Ambassador Oidekivi and President Tadić expressed their common position that the development of Estonia-Serbia relations will certainly gain new momentum from President Toomas Hendrik Ilves's official visit to Serbia from 14-16 October, which is the first such high-level visit in the history of the countries' relations.

Rein Oidekivi was born in 1965 in Muhumaa. He graduated from the Estonian philology department of Tartu University. Oidekivi has worked in the diplomatic field since 1992, when he began working in the Foreign Ministry's press and information department. From 1995-1998, Oidekivi worked as an advisor at the Estonian Embassy in Kiev. After that, he was the director of a division of the political department at the Foreign Ministry, until being named ambassador to Lithuania in 2000, a position that he held until 2004. From 2005-2007, Rein Oidekivi was the head director of the Foreign Ministry's press and information department. Since September 2005, he has been the ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina (non-residing), and in 2007 he became the Estonian Ambassador to Bulgaria. Oidekivi speaks English, Russian and Finnish. The ambassador resides in Sofia.

First Estonian Ambassador to Thailand Presents Credentials

8 October - Ambassador Andres Unga, the first Estonian ambassador to Thailand, presented his credentials to the Crown Prince of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn.

During their discussion after the credentials-presenting ceremony, Ambassador Unga and Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn discussed Estonia-Thailand bilateral relations. Both parties emphasised that relations between the nations have a long history and are good, although reciprocal contacts in economics, tourism, culture and education should be developed further. Ambassador Andres Unga passed greetings from President of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves along to the crown prince, and Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn sent his best wishes to the Estonian president and Estonian people on behalf of the King of Thailand.

The development of bilateral relations was also discussed in a meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya prior to the credentials-presenting ceremony. Questions of visa freedom were among the topics addressed. Ambassador Unga expressed satisfaction over the fact that Estonia and Thailand are coming to an agreement in this matter. "Thailand is one of the most popular destinations in Asia for Estonians, and hopefully soon Estonian citizens will be able to travel there without a visa," said Ambassador Unga. The ambassador also noted that in response to Estonians' increased interest in travelling to Thailand, Estonia feels it is essential to expand its network of honorary consuls there. "The second Estonian honorary consul in Thailand will begin working soon in Phuket," added the ambassador.

Other topics discussed at the meeting were developing Estonia-Thailand economic relations and strengthening business ties. Ambassador Andres Unga stated that concluding an agreement for the avoidance of double taxation would surely help to intensify economic ties. They agreed at the meeting that relations between the countries would also be enlivened by reciprocal high-level visits and meetings, as well as intensifying contacts on the working level. "A good opportunity for intensifying contacts would certainly be establishing regular political consultations between the foreign ministries of Estonia and Thailand," Unga emphasised.

Andres Unga was born in 1966 in Viljandi. He graduated from Tallinn University of Technology and the Estonian School of Diplomacy in 1991. After

graduating from university, Unga went to work in the protocol department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and stayed in that department until 1996 as a deputy director, director and then director general. From 1996 to 2000, Unga was the ambassador to Sweden, and after that he worked as the director general of the Ministry's human resources department. From 2003-2007 Andres Unga was the ambassador to Greece. From 2004-2007 he was the non-residing Estonian ambassador to Cyprus and from 2003-2008 he was the non-residing ambassador to Armenia. Unga has been the ambassador to China since 2007. Since 2008 he is also the non-residing ambassador to Vietnam. Unga speaks English, Russian and Swedish. The ambassador resides in Beijing.

Paet: Estonia in Favour of Development of Well-Functioning European Union Foreign Service

13 October - Foreign Minister Urmas Paet spoke to his Dutch, Belgian, Luxembourgish, Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues about European Union development during a meeting in Vilnius.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that Estonia desires the development of a strong and wide-reaching European Union foreign service. "Estonia is interested in the European Union's foreign service being able to function more productively and effectively in all of Europe's foreign policy fields. The visibility and added value of the European Union's foreign service would also be increased by adding consular protection functions," Paet emphasised. Foreign Minister Paet added that it is also important to ensure that diplomats from all member states will be represented in the European Union foreign service right from the initial stages.

The foreign ministers also addressed the European security situation at the meeting. Foreign Minister Paet emphasised that the preparation of the NATO strategic concept also plays a role in European Union security issues. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that working out the new NATO strategic concept must increase the unity of the alliance. "The new strategic concept must be based on the principle of collective defence, and it must clearly represent NATO's visibility, trustworthiness, and abilities," said Paet. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet also asserted how important close co-operation between the EU and NATO is.

In speaking about issues related to European Union enlargement, the foreign ministers expressed their satisfaction that new chapters were finally opened in the accession negotiations with Croatia so that negotiations can continue.

Estonian Ambassador to Poland Presents Credentials

9 October - Estonian Ambassador to the Republic of Poland Taavi Toom presented his credentials to Polish President Lech Kaczyński.

In the discussion following the credentials-presenting ceremony, Ambassador Taavi Toom and Polish President Lech Kaczyński talked first and foremost about bilateral relations, agreeing that they are in very good standing. Ambassador Toom passed greetings from President of the Republic of Estonia Toomas Hendrik Ilves along to the Polish president.

During their meeting they also talked about co-operation within the European Union and NATO. The Estonian ambassador stated that the Polish president said he plans to sign the Treaty of Lisbon tomorrow, which would conclude the ratification process in Poland. "It is essential that the Treaty of Lisbon, which will make the European Union more effective and more democratic to the benefit of all member states and citizens, comes into effect soon," said Ambassador Taavi Toom.

Another topic addressed was opportunities to intensify Estonia and Poland's economic and trade relations. "Poland is still one of Estonia's biggest foreign trade partners in Central Europe, and the development of economic and trade relations would be further facilitated by well-built transportation connections," said Ambassador Toom.

After presenting his credentials, Ambassador Taavi Toom placed a wreath with the colours of the Estonian flag on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw.

Taavi Toom was born in 1970 in Tartu. Toom graduated from the law department of Tartu University. Toom has worked in Estonia's foreign service since 1994, when he came to work at the Foreign Ministry as the director of the European Union division. From 1996-1999 Toom worked at Estonia's permanent representation to the European Union in Brussels. From 1999-2001 he was the Foreign Ministry's press spokesperson. From 2001-2006, Taavi Toom was the Estonian ambassador to Denmark. Before assuming his current position, Toom was the director general of the Foreign Ministry's European Union department. Ambassador Toom speaks English, German, Russian, and French.

New US Ambassador in Estonia Looking to Animate Trade

9 October (BNS) - Michael C. Polt, the newly appointed US ambassador to Estonia, said at a hearing in the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that he would launch close co-operation with entrepreneurs in both countries in order to create new jobs by promoting trade.

Polt also recognised Estonia's support for Afghanistan and Georgia, which had continued despite economic difficulties, and promised all-around support for cyber security capabilities.

The ambassador, who will take office soon, also confirmed continued support for the development of the Estonian Defence Forces, simultaneously recognising Estonia's strong contribution in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Polt said while speaking in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that he would support the Estonian government in the fight against HIV in order to improve both prevention and creating opportunities of testing. As one of the opportunities he mentioned US support for HIV testing in the Defence Forces.

In order to contribute to the integration of the Russian-speaking population, Polt regarded it important to use the opportunities of new media to bring his message to all residents of Estonia, above all the local Russian-speaking young people.

US President Barack Obama appointed Michael C. Polt, who has worked as a career diplomat for thirty years, as ambassador to Estonia at the end of September. Before that Polt worked since August 2008 as Acting Assistant Secretary of State for

Legislative Affairs. In 2004-2007 Polt served as US ambassador to Serbia and Montenegro.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Tartu University Named on List of Leading Universities in the World

8 October (BNS) - **For the first time ever, Tartu University (TU) appeared on the renowned list of the top 600 world universities, "Times Higher Education-QS World University Rankings".**

"We can't say our exact position, because places 501-600 are represented as one big group of universities," explained the director of Tartu University's foreign relations department Virve-Anneli Vihman to BNS.

"Being among the top 5% of the world's leading universities is recognition of our university," said Tartu University rector Alar Karis. "I believe that it will help young people choose their path of education and encourage them to study at Tartu University," he said.

Harvard University remains at the top of the list, while Cambridge University has risen to second place, surpassing Yale University.

The creators of the list stated that the most remarkable fact is that University College London has risen to fourth place, ahead of Oxford University and Imperial College, which share fifth and sixth place.

Also remarkable is that the number of American universities on the list has decreased (42 in 2008, 36 in 2009) and European and Asian universities have increased. Of Tartu University's close neighbours, Lund (67th) and Uppsala (75th) Universities in Sweden are represented in the top 100, and Helsinki University in Finland is not far behind in the 108th position.

In compiling the list, factors taken into consideration are surveys of the leading figures at universities, the student-to-instructor ratio, citations in science publications, and the percentage of foreign instructor and students. This year 9 386 representatives of the academic world took part in the study, which is 47% more than in 2008.

According to the OECD, there are 12 000 universities in the world.

DEFENCE NEWS

Rasmussen: NATO Must be Visible Across Its Entire Territory

9 October - **NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo, who met yesterday in Tallinn, declared that the main objective of NATO is and will continue to be collective defence based on Article V.**

At the meeting, Minister Aaviksoo stated that in the current security situation, it's important for allies to demonstrate the visibility and capabilities of NATO via military planning, exercises and training to react to the challenges facing the Alliance.

At the meeting, Secretary General Rasmussen declared that Article V is the main function of NATO, just as it has been over the past 60 years. "In the context of the new strategic concept it is clear that the protection of the territory of the Alliance will be the main task of NATO," Secretary General

Rasmussen stressed. "The visible presence of NATO across the entire territory of the Alliance is of utmost importance," he added.

"It is very important that the visibility of air policing has increased and that the allies have reached an agreement to extend the mission until at least 2014," Minister of Defence Aaviksoo said.

When speaking about the Afghanistan operation, the Secretary General thanked Estonia for its remarkable contribution, which is one of the largest per capita.

During his visit in Estonia, Secretary General Rasmussen also met with Commander of the Estonian Defence Forces Ants Laaneots.



Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo with Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen, 8 October.

Estonian Official Discusses Military Co-operation with US in Afghanistan

9 October (BNS) - **Estonian Defence Ministry Deputy State Secretary Sven Sakkov met Wednesday with James Townsend, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Europe and NATO Policy, and discussed the two countries' further military co-operation in Afghanistan.**

"Generally, major changes are going to take place in Afghanistan in connection with the new strategy of the new commander of ISAF, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, and the circumstance that the United States will soon sharply increase the number of its troops in Southern Afghanistan, where the Estonian soldiers mainly operate," a spokesman for the Defence Ministry told BNS. "Potential future spheres of co-operation were discussed at the meeting but it is still slightly too early to speak about them today."

He added that in addition to our usual contribution there is an additional infantry company operating in Afghanistan, brought under US command, and issues connected with the unit were talked about as well.

Sakkov had a meeting on the same issues in the US National Security Council.

Foreign Ministry Secretary General Opened NATO Military Terminology Conference

12 October - **Foreign Ministry Secretary General Marten Kokk opened the NATO Military Committee Terminology Fall Conference being held in Tallinn.**

While opening the conference, Secretary General Marten Kokk emphasised that Estonia is pleased to be hosting the event. Secretary General Kokk stated that harmonising military and security vocabulary and language is necessary so that NATO member states can converse amongst one another without difficulty. "The comprehensibility and clarity of terminology and the general comprehension of it are pre-requisites for even better co-operation within the alliance," said Kokk.

In his speech, Secretary General Kokk also highlighted the importance of the military and security and defence policy terminology commission working at the Ministry of Defence. "The terminology commission has done excellent work in supplementing the Estonian-language technical vocabulary with specialty terminology in our own language, and the commission has also played a significant part in the preparations for this conference," Kokk noted.

The conference, taking place in Tallinn from 12-16 October, was organised in co-operation by the Ministry of Defence, Foreign Ministry, and NATO Secretariat.

ECONOMIC NEWS

IMF Praises Estonia's Economic Policy

8 October (BNS) - **Estonia's economic policy during the global economic crisis won praise at the finance minister's and central bank governor's meetings with leaders of the International Monetary Fund and the head of its European division.**

"The IMF expressed support for both Estonia's economic policy so far and Estonia's goal to adopt the euro as soon as possible. Given Estonia's economic policy so far, the IMF considers this target realistic and supports Estonia's efforts to achieve it," Bank of Estonia President Andres Lipstok stated.

According to Finance Minister Jurgen Ligi, it is very important for Estonia to raise awareness internationally that our budget policy and financial situation differ radically from the general impression one gets when reading of the Baltic region.

"The important message we have to spread among investors and international finance organisations is that our economy is stabilising and soon we'll meet the Maastricht criteria," Ligi said.

The Estonian delegation also met with representatives of rating agencies and commercial banks, giving them an overview of the current state of the economy and assurances of the reliability of the country's economic policy and financial system.

Estonia's VKG to Launch New Oil Shale Plant Soon

7 October (BNS) - **The northeast Estonia-based Viru Keemia Grupp (Viru Chemical Group, VKG) that focuses on the production of oil shale will soon launch a new plant that cost 1.1 billion kroons (EUR 70 mln) and has an annual capacity of 0.9 million tons of shale oil.**

Development director of VKG Jaanus Purga said the construction has so far progressed according to plan and the company hopes to get the first batch of oil from the new factory already at the end of October.

According to earlier information, in spring VKG reduced the expenditures of the parent company by

up to 30% compared with the previous year. The company then said the only investment project that would go ahead on the planned scale was the construction of the new oil factory.

Estonian Farming Entrepreneurs Welcome in Belarus

7 October (BNS) - **Belarus is waiting for Estonian farming entrepreneurs, who will be offered cheap land and other easy terms for investment, says Agriculture Minister Helir-Valdor Seeder, the first member of the Estonian Cabinet to visit the Slavic state.**

According to Seeder, his Belarusian colleague Semen Shapiro showed great interest in the inflow of foreign investment and the country is especially interested in agricultural investments, the Ministry of Agriculture said.

The parties see opportunities for development in trade, too. The movement of food and other farming products between the two countries surged over the past year. In the first half of this year Estonia exported goods worth 57.7 million kroons (EUR 3.7 mln) to Belarus. The volume of export at the same time last year was 35.4 million kroons.

Import from Belarus has seen even stronger growth, soaring from six million kroons in 2008 to 65.1 million kroons in the first half of this year.

Seeder said Estonia and Belarus are both clearly export-oriented, so the prospects of further growth of trade are good.

Finland Wants to Store Grain in Estonia

7 October (BNS) - **Finland wants to ship a part of its grain crop into Estonia for storage, the Finnish daily Turun Sanomat says.**

Finnish storage facilities cannot hold all domestic grain so a plan was made to bring 200 000 tons or 50-100 shiploads into Estonia. The amounts of grain have grown owing to the poor market situation and two consecutive good crops.

The shipment will start soon provided the European Commission gives its nod to the plan. The grain belongs to the European Union, which has been making intervention purchases.

"Seeing that the grain is part of the EU stockpile, the decision on whether and where it will be stored is up to the European Commission," said PR manager of Tallinna Sadam (Port of Tallinn) Sven Ratassepp.

ESTONIAN REVIEW (ISSN 1023-1951)

Is issued by the
Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ISLANDI VÄLJAK 1, TALLINN, ESTONIA 15049

TEL +372 637 7600

FAX +372 637 7617

Estonian Review is also available over the
internet at <http://www.vm.ee>

To subscribe, please contact: vm@vm.ee
Estonian Review is compiled in co-operation with
the Baltic News Service <http://www.bns.ee/>

