

Estonian Review

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

VOLUME 19 NO 44

DEC 2 - 8, 2009

FOREIGN NEWS



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves with Polish President Lech Kaczynski, 7 December.

© Chancellery of the Polish President

President Ilves: Our Decisions and Actions Must be Characterised by Responsibility Before Europe

8 December - **All of the member states of the European Union, regardless of their size or the year in which they joined, are answerable to the union and their neighbours, agreed Estonian and Polish presidents Toomas Hendrik Ilves and Lech Kaczynski during their meeting in Warsaw.** "This means that no member state can take the easy way out as a bystander in the decision-making processes," President Ilves explained. "We all have to be equally avid in the defence of our interests. At the end of the day this means standing for a stronger and more united European Union."

A united EU also means equality within the union, precluding the division of member states into 'old' and 'new' or 'big' and 'small', the presidents concurred. They stated that it was unreasonable that just one of the 158 foreign representations of the union is led by an 'Eastern European' and that not one of the directors of the 41 General Directorates of the European Commission is from a country which joined the European Union six years ago.

President Ilves had spoken on the same issue at the Natolin campus of the College of Europe in Warsaw immediately prior to meeting with the Polish head of state. "There are no new members [of the European Union]," the Estonian president said in his address to the students and teaching staff at the college and the foreign diplomats in attendance. "There is no 'old' and 'new'. It is time for us to make it clear that we do not accept a difference in the amount that member states do: we must all be treated as equals. There is only one European Union, its member states, and most importantly its citizens. Equals."

Presidents Ilves and Kaczynski named stability and success in neighbours of the union as being in the common interest of the EU, as well as strong trans-Atlantic ties and the success of NATO in Afghanistan.

Continued on page 2

FOREIGN NEWS

Estonia Welcomes USA's New Afghanistan Strategy

2 December - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet expressed support for President of the United States Barack Obama's new Afghanistan strategy, which emphasises the importance of focusing on the civil sector in addition to increasing the military contribution in Afghanistan, as well as on co-operation with Pakistan.**

Paet welcomes the US president's decision to significantly increase the USA's contribution in Afghanistan. "Adding 30 000 soldiers is a valued decision that will help allies come to terms more effectively with the upcoming obligations," stated Paet. The foreign minister emphasised that in order to improve the security situation and ensure sustainability in Afghanistan, it is necessary for the Afghans to accept greater responsibility. "One goal of sending in additional forces is to increase training for the Afghan security forces, which will result in the Afghans being able to carry the responsibility for their own nation's security in the future," Paet added.

Estonia will continue to contribute to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan to the same degree as before. "On average there are 150-165 Defence Forces members participating in the mission, including the fire support team sent to strengthen the Estonian contingent and provide greater security," said Paet.

"During the next year we also plan to add an improvised explosive device disposal (IEDD) team," stated the foreign minister. A majority of the Estonian Defence Forces members will continue working in Helmand Province in southern Afghanistan.

Paet stated that while the military contribution is being increased, more attention should be paid to building up Afghanistan.

Continued on page 2

Ilves

(continued from page 1)

Democratic reform in the union's neighbouring countries must be encouraged since the success of such reforms will bolster the union's own security, the Estonian head of state stressed, adding: "But this also means responsibility on our part – promoting change in other countries, we must have the courage to continue offering them the opportunities they are striving for."

President Ilves referred to the Western Balkans as an example, where a number of countries have been successful in the course of reforms on their way to joining the union, but opposition to which from certain member states has hindered their progress somewhat.

The Estonian and Polish heads of state said that part of the neighbourhood policy of the European Union must continue to support reforms in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, but that it is also important to encourage the governments of Belarus and the Central Asian states to choose in favour of democratic changes.

Discussing the development of their own region – the Baltic States and Poland – the presidents emphasised that the success of one country in coping with the financial crisis boosts the success of the region as a whole, just as failure on one count affects the reputation of the remaining three. "That is why we have a responsibility not merely before ourselves in terms of how we are faring, but before the entire region," President Ilves said, praising Poland for maintaining economic growth despite the pressure of the global crisis.

Afghanistan

(continued from page 1)

"Estonia plans to increase its civil contribution in the next year, and we plan to send a third Estonian police officer to join the two already participating in the European Union police mission EUPOL Afghanistan," the foreign minister stated. Paet added that Estonia intends to continue its development co-operation projects in Afghanistan to the full extent of their original plans.

Paet Meets with New EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Ashton

8 December - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet participated in a meeting of the European Union foreign ministers in Brussels, where the European Union's enlargement policy was discussed.** Foreign Minister Urmas Paet also met with the new EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton within the framework of the external relations council.

The foreign ministers' council recognised Serbia's dedication to European Union integration, and taking into consideration Serbia's efforts to co-operate with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) decided to start implementing the interim agreement. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet confirmed that Serbia has achieved good results in accession negotiations with the European Union. "I am pleased that the European Union can begin to implement its interim agreement with Serbia, which

is a significant step in the European Union integration process," said Paet.

The EU foreign ministers confirmed that Macedonia has worked hard to act on the priorities of its Accession Partnership and that these endeavours should continue. The council of foreign ministers highlighted the European Commission's recommendation to begin accession negotiations with Macedonia*, which will be addressed during the next European Union presidency.

Foreign Minister Paet said that the visa freedom with the EU being granted to citizens of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as of 19 December is essential to the development of the entire Western Balkan region.

The EU foreign policy leaders were concerned that Bosnia and Herzegovina has fallen behind the other Western Balkan states in the EU accession process. Paet said that Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to speed up the implementation of reforms and the government needs find a common vision regarding the direction of the nation's Euro-Atlantic development.

"The European Union enlargement process needs to continue in accordance with the bases agreed upon in 2006," Paet noted. He also stated that experience as well as Montenegro and Albania's applications for accession have shown that a clear view to the European Union is an essential stimulus for carrying our reforms in candidate countries. "We support Turkey's efforts in the reform process and Croatia's progress in accession negotiations," Paet acknowledged.



German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs Guido Westerwelle, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, French Minister for Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner, and Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet in Brussels, 8 December.

The Council of Europe

Together with his Latvian and Slovenian colleagues, Foreign Minister Paet met with the new EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton. The topics of discussion at this introductory meeting were first and foremost the pressing questions related to the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), which need to be resolved quickly so that the European foreign service can start functioning in the spring of 2010. They also discussed the more effective implementation of the European Union Eastern Partnership Programme. "The European External Action Service that is being created will join

together divisions in existing EU institutions that sometimes overlap in their responsibilities, which will help the EU have more coherent external communication and better co-ordinated external activities," said Paet. Foreign Minister Paet said that it is essential that diplomats of all member states be represented in the EEAS from the beginning, and that one of the service's functions be providing consular protection for EU citizens.

**Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*

Paet: Free Trade and Visa Facilitation with Eastern Partnership States in EU's Interests

8 December - **At the first meeting of the European Union foreign ministers with their Eastern Partnership colleagues, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet emphasised the importance of free trade agreements and visa facilitation.**

At the meeting of the Eastern Partnership foreign ministers, the European Union foreign ministers and their colleagues from their partner countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus discussed how to better implement the Eastern Partnership policy that began in May of this year. "Eastern Partnership must become a values-based policy that will provide effective aid to target countries in growing closer to the European Union and in developing democracy and building up the rule of law," said Foreign Minister Paet. "Eastern Partnership must first and foremost offer our Eastern partners practical co-operation and the maximum possible support for implementing reforms, thereby creating a strong framework for this ambitious policy which includes the European Union's support and resources, the concluding of association agreements and the goal of visa freedom, as well as economic integration amongst our partners," Paet emphasised.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stressed the need for open markets and the unlawfulness of protectionist measures, calling upon the nations that had not yet joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to do so. "We must promote reciprocal economic and trade co-operation that would result in the possibility of concluding wide-ranging free trade agreements with those nations that are prepared for them," Paet noted. "Alongside political reforms, our partners to the east require comprehensive economic reforms and better co-ordinated support and technical aid from the European Union," Paet explained.

Foreign Minister Paet expressed satisfaction over the fact that the foreign ministers confirmed the priority activities of Eastern Partnership for the next few years and expressed hope that the swift execution of the Eastern Partnership seen thus far will continue during the Spanish European Union presidency.

Eastern Partnership is the continuation of a proposal made in 2008 to strengthen the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy, the European Commission's report on strengthening the eastern partnership initiative published at the end of 2008, and the European Council conclusions from December 2008 and March 2009 on starting up the Eastern Partnership programme.

NATO and ISAF Foreign Ministers Agree on Increased Contribution in Afghanistan

4 December - **The foreign ministers of NATO and the countries contributing to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) meeting in Brussels supported the USA's decision to strengthen the international forces in Afghanistan and confirmed NATO's focus on improving the security situation in Afghanistan.**

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that the foreign ministers of the countries involved in the ISAF expressed their support for US President Barack Obama's new strategy in Afghanistan. "Estonia welcomes President Obama's decision to significantly increase the security forces in Afghanistan and the United States' clear strategy for the future," confirmed Foreign Minister Paet.

Estonia is diversifying its military contribution in Afghanistan through adding special capabilities. Estonia will maintain its current contribution in terms of numbers, which means no more than 170 soldiers, most of whom will continue to ensure security in Helmand Province.

The foreign ministers emphasised the need to increase co-ordination between military and civil efforts and agreed on the necessity of the UN's increased role in managing this. Foreign Minister Paet stressed that military and civil co-operation and the effective use of resources are vitally important. The foreign ministers also emphasised the necessity of increasing the Afghans' responsibility and sense of ownership in all sectors. "Estonia expects the new Afghan government to take on more responsibility and implement concrete measures—the fight against corruption is especially important," asserted Paet.

The reintegration and reconciliation process plays an essential role in increasing stability in Afghanistan's society and in the rebuilding of the nation. "This process is of key importance for the effective functioning of a legitimate government that is recognised by Afghan citizens. ISAF Afghanistan can provide support in this area," Paet stressed.

The foreign ministers of the ISAF nations confirmed that they will continue providing military and economic support as well as development aid to Pakistan in order to support the nation's fight against extremism.

Prime Ministers Ansip and Zapatero Discuss Spain's Plans for EU Presidency

2 December - **Today, Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met with the Prime Minister of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, to discuss questions related to Spain's presidency of the European Union.** At the meeting, they discussed topics of importance to both the European Union and Estonia. According to Prime Minister Ansip, Estonia's goal for the coming year is to join the euro zone and to try to become the home country for the EU IT agency.

"I hope that Spain includes the selection of the location for the IT agency in its agenda for its presidency," said Prime Minister Ansip. The prime minister of Spain commended Estonia's development in the IT field and stressed that Estonia has been a forward-looking member state in other areas as well.

According to Ansip, there remain important questions relating to climate change and energy

security. "Energy security is a very important topic for Estonia, as well as for Spain," he said. According to the prime minister, the prerequisite for ensuring Estonia's energy security is the building of additional energy connections and the creation of a sufficiently functional and thoroughly interconnected energy market within the European Union for both natural gas as well as electricity.

Ansip confirmed that over the next six months, the development of Europe's foreign service, summits with Russia and the US, and the continued expansion of the European Union, are also very important. Zapatero confirmed that Spain is also planning to focus on the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

The mutual relations between Estonia and Spain were also discussed at the meeting. "The relations between Estonia and Spain are very good," Ansip declared. However, both prime ministers admitted that there are still many opportunities to develop the economic relations between the two countries. "Due to our joint activities in NATO, and in the framework of the European Union and other similar interests, we are firm allies and partners," the prime minister added. He said that co-operation is also made easier due to the similarities in our standpoints regarding many questions relating to security and European Union policies.



Prime Minister Andrus Ansip with Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, 2 December.

Ansip in Spain: Estonia Staying the Course to the Euro

2 December - **Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met with Miguel Fernández Ordóñez, Governor of the Bank of Spain, in Madrid today.**

The meeting addressed the situation in the world economy. The prime minister asserted that Estonia had adapted quickly to the new circumstances of the economic crisis. "Sizable budget reserves accumulated during economic growth, low government sector debt and speedy measures to adjust the budget have helped the Government to avoid financing problems and raised our hopes for the introduction of the euro in 2011," Ansip said. The latest forecasts by both the IMF and the European Commission confirm that Estonia's prospects for meeting the Maastricht criteria are good.

According to Miguel Fernández Ordóñez, the euro zone is open to new members; however it is important is to observe all of the agreed upon rules. According to him, Estonia has been making the right

choices and is welcome in the circle of the euro zone countries.

The meeting at the Royal Elcado Institute think tank focused primarily on topics concerning the economy. According to Prime Minister Ansip, recent developments in Estonia have been positive, despite the continuing economic downturn. Economic recovery, however, will depend largely on developments in the main export markets and on the ability of the state to attract direct foreign investments. "Joining the euro zone will definitely increase the reliability of the investment environment," Ansip said.

Similarly to Spain, Estonia attaches great importance to investments in innovation, research and development, and education; in order to stimulate the economy and secure improved competitiveness. Estonia has improved financing options for export companies and increased the flexibility of its labour market.

Paet: Existing Crises Should be Resolved Within Framework of OSCE

2 December - **In his speech at the OSCE foreign ministers' meeting in Athens, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet emphasised that the further development and activities of the OSCE must be based on the organisation's values and previously established fundamental principles.**

"In the Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and also in Transnistria and Nagorno Karabakh, we must achieve results by acting according to the OSCE's guiding principles and previously made agreements," Paet stressed. "Adhering to our pledges does not require us to invent anything new," he emphasised.

Paet stated that the OSCE's principles have served to protect rule of law, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms across the Euro-Atlantic area for the last 35 years. "However, we still need to move forward in order to meet emerging threats and challenges such as climate change, energy security, cyber security, and terrorism," asserted Paet. "It is also necessary to have stronger OSCE engagement in Afghanistan so that we can make a valuable contribution to the progress being made there," he said.

Paet stressed that the application of the OSCE's acting principles affirm how active the organisation is in addressing human trafficking, national minorities, media freedom, and election monitoring. "For example, discussions about the implementation of the Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations, which were initiated and launched by High Commissioner on National Minorities Knut Vollebæk, have successfully begun among OSCE member states," said Paet. "Communication among nations continues to be very important in the support and protection of national minorities," he added.

Paet proposed sharing Estonia's e-voting experience with the other OSCE member states. "The OSCE election monitoring system is unique in the world and has already functioned for nearly 20 years," said Paet. "Estonia has successfully introduced new technology for carrying out elections electronically, and we are prepared to share our experiences so that the positive aspects of this system could be used by others throughout the OSCE area," Paet added.

In 2010 the chairmanship of the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe) will be passed from Greece to Kazakhstan.

Foreign Minister Discusses Frozen Conflicts with Armenian, Azerbaijani Colleagues

2 December - **In his meeting with his Armenian and Azerbaijani colleagues in Athens, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet discussed regional developments and the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh.** In talking about potential solutions to local frozen conflicts with Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian and Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov, Paet confirmed Estonia's support for peaceful and constructive resolutions.

Both Nalbandian and Mammadyarov expressed hope that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict would be resolved in the foreseeable future. Paet stated that the re-establishment of relations between Turkey and Armenia is a promising sign for improving the security situation in the South Caucasus. "Frozen conflicts must be addressed seriously, because otherwise they will become combustible conflicts," Paet added.

Paet stated that Estonia is interested in tightening economic ties with both Armenia and Azerbaijan. "Although we are just taking the first steps towards intensifying economic and tourism relations with Armenia—for example, this summer an Estonian business delegation visited Armenia—with Azerbaijan we have already reached the point of reciprocal investments," said Paet. "The information technology agreement signed with Azerbaijan in September of this year will soon come into effect. We would like to make even more additions to the framework of the agreement to set the stage for the development of economic relations," he added.

NATO Foreign Ministers Encouraged Ukraine and Georgia to Continue Making Reforms Towards NATO

3 December - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet is participating in a meeting of the NATO foreign ministers in Brussels, where meetings of the NATO-Ukraine and NATO-Georgia commissions also took place.**

The NATO foreign ministers emphasised the decision made at the Bucharest summit and re-confirmed at the Strasbourg/Kehl summit regarding the future NATO membership of Ukraine and Georgia and encouraged Kiev and Tbilisi to continue making reforms. Foreign Minister Paet recognised Ukraine and Georgia for successfully completing the first year of the Annual National Plan (ANP) regardless of difficult economic conditions.

At the meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Commission, the foreign ministers discussed the current state of NATO-Ukraine partnership and future goals.

The NATO foreign ministers encouraged Ukraine to intensify its reform activity and improve the implementation of the NATO Membership Action Plan. "Ukraine should use the NATO action plan and the NATO-Ukraine Commission as much as possible in order to advance its reforms on the way to joining the alliance," Paet stressed. The ministers also recognised Ukraine's contribution to NATO operations.

At the meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission, the NATO foreign ministers recognised Georgia for implementing reforms and called on the nation to continue to do so.

The NATO foreign ministers emphasised that NATO-Georgia relations are based upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. "These principles and the non-recognition of the separation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia are key elements to resolving the conflicts in the South Caucasus," stressed Paet. Paet also stated that access to Abkhazia and South Ossetia for international monitors and humanitarian aid workers is essential. In addition, Foreign Minister Paet recognised Georgia for its contribution to NATO operations.

Paet: NATO-Russia Relations Depend on Trust and Fulfilment of Obligations

4 December - **At the meeting of the NATO and Russian foreign ministers in Brussels, the ministers decided that the priority areas of NATO-Russia practical co-operation are Afghanistan, fighting the narcotics trade, the battle against terrorism, combating piracy, missile defence, and arms control and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.** The foreign ministers approved the appropriate documents and action plan. In addition, the NATO-Russia Council decided to compile a joint overview of the security challenges standing before NATO and Russia in the 21st century.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that NATO-Russia relations depend on the existence of trust and the fulfilment of accepted obligations. "Increasing mutual trust is important for transparency and making decisions, as well as for organising military trainings. Reciprocal misinterpretations and possible tensions only serve to prevent transparent relations between NATO and Russia," he added.

Paet stated that NATO emphasised Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and called upon Russia to retract its decision to recognise the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The NATO foreign ministers also called on the parties to the Geneva negotiations to be constructive and to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict through co-operation with the UN, EU and OSCE.

Estonia Supports Giving NATO MAP to Montenegro

4 December - **According to Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, the decision made by the NATO foreign ministers today to give a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Montenegro and the confirmation that a MAP will soon be given to Bosnia and Herzegovina will strengthen Europe's security.**

The NATO foreign ministers decided to give Montenegro a Membership Action Plan because Montenegro has continued to show its concrete dedication to implementing reforms and its aspiration to become a future member of NATO.

The NATO foreign ministers confirmed that NATO's doors will remain open to all democratic European nations that share NATO's values and are prepared to fulfil the responsibilities and obligations that are required for membership. Foreign Minister Paet said that Estonia has always been a strong supporter of NATO enlargement and the MAP.

Paet confirmed that the NATO Membership Action Plan is an effective tool that helps new democracies carry out reforms. "However, the MAP does not automatically mean membership in NATO," Paet stressed. He added that there are different paths for achieving NATO membership—equally valuable is the compilation and fulfilment of an Annual National Plan (ANP).

The NATO foreign ministers emphasised that NATO enlargement is the most effective way to bring stability and well-being to the Western Balkan region.

The NATO foreign ministers confirmed their readiness to give a MAP to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Paet noted that the NATO foreign ministers agreed that Bosnia and Herzegovina has achieved great success in carrying out its reforms and they welcomed the country's application for a Membership Action Plan. The NATO foreign ministers called upon Bosnia and Herzegovina to continue its close co-operation with NATO through intensive dialogue and the Individual Partnership Action Plan.

Paet Confirmed Estonian Support for Ukraine

5 December - **During his meeting with Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Petro Poroshenko thanked Estonia for its support and aid for Ukraine's development and on its path to the European Union and NATO.**

Poroshenko confirmed that regardless of the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections, Ukraine would like to continue its close co-operation with the EU and NATO.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that Estonia is prepared to support Ukraine on its path towards NATO and the EU in any way it can. "One new opportunity is the European Union Eastern Partnership programme, within the framework of which co-operation with the EU and NATO can intensify even more," he added.

Paet stated that Estonia supports visa negotiations between the EU and Ukraine to allow Ukrainian citizens easier access to EU countries.

The ministers said that a social security agreement between Estonia and Ukraine will be concluded shortly.

Poroshenko invited Paet to pay a visit to Ukraine.

Estonian Ambassador to Albania Presents Credentials

7 December - **Estonian Ambassador to the Republic of Albania Andres Talvik presented his credentials to Albanian President Bamir Topi. The Estonian ambassador resides in Athens.**

During the conversation following the credentials-presenting ceremony, Ambassador Andres Talvik and President Bamir Topi discussed opportunities to further develop relations between Estonia and Albania and recognised that there is great potential for developing trade relations. "Business contacts between Estonia and Albania should be intensified," stated Ambassador Andres Talvik. They also discussed opportunities for developing relations in the tourism sector.

President Topi stated that Albania is interested in Estonia's experiences in joining the European Union

and in its information and communication technology sector.

Talvik and Topi also discussed the situation in Kosovo. The Albanian president recognised Estonia's contribution to supporting stability in Kosovo.

Ambassador Andres Talvik was born in 1947 in Tallinn. In 1972 Talvik graduated from the architecture department of Tallinn University of Technology. Talvik began working at the Foreign Ministry in 1992. He has been a division director in the foreign economic policy department, worked at the Estonian embassies in Brussels and Paris, and been the Estonian ambassador to France. Andres Talvik has also served as the director general of the Foreign Ministry's department for Asia, Australia and Oceania. Talvik is the Estonian Ambassador to Greece. Ambassador Andres Talvik speaks French, English and Russian.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Mart Laar Awarded High Finnish Decoration

8 December (BNS) - **Finnish President Tarja Halonen has awarded Mart Laar, historian and chairman of the Estonian Pro Patria and Res Publica (IRL) party, the Knight of the Order of the White Rose, first class.**

Laar was nominated for the honour by Finnish war veterans in recognition of his research into the history of World War II. The decoration was handed over by Finnish Ambassador to Estonia Jaakko Kalela, spokesperson for IRL said.

"It certainly would not have been possible to receive this (decoration) without the Estonian men who, fighting for the freedom of Finland and for the honour of Estonia, showed that Estonia's goal in World War II was to support neither of the two totalitarian great powers," said Laar.

Last year the man of letters Rein Veidemann received the same decoration.

Preliminary Registration of EU Domains Containing Diacritical Marks Launched

2 December (BNS) - **Starting from 10 December it will be possible to register eu-ending domain names that contain diacritical marks of the Latin alphabet or letters of the Cyrillic or Greek alphabets.**

Among other things, this means that the Estonian letters ä, ö and ü with umlauts and õ with a tilde can be used in domain names, said Zone Media, which started preliminary registration of eu domain names with diacritical marks.

Only the Cyrillic letters used in European Union countries will be supported.

Reception of preliminary applications will expire on 10 December and forwarding of the applications to the European Union's domain register will start on the same day.

Zone Media said that the company was the only accredited EU domains registry keeper in Estonia.

OÜ Zone Media, which launched its operations in 1999, is one of the leading Estonian internet infrastructure and support service providers. Since 2006 Zone Media is the official registry keeper of the European Union.

Finnish Researcher's Book on Estonian History in Third Print After One Month

4 December (BNS) - **The publisher has ordered the third printing of the book "Eesti ajalugu" ("The History of Estonia") by Finnish historian Seppo Zetterberg in just over a month.**

The Estonian edition of the book came out at the beginning of November and about 5 000 copies of it have been sold, the publisher of the Estonian edition, Tänapäev, said.

It said that for a book on history the number of copies printed was unprecedented and that the 5 000 copies were sold in a very short period of time.

According to the publisher the book by Zetterberg, professor of general history at the University of Jyväskylä, is the largest overview of Estonian history from the earliest times to the present day. For the 672-page Estonian edition, the author reworked through all the material and made significant additions.

Zetterberg, who headed the Finnish Institute in Estonia in 1994-1996, has written extensively on the history of Estonia and Estonian-Finnish ties.

The Finnish original of "A History of Estonia" ("Viron historia") was published in 2007. His previous works include "Suomi ja Viro 1917-1919" ("Finland and Estonia 1917-1919") and he was the editor of "Viro. Historia, kansa ja kulttuuri" ("Estonia. History, People and Culture").

DEFENCE NEWS

Defence Minister Rates Chances of Success in Afghanistan as Good

8 December (BNS) - **Estonian Defence Minister Jaak Aaviksoo and Sherard Cowper-Coles, Britain's special representative to Afghanistan, said after Tuesday's meeting in Tallinn that following the decision of the United States and other allies to send reinforcements to Afghanistan they rate the chances of success in that country as very good.**

Clearly there is not a purely military nor purely non-military solution that would create long-term stability in that country, the two concurred in the meeting.

Aaviksoo and Cowper-Coles acknowledged that the only way to achieve stability in Afghanistan was in a manner chosen by Afghans themselves and based on their principles, spokespeople for the Defence Ministry said.

"What it will take is the Afghans' own sense of responsibility and a foundation resting on their society and culture on which to build the rest," the defence minister said and added that to create elementary stability and a political dialogue, adequate military presence is required.

The British diplomat also met on Tuesday with Capt. Janno Mark, the chief of the Estonian contingent in Afghanistan, and commander of the infantry company ESTCOY-18 Capt. Tarvo Luga, who recently returned from that country. Cowper-Coles said he had been told by all British contingent commanders that Estonian soldiers in Afghanistan stand out with their courage and professionalism.

Mine-Hunter Sakala Returns to Estonia

3 December (BNS) - **The mine-hunter Sakala, which served for five months starting from the**

beginning of July in the NATO response force NRF-13, returned to Estonia today.

The vessel was met at the naval base in Tallinn by Navy chief Capt. Igor Schvede, commander of the mine-hunter division Lt. Cmdr. Sten Sepper, and the crew's family members, the General Staff said.

The chief of the Navy thanked the returned seamen for honourable performance of duties towards allies. Schvede handed over NATO medals to the 26 seamen who served on the mission. Thirteen seamen were awarded the NATO medal brooch marking participation in a second mission. Two servicemen who served on the Sakala also received NATO medals.

"Crossing the Atlantic showed that vessels of the Estonian Navy are capable of operating successfully also outside the Baltic Sea," said the ship's commander Lt. Ain Parna. In his words, the weather was good on the journey from Europe to the eastern coast of Canada but during the return trip the crew had only a couple of storm-free days.

The Sakala was the first Estonian warship to cross the Atlantic both ways. While serving in the composition of the alliance's mine countermeasures group, it visited Britain, Spain, Portugal, Canada, the United States and France, calling at 12 ports -- Devonport, Vigo, Ponta Delgada, Halifax, New York, Norfolk, Charleston, Hamilton, El Ferrol, la Coruna and Cherbourg -- and covering close to 24 000 kilometers.

On the other side of the ocean, the Sakala took part in a mine clearance exercise in Canadian waters and in the largest U.S. naval training of this year, Joint Task Force Exercise, to practice co-operation in the composition of an aircraft carrier group. The ship will be on NRF standby until 5 January.

The Sakala is one of the three Sandown class mine-hunters Estonia bought from Britain. The 1990-built ship is equipped with modern mine-hunting technology and the SEAFOX mine disposal system. The crew of the Sakala received ship class-specific training in the UK.

Earlier on the flagship of the Navy Admiral Pitka and mine-hunters Admiral Cowan and Sulev have served in the NATO response force.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Estonia Meets Maastricht Inflation Criteria in November

7 December (BNS) - **Judging by current data, Estonia fulfilled the Maastricht inflation criterion for euro adoption in November, the central bank said today.**

The Maastricht inflation criterion is calculated on the basis of harmonised indices of consumer prices, whose figures for November Eurostat will publish on 16 December, the bank said.

Although the economic environment is not conducive to price rises, several taxation changes pushing up prices will take effect next year. As the Bank of Estonia sees it, they will speed up inflation but do not endanger fulfilment of the inflation criterion in the near future.

According to Statistics Estonia, the consumer price index dropped in November by 0.2% compared to October and by 2.1% compared to November 2008. The fall forecast of the Bank of Estonia sees prices coming down by an average 0.1% this year.

Playtech Acquires Skill Games Developer GTS

8 December (BNS) - **The international developer of online games and gaming environments Playtech, which does a large portion of its development work in Estonia, is to buy the gaming software company Gaming Technology Solutions (GTS).**

The acquisition will take place for an initial consideration of 10.8 million euros, with a further consideration capped at 21.6 million euros over the next two years based on the future performance of the business.

GTS offers skill games, including those allowed under regulated markets, Playtech said. It said GTS has amongst its licensees some of the most well established European sports betting operators.

For the 12-month period ended June 2009, GTS recorded revenues of 2.6 million pounds sterling. Playtech is listed on the Alternative Investments Market (AIM) of the London Stock Exchange.

Tallink Serves Nearly Two Mln Passengers in September-November

4 December (BNS) - **The Estonian shipping line Tallink Group carried a total of 1 808 235 passengers on all its routes in September-November, one percent more than in the same period last year.**

The number of passengers increased the most on the Latvian-Swedish and Estonian-Finnish routes. On the Latvian-Swedish route the company carried 116 804 passengers (up 19%) and on the Estonian-Finnish routes 839 678 passengers (up 4%).

On the Estonian-Swedish route Tallink carried 154 398 passengers (down 2%), on the Finnish-Swedish route 681 685 passengers (down 4%) and on the Finnish-German route 15 670 passengers (down 12%).

In addition to the growth in passenger numbers, the number of vehicles carried also increased. The number of cars carried grew by 15% to 200 199, while that of trucks fell by 10% to 68 334.

In November Tallink Grupp carried 540 846 passengers, 58 690 vehicles and 22 417 cargo units. Tallink Group operates on several different routes under the Tallink and Silja Line trademarks. The company owns a total of 19 ships.

Smartpost Expanding Service to Finland

7 December (BNS) - **Starting in January it will be possible to send parcels from parcel terminals of the Estonian company Smartpost to Finland, where they will be delivered by the Finnish state-owned postal company Itella.**

It will take three to four days for a parcel to reach the recipient. The price of the service has not yet been fixed, Smartpost said.

After starting to offer the possibility of sending parcels from Estonia to Finland, the company plans to launch the service in the opposite direction as well. Smartpost is developing a network of parcel terminals or self-service post offices and plans to expand to several countries, including outside the European Union.

It started building a network of parcel terminals in Estonia last summer. The Estonian Development Fund invested 13.4 million kroons (EUR 0.86 mln) in the project.

Smartpost technology allows delivery of goods purchased by people from Internet vendors and mail-order companies via specially built unmanned parcel terminals located in shopping centres. Parcels can also be sent from the terminal using a bankcard to pay for the service.

CULTURAL NEWS

Grand Prize of Black Nights Film Festival Goes to German-Israeli Film

4 December (BNS) - **The grand jury award of the annual Black Nights Film Festival that is about to end in the Estonian capital Tallinn on Friday went to the film "Ajami," a German-Israeli co-production directed by Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani.** The Grand Prix for the best film comes with a prize of 10 000 euros from the city of Tallinn.

The jury prize for best director went to Finland's Klaus Härö for his film "Letters to Father Jakob".

Maria Bonnevie's role in the Norwegian-Swedish-Finnish co-production "The Angel" landed her the jury prize for best actress while the jury prize for best actor went to David Denick for his role in the Danish film "Brotherhood." The special jury prize of the 13th Black Nights Film Festival went to the film "Wedding in Bessarabia," a joint production of Romania, Moldova and Luxembourg.

Animated Film by Olga and Priit Pärn Won Grand Prix in Italy

2 December - **Olga and Priit Pärn's animated film "Life Without Gabriella Ferri" ("Elu ilma Gabriella Ferrita") earned the Grand Prix at the I Castelli Animati Festival.**

According to the international jury at the I Castelli Animati Festival, it is a complete, sensual and heart-warming film filled with humanity and hope, which poetically depicts the strength of love and the opportunity for a new life.

The international animated film festival I Castelli Animati took place from 25-29 November in Rome, Italy. The festival programme included a complete retrospective of the films of Priit Pärn. In addition, the Estonian animated film director held a lecture within the framework of the festival entitled "Constructing a Screenplay" and belonged to the jury for Italian student films.

ESTONIAN REVIEW (ISSN 1023-1951)

Is issued by the
Press and Information Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ISLANDI VALJAK 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@press@vm.ee
Estonian Review is compiled in co-operation with
the Baltic News Service <http://www.bns.ee/>

