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TOP NEWS



President Toomas Hendrik Ilves speaking to the United Nations General Assembly at UN Headquarters, New York

UN Photo/Marco Castro

The President of the Republic Spoke to the UN General Assembly

Sep 26 - **Climate change, cyber security, crisis regulation, and cooperation between international organizations—these were the topics for the speech by President Toomas Hendrik Ilves in New York, when the Estonian Head of State spoke to the 62nd Session of the United Nations Organization yesterday on behalf of his country.**

Climate change has now merited the necessary attention, and has awakened a sense of mission in the world's countries, said President Ilves.

"Yes, we understand the special needs of the developing countries, when we are speaking about sustainable economic development and eradicating poverty. However, just as important is to disassociate economic growth from energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions," said the Estonian Head of State. "The diversification of energy sources and expansion of the utilization of renewable energy is the way of the future. Each one of us should bear part of the collective responsibility for increasing energy efficiency."

The resources and technology for removing carbons originate primarily from industrial countries, President Ilves stated, adding, "Therefore it is important to continue the dialogue between industrial and developing countries for the introduction of green economics—thereby reducing dependence on carbon-based fuels and striving to counterbalance the climate changes caused by human activities. We must promote the transfer of the technology necessary for the production of environmentally friendly energy. Estonia feels the best way to do this is to tie investments with clean technologies."

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DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonia Held Day of Resistance

Sep 22 - **September 22 is marked officially as Day of Resistance in Estonia for the first time this year to remember the fall of the interim government set up in Estonia in the late part of World War II.**

The bill declaring Sept. 22 Day of Resistance was passed by the parliament on Feb. 15 this year.

On Sept. 18, 1944, when the Estonian capital was still under the control of Nazi German forces, Jüri Uluots in his capacity as the acting president of the Republic of Estonia appointed to office a broad-based government headed by Otto Tief. The government declared the continuation of the Republic of Estonia and its neutrality in the war.

On Sept. 22, 1944 the Red Army overran Tallinn from where German occupation forces had withdrawn several days earlier, where the Estonian government headed by Otto Tief had been installed and where the blue, black and white national flag was flying atop the Tall Hermann tower. Five decades of Soviet occupation followed.

FOREIGN NEWS

Estonia to Increase Its Civilian Contribution in Afghanistan

Sep 21 - **Estonia intends to increase its civilian contribution in Afghanistan in the near future, Foreign Minister Urmas Paet said.**

With 130 Estonian military personnel taking part in the mission in Afghanistan, it is the most important military mission for the country right now and is set to remain this way for a long period of time, the minister said.

Civilian contribution is becoming more and more important in Afghanistan. Estonia's first development cooperation project in Afghanistan -- the furnishing of a children's hospital in southern Afghanistan -- has been completed and Estonia is on the lookout for new projects accomplishable with Estonia's means.

Estonia is also ready to make a financial contribution to Afghanistan, Paet said, adding that the sums earmarked for development aid in Estonia's draft budget for next year are substantially bigger than before.

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Speaking about Europe's crisis hotspots, President Ilves paused on Abkhazia in Georgia.

"We cannot be satisfied with the current situation. It is important to create trust between the parties and to restart meetings between the Georgian government and representatives of Abkhazia. There is no place here for internally or externally based military provocations," said the Estonian Head of State. "This conflict can be resolved if all the interested parties act constructively. We must create the necessary political will for regulating this crisis, and in this respect, a more effective contribution by the European Union would be welcome."

President Ilves called for increased coordination from the international community in dealing with the resolution of problems related to forced migration, regardless of whether poverty, armed conflict or natural catastrophes is the reason for the massive migration from home.

"A forced migration from home is always a tragedy. I know. My family was forced to leave their homeland by Soviet occupation forces. Blending into a new society is also a difficult experience. Only with well-coordinated, common efforts can we guarantee that people will never have to leave their homes because they have no choice. Therefore, a global approach to people's migration should continue to be included as a question of vital importance in the UN agenda," said the Estonian Head of State.

Full version of the speech is available at www.president.ee

FOREIGN NEWS

Juncker: Luxembourg and Estonia are Moving Together Toward an Increasingly United Europe

Sep 24 - **The visiting prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean Claude Juncker, said after meeting with his Estonian colleague Andrus Ansip that the two countries work closely together on EU-related questions, especially the Constitutional Treaty, and he acknowledged mutual cooperation in this field.**

In Juncker's words, Luxembourg and Estonia are bound by their wish to move together toward an increasingly united Europe, he said. The Luxembourgian prime minister also underlined the necessity of adopting the EU reform deal.

Both Ansip and Juncker praised the state of bilateral relations. Juncker said his country has always supported Estonia and called this Baltic state a country with a tragic past but a promising future whose progress since 1991 has been impressive.

Estonia can learn much from Luxembourg as a successful member country of the European Union, Ansip said. "Luxembourg is living proof that even the smallest member nations can successfully influence and direct EU policies," he said.

Both Estonia and Luxembourg have an optimistic view of the bloc's future, Ansip said.

According to Ansip, Estonia welcomes the EU's new energy package which creates the preconditions for continued development of the internal energy market. In his opinion, the bloc has to speak with

one voice about external energy relations. Estonia's view is that the internal energy market package should contain clear and uniform rules for trading with third countries.

Juncker met today also with deputy speaker of parliament Kristiina Ojuland. The two talked about the EU's possible expansion into western Balkans. Ojuland for her part expressed the opinion that EU countries should not sit with their hands folded waiting for developments in that region but together discuss the ways in which West Balkan countries' democratic developments could be fostered.

The two agreed that EU countries will probably fail to find common ground in this issue right now, but the topic will remain on the agenda.

Speaking about the bloc's relations with Russia, Ojuland stressed EU member nations should have a common policy in spite of Moscow's efforts to cause internal friction.

Juncker had meetings also with Finance Minister Ivri Padar and the governor of the central bank, Andres Lipstok, and visited the Museum of Occupations.

Foreign Minister Met with Representatives from American Jewish Committee

Sep 25 - **Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with representatives from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) in New York.**

At the meeting, it was recognized that Estonian foreign ministers have developed a steady tradition of meeting with representatives from Jewish organizations while attending the UN's General Assembly.

The AJC representatives expressed their happiness over the synagogue that was inaugurated in Tallinn in the spring of this year. The opening of the synagogue, which is built after original designs by Estonian architects, was attended by current Israeli President Shimon Peres.

Foreign Minister Paet said that Estonia's relations with Israel have become stronger recently, and he hopes that sending an Estonian diplomat to Tel Aviv in August of this year is a step towards further bolstering relations.

At the meeting, both sides also exchanged thoughts about current international events.

Paet: UN Climate Conference Sent a Strong Political Signal

24 Sep - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet attended a high-level side event to the UN climate change conference entitled "Global Voices on Climate Change."**

The keynote speaker of the event was former US Vice President Al Gore, who expressed hope that an agreement could be reached regarding a new global climate treaty by 2009. Gore proposed that negotiations on the treaty should begin in 2010 and that nations should not be given the usual amount of time to conform to requirements. Gore added that until a new agreement is reached, climate change must remain a priority in the political spotlight, which should be achieved by holding high-level meetings on the subject periodically during the negotiation period.

According to Foreign Minister Paet the recent UN climate conference sent a strong political signal. "The desire and conviction to act are present on the very highest level," Paet said. He added that it is in Estonia's best interests to reach a new global climate agreement as quickly as possible. "Then companies have a clear picture of what they need to invest in to meet the new requirements," Paet noted.

In December, the UN's annual climate change conference will take place in Bali, Indonesia. At the conference, negotiations will begin on the creation of a new global climate change agreement (the follow-up pact to the Kyoto Protocol).

The Kyoto Protocol is an agreement for reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. The Protocol was negotiated in December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan, and it will expire in 2012. Estonia ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 14 October, 2002.

Estonia Wishes to Broaden Transit-related Co-operation with Kazakhstan

Sep 24 - **Estonian Foreign Minister Urmass Paet met with his Kazakhstani counterpart Marat Tazhin in New York.**

The ministers discussed economic co-operation between Estonia-Kazakhstan, energetics issues, the European Union's Central Asia strategy, and the situation in Afghanistan. Both ministers exchanged invitations for visits to each other's country.

When talking about economic co-operation, both sides recognised the fact that trade between the two nations has increased recently, but there is still plenty of room for development. Foreign Minister Urmass Paet said that this potential is most relevant in the realm of transit. "Estonian ports are ready to broaden our co-operation," said Paet.

The volume of Kazakhstani freight coming through Estonia's transit sector has increased from year to year. Last year, imports from Kazakhstan to Estonia increased fourfold. In 2006, 805,9 million kroons worth of goods were imported, up from 208,8 million kroons in 2005.

Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Marat Tazhin also gave a thorough overview of the plans for new pipelines to be built in the region.

When discussing the EU's Central Asia strategy, Paet mentioned how Estonia sees the possibility of involving Afghanistan in some projects. Both Foreign Ministers noted that a majority of narcotics circulating in Estonia and in Kazakhstan originate in Afghanistan.

The EU's Central Asia strategy was approved in June of this year, and its focus is on education, human rights, advancement of democracy, economic development, building energy and transportation infrastructures, environmental protection, and the war on terrorism.

Foreign Minister Paet is participating in an EU Foreign Ministers week in New York as part of the UN's 62nd General Assembly. In addition to meetings between European Union foreign policy leaders, the traditional meetings with the United States and Russian Federation Foreign Ministers are also taking place.

Estonia Applies for Membership in International Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research Task Force

Sep 25 - **The Estonian Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Mati Vaarman, gave Estonia's request to join the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF) to the Czech Republic's Foreign Ministry, since the Czech Republic is currently the leading nation of the organization.**

Estonia's Foreign Minister Urmass Paet has expressed hope that Estonia will be a member of ITF beginning next year. The ITF's goal is to advocate the necessity of Holocaust education, remembrance and research on a national and international level. Foreign Minister Paet has stated that a Holocaust-related co-operation forum would surely be a relevant place to discuss other genocides, large-scale international crimes, and mass oppressions as well.

On 12. July of this year, Estonian government approved the application to join the ITF. Estonia's accession to the Task Force will be decided at the organization's December plenary meeting. At the moment, Estonia is an ITF liaison project country.

The ITF was created in 1998 by Sweden's Prime Minister at the time, Göran Persson. It is a Holocaust-related co-operation forum for both governments and independent organizations.

Currently, the members of the ITF are Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Holland, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

EU Foreign Ministers Discuss Situation in Chad

Sep 25 - **Estonian Foreign Minister Urmass Paet attended a meeting of European foreign ministers in New York, where the situation in Chad and Myanmar was discussed.**

The foreign policy leaders considered steps the EU could take to resolve the humanitarian and security problems in Sudan's neighbouring countries, which have been brought about by the crisis in Darfur. The possibility of sending an EU military mission to the region was also discussed.

Foreign Minister Paet said that Estonia supports the resolution of the Darfur crisis on a larger scale and the potential EU military mission. "Estonia is prepared to participate in the EU's possible military mission, if the Nordic Battlegroup (NBG) is used," Paet said.

The Darfur conflict has created a humanitarian crisis and a deterioration of security for its neighbouring states, particularly eastern Chad and the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic. The UN finds that having an international presence in eastern Chad would help to alleviate the situation. The objectives of a military mission would be to ensure the safety of the refugee camps, to create opportunities for refugees to return to their homes, and to initiate development projects.

The EU's Nordic Battlegroup is comprised of units from Estonia, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Ireland. The Battlegroup, which is led by Sweden, must be operational by 1. January, 2008.

The foreign ministers also discussed making an EU declaration in response to the events in Myanmar, stating the EU's solidarity with the people of Myanmar and calling for an end to acts of violence by authorities.

Estonia backs Macedonia's bid for membership in EU, NATO

Sep 25 - Estonia supports Macedonia's aspirations to join both the European Union and NATO, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves assured his counterpart Branko Crvenkovski.

"Estonia recognizes the reform efforts of Macedonia that aspires to become the economic tiger of West Balkan," Ilves told Crvenkovski in a meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, the president's office reports.

The president affirmed Estonia's support for the EU's and NATO's open door policy. Macedonia wishes to become a member of both organizations in the future.

"Accession talks with the EU can begin as soon as the European Commission judges you to be ready for them," Ilves said. "And you can count on Estonia's backing for your NATO bid, too."

Speaking about the general political situation in West Balkan and the status of Kosovo, the Estonian head of state said Estonia supports UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari's proposals on the status of the Serbian province and acknowledges his work.

"We believe it is essential for the EU to maintain internal unity both during the negotiations and the subsequent period. We are also in favour of coordination of EU, NATO and US actions," he said.

Estonian Foreign Minister Met with Vietnamese and Argentinean Counterparts

Sep 25 - Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with his Vietnamese counterpart Pham Gia Khiem and Argentinean counterpart Roberto García Moritan in New York.

In Paet's meeting with Pham Gia Khiem, the ministers discussed implementing visa-free travel for Estonian citizens, the situation in Myanmar and supported each others' candidacy in international organizations.

According to Urmas Paet, Vietnam is quite a popular travel destination for Estonians, and allowing visa-free travel for Estonian citizens would surely boost tourism even further. Foreign Minister Khiem confirmed that he will do everything in his power to simplify Estonians' travel to Vietnam. The Estonian and Vietnamese ministers exchanged invitations for visits to each other's country.

When Paet met with his Argentinean colleague, the two discussed boosting economic relations, supporting one another's candidacy in international organizations, and co-operation in the realm of e-government.

Roberto García Moritan proposed to help a range of businesses in creating networking ties with each other and noted that Argentina plans to send a delegation of business representatives to Estonia early next year.

Since both Estonia and Argentina utilize e-government, the two ministers also discussed co-operation in the area of e-governing. Foreign Minister Paet noted that Estonia has fresh

experiences in implementing e-government, and Argentina might be interested in our observations.

Foreign Minister Paet acknowledged the recent departure of Estonia's Honorary Consul from Argentina.

The Estonian and Argentinean foreign ministers also exchanged invitations to visit each other's countries.

Foreign Minister Paet is participating in an EU Foreign Ministers week in New York as part of the UN's 62nd General Assembly. In addition to meetings between European Union foreign policy leaders, the traditional meetings with the United States and Russian Federation foreign ministers are also taking place. The Estonian Foreign Minister has many bilateral meetings scheduled.

President of Estonia Signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Sep 25 - President Toomas Hendrik Ilves signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which the world organization passed in December 2006.

The Convention obligates the countries agreeing to it to protect the rights of the disabled, to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and promote their rights, including in educational, health-care and social spheres.

"Support for the disabled, our attitude toward their rights, and their broad-based involvement in the society demonstrate the health, maturity, and strength of our society," said President Ilves.

Compliance with the Convention will be monitored by a supervisory committee comprised of experts, to which the countries will submit reports regarding compliance with the Convention.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Persons with Disabilities has not come into force yet; this will happen after the Convention is ratified by 20 countries.

"I hope that the Convention, which has been jointly supported by the European Union member states, will also be ratified as soon as possible by Estonia," said President Ilves.

Estonia to Appoint Envoy to Kazakhstan

Sep 21 - Estonia is about to appoint an ambassador to Kazakhstan in the near future.

The non-resident ambassador is to be appointed next year. Toomas Lukk, director of the ministry's bureau for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, said that Kazakhstan has accepted the Estonian plan and hopefully the name of the new ambassador can be made public soon.

Communication between Estonia and Kazakhstan has intensified in recent years and is set to intensify further with the appointment of the ambassador, Lukk said.

DEFENCE NEWS

NATO Centre of Excellence in Estonia to be Accredited Next Year

Sep 25 - A NATO centre of excellence to be established in Estonia is to be accredited next year.

The future NATO Centre of Excellence on Cooperative Cyber Defence is to receive formal accreditation in the first half of 2008, Estonia's

military representative at NATO and the European Union, Lt. Gen. Johannes Kert said.

Kert said the centre has aroused wide interest and specialists from dozens of countries will be coming to work in it. The general described the cyber attacks targeted at Estonian websites in spring as a good lesson. In his words, the consequences of a massive strategic cyber attack could be compared to those of a nuclear bomb explosion.

He added that in his opinion the spring cyber attack was spontaneous rather than orchestrated.

The centre of excellence in Estonia would be an international organization established within the framework of the NATO transformation program, the goal of which would be to promote cooperation in cyber defence between NATO and its member states as well as to set out the principles and methods of cyber defence.

The centre would also carry out cyber defence analysis, compile teaching and information material, and organize training.

The centre for cyber defence that is a part of the Communication and Information Systems Training and Development Centre (SIVAK) of the Estonian defence forces serves as basis for the creation of the NATO centre of excellence.

Loans to financing institutions grew by 84.9 percent during the year and more than doubled in the six months to reach 18.8 billion kroons.

Loans to the government stood at 2.76 billion kroons at the end of the month, an increase of 6.2 percent year on year but a reduction of 3.9 percent in six months.

The total value of outstanding loans issued by Estonian banks was 224.9 billion kroons at the end of August, compared with 153.8 billion kroons at the same time a year ago and 186.1 billion kroons at the end of 2006.

Of the loans as of the end of August, 22 percent had been issued in kroons and 76 percent in euros.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonian President Calls on Expats to Think about Returning

Sep 24 - **President Toomas Hendrik Ilves urged expatriate Estonians to think about returning to Estonia at a meeting in New York.**

"Thank you for keeping the Estonian spirit alive here, but you should know that Estonia has made progress and is waiting for you," Ilves said at a reception held by the Estonian Educational Society at the Estonian House in New York.

"Estonia is no longer a poor country but has grown at a fast pace and I would like to encourage you to come to Estonia to see it all," the president said. "We have come so far that people here could start thinking: my income in the United States might be a bit bigger than in Estonia, but Estonia is the place where it is possible to have my children taught in Estonian, eat Estonian bread and lead an Estonian life."

The head of state urged fellow Estonians to think about the possibility of coming back to Estonia because the country needs every Estonian.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Currency rates in kroons

(Bank of Estonia)

Loans Issued to Private Individuals up by 47 Percent in Estonia in Year

Sep 25 - **Outstanding loans to private individuals issued by commercial banks in Estonia totalled 101.6 billion kroons (EUR 6.49 b) at the end of August, an increase of 47.4 percent over August 2006.**

In comparison with the end of July, the total value of loans to individuals grew by 2.2 percent, whereas in six months the rate of increase was 18.3 percent, the central bank said on Tuesday.

Loans to companies grew by 41 percent during the year to 101.8 billion kroons.

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