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GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COUNCIL IN BRUSSELS



Foreign Minister Urmás Paet with Foreign Minister of Sweden, the current EU presidency, Carl Bildt, 14 September.

Council of the European Union

Paet: Time to Strengthen Ties Between European Union and Southern Caucasus

15 September - **Foreign Minister Urmás Paet participated in the European Union external relations council in Brussels.** The European Union's partnership with countries of the Southern Caucasus and the situation in Afghanistan were discussed.

The European Union foreign ministers discussed the development of further co-operation between the EU and the Southern Caucasus countries—Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Foreign Minister Urmás Paet stated that the partnership and co-operation agreement signed ten years ago is expiring, so now is an appropriate time to update the agreement base between the European Union and the Southern Caucasus countries. "In order for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to have tighter economic relations with the European Union, it is necessary to begin negotiations for a new framework agreement," said Foreign Minister Urmás Paet. "European Union Eastern Partnership, which began this year in May within the framework of the Neighbourhood Policy, also calls for a new association agreement with our partners in the Southern Caucasus," said Paet. Estonian Foreign Minister Paet expressed hope that the European Commission would begin negotiations very soon. "However, the success of the process will be determined first and foremost by the political will and preparedness of the Southern Caucasus countries, as well the progress they have made in fulfilling their responsibilities," Paet noted. Foreign Minister Urmás Paet stated that we must also work to facilitate relations between people and the movement of people, and also to discuss matters related to simplifying visa policy. The EU foreign policy leaders agreed that during the past few years, the European Union and the Southern Caucasus as close neighbours have come to rely on each other more in matters of mutual security and energy as well as economic matters.

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EU Foreign Ministers Addressed Prospect of Estonia-Brazil Visa Freedom

14 September - **At the meeting of European Union foreign ministers on Monday night, the topic of discussion was issues related to the reciprocal visa freedom agreement between the European Union and Brazil.** The foreign ministers also discussed preparations for the European Council and matters connected to ensuring energy supplies.

Foreign Minister Paet stated that the negotiations over the visa freedom agreement have already lasted five years, but the fact remains that the citizens of four member states—Estonia, Latvia, Malta and Cyprus—still need a visa to enter Brazil. "We hope that the parties involved can find a compromise on the text of the agreement and that the visa freedom agreement will be ready by the European Union-Brazil summit taking place on 6 October," Paet stated. Paet said that Brazilian citizens can enter all European Union member states without a visa. "This is why we hope for clear decisions on visa freedom from the next European Union-Brazil summit," Paet stated.

The European Union foreign ministers also discussed how to ensure energy supplies, including the issue of connecting energy infrastructure and energy supply systems among the member states. They also discussed the progress of a mechanism to deal with crises. For ensuring European security, Foreign Minister Paet stated that Estonia supports the diversification of suppliers as well as establishing supplementary energy connections among member states and the creation of a common energy market. "An essential step in developing the Nordic-Baltic energy market is the approval of energy connections between the Baltic Sea region states," said Foreign Minister Paet.

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Southern Caucasus

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Foreign Minister Paet stated that there are three basic principles of further co-operation between the European Union and the Southern Caucasus, which are involvement, an individual approach, and conditionality.

In talking about Afghanistan, the foreign ministers agreed that first of all it is necessary to wait for the official confirmed election results and after that to proceed with a more profound analysis of the situation. The foreign policy leaders talked about the new European Union strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan that is being compiled, which will hopefully be approved at the next foreign ministers' council. Foreign Minister Urmas Paet believes that the better co-ordination and harmonisation of the activities of the European Commission and the member states, as well as the co-ordinated co-operation of NATO and the European Union, are of key importance.

"In order for the actions of the European Union in Afghanistan to be more effective than before, it is necessary for the new action plan to be as concrete as possible, containing a detailed list of what needs to be in each sector and how it will be achieved," emphasised Paet.

Brazil

(continued from page 1)

"Estlink2 and NordBalt are of key importance to the Nordic-Baltic energy market," noted Paet. The Estonian foreign minister expressed hope that the co-financing of energy projects set out by the European Economic Recovery Plan will happen smoothly.

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet believes that the gas crisis between Russia and Ukraine at the beginning of this year and its effect on energy supplies showed how important it is to ensure strong mechanisms for tracking the functioning of the an energy market and reacting to a crisis. "Reaching an agreement to fill the gas depositories and reform the gas sector in Ukraine is one positive step in this sector," asserted Foreign Minister Paet.

The European Union presidency Sweden presented the topics of the European Council to take place from 29-30 October. According to Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, important topics that must be addressed at the Council are institutional matters related to the Treaty of Lisbon and discussions of climate change, so that the European Union can achieve a common position prior to the Copenhagen climate conference. "In talking about regional co-operation in the European Union, the approval and quick implementation of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is noteworthy," said Foreign Minister Paet. The economic and financial situation is also on the agenda for the Council.

FOREIGN NEWS

Prime Minister Ansip Affirms Estonian Support for Territorial Integrity of Georgia

14 September - **Today Prime Minister Andrus Ansip met with Nika Gilauri, the Prime Minister**

of Georgia. At the meeting, Prime Minister Ansip stated that Estonia and Georgia are good partners in several international organisations and the relations between the countries are good.

At the meeting, economic co-operation was the main subject, but political issues were also discussed. "Estonia respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia," Prime Minister Ansip declared.

The prime minister of Georgia thanked the people of Estonia for the support given to Georgia, especially during difficult times. According to him, Georgia has conducted many reforms where the lessons learned from Estonia have been put into practice.

The prime ministers also opened a business seminar with entrepreneurs from both Estonia and Georgia today. Ansip stressed that regardless of the liberal business climate and good business conditions of Georgia, economic relations between the two countries are not very extensive; Georgia is in 86th place in the ranking of trading volume. "This means that both Estonian entrepreneurs and Georgian businesses have great potential for successful business," Ansip said. "Above all, I see great opportunities in the field of IT and telecommunication and in the exporting of technology to Georgia, but there are co-operation opportunities in other fields as well; in agriculture, for example," he added.



Prime Minister Andrus Ansip with Georgian Prime Minister Nika Gilauri, 14 September.

Estonia Helps Create Supplementary Training System for Afghan Doctors

12 September - **The Foreign Ministry is supporting MTÜ Mondo in creating a supplementary training system for doctors in Helmand Province.**

Foreign Minister Urmas Paet stated that developing the health care sector in Afghanistan is a very important goal of Estonian development co-operation. "In Helmand Province, which has a population comparable to that of Estonia, there are only slightly more than 1300 people in the health care sector and fewer than 100 of them are doctors," noted Foreign Minister Paet. "Increasing the accessibility of medical care through continuing education will allow for Afghans' quality of life to get better, step by step," he added.

The health care workers of Helmand Province lack the opportunity to acquire further medical education. According to the Estonian health care

expert in Afghanistan Anu Raisma, the goal of the project is to increase the capabilities of health care workers by offering them opportunities for further education and training. "At the moment, opportunities for medical workers in Helmand Province to receive any supplementary training after completing the appropriate school are extremely limited," stated Raisma. "With this project we hope to implement supplementary training for medical workers, participate in the creation of a training centre, and support a school for nurses and midwives," she added.

Within the framework of the project, MTÜ Mondo will help to work out the concept for a Helmand Province health care worker training centre. MTÜ Mondo will also help to furnish the centre and provide it with the necessary teaching materials.

In order to learn about the working order of Estonian health care facilities and the structure of the training system for health care workers, two health care workers responsible for Helmand Province in Afghanistan will come to Estonia for a two-week training visit in November. During the course of the training visit, the health care workers from Helmand Province will be given an overview of the administrative model, work order, and the nature of infection control used in hospitals of various sizes, as well as the possible forms of supplementary education for health care workers.

The two-year project will be supported by 1 099 980 kroons from the Foreign Ministry's development and humanitarian aid budget.

Foreign Minister Paet Met with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen

15 September - **Foreign Minister Urmas Paet met with NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen at the headquarters of the NATO alliance in Brussels today.**

At the meeting, Foreign Minister Paet and Secretary General Rasmussen focused primarily on NATO's new strategic concept, the upcoming NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Tallinn, and the situation in Afghanistan. They agreed that the strategic concept must answer to the problems of today, and it must address new risks and challenges in addition to those that are left over from the 20th century. Rasmussen and Paet said that NATO's new strategic concept will also be an essential topic at the NATO foreign ministers' meeting taking place in Tallinn from 22-23 April next year.

Collective defence is the basis for NATO's work, which is why the backbone of the new strategic concept must be NATO's visibility, trustworthiness, and the clear expression of its abilities. "Article 5 of the Washington agreement, which is the basis for NATO's activities, must be reliable," emphasised Foreign Minister Paet. For Estonia it is essential to ensure the synergy between collective defence and the missions occurring away from the territories of NATO member states. "Both are important and require the contributions of all allies," noted Paet. He added that it is positive that the working group preparing the strategic concept includes a representative of the Baltic states. Paet and Rasmussen also agreed that co-operation with partners of the alliance, including Russia, is important.

In addition, Paet and Rasmussen talked about the latest developments in Afghanistan. Rasmussen

recognised Estonia's important and visible military and civil contribution in stabilising the situation in Afghanistan. Paet said that Estonia contributes to the most difficult area of Afghanistan—Helmand Province—along with British, American and Danish forces. "Estonia has suffered losses in this mission, and therefore one of our most important principles is that we do not want an incorrect or imprecise strategy to cause the death of a single soldier or civilian," stressed Paet.

Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Opened Honorary Consulate in Odense, Denmark

15 September - **Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Marten Kokk opened the Estonian Honorary Consulate in Odense in the Kingdom of Denmark. The Estonian honorary consul in Odense is Bo Stærmosé.**

Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Marten Kokk stated that this is Estonia's 110th honorary consulate and that the constant expansion of the network of Estonian honorary consuls is very positive. "Honorary consuls play an important role in the promotion of political, economic, cultural, educational, and other relations. They also help Estonian citizens by providing consular aid and services," Kokk noted. There are currently six Estonian honorary consuls in Denmark.

Undersecretary Kokk expressed hope that the opening of a new honorary consulate would help to strengthen ties between Estonia and Denmark even more. "Estonia's new honorary consul would like help intensify economic and business contacts between Estonia and Denmark and make Danish entrepreneurs more aware of opportunities to establish business contacts with Estonian businesses," said Kokk.

The consular area of the new Estonian honorary consul covers the communes of Odense, Bogense, Kerteminde, Middelfart, Assens, Nyborg, Faaborg-Midfyn, Svendborg, Langeland, and Ærø. The honorary consulate is located at Sivlandvænget 29 DK-5260 Odense S Denmark. The honorary consulate can be reached by phone at +45 66 11 18 11, by fax at +45 66 11 18 82, or by email at bs@juliana.com.

Bo Stærmosé was born in Odense in 1948. In 1974 Stærmosé graduated from the legal science department of Aarhus University. In 1974 he joined his family business Juliana A/S as an acting director. The business deals with the production of greenhouses and greenhouse supplies. He has been the owner of the company since 1982. Stærmosé's business exports greenhouses to almost 30 nations, and the business has representatives in Estonia as well. In addition to his business, Stærmosé also belongs to the boards of many important Danish organisations; he is also the vice-chairman of the Confederation of Danish Industry. The honorary consul speaks Danish, English and German.

DOMESTIC NEWS

Estonian Life Expectancy Increasing

15 September - **The average life expectancy in Estonia this year is 74 years, the highest level in the past 50 years.**

The average lifespan for women was a record 79.23 years last year, while for men it was 68.59

years, according to data published on the webpage of Statistics Estonia.

A year earlier the average expected lifespan in Estonia was slightly over 73 years. For women the number was 78.73 years and for men 67.13.

Life expectancy was lowest in 1994, when the number fell to 66.46 years. Average expected lifespan for men that year was 60.52 years and for women 72.76 years.

In 1989 the average expected lifespan in Estonia was 70.31 years. For women the average was 74.68 and for men 65.55.

Life expectancy is the average number of years people are expected to live.

DEFENCE NEWS

Aaviksoo: Estonia is Now Even More of a Maritime Nation

11 September - **On Wednesday, at the Estonian House in New York City, a festive reception was given in honour of the crew of the Estonian Navy's mine-hunter Sakala, in from its first transatlantic crossing, and for the émigré Estonian community.** Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo's address was read aloud at the reception.

Minister of Defence Jaak Aaviksoo pointed out in his address that following the transatlantic crossing Estonia was now even more of a maritime nation, for our marines once more include seamen with experience on the ocean.

"It is in the national interests of Estonia for the NATO Response Force to develop credibly and for our readiness to be noticed by both our friends and our enemies. And could there be better proof of credibility than an oceanic crossing? For it also matters to us that in an emergency our allies' ships could make their way speedily across the ocean, the way they have done for Europeans repeatedly before," the address of the minister of defence stated.

According to Aaviksoo, the presence of an Estonian naval vessel in the waters of the United States is also of important significance to Estonians in America, who kept the spirit of Estonia alive the entire time their compatriots had to submit to the repressive dictate of the occupying authorities in their homeland. "The fact that you are advancing our cause on the American continent and, if needed, are able to make such an important contribution to the defence and survival of the Estonian state is important knowledge that acts as a support for those in Estonia who must consider these same things," the minister of defence wrote.

At the soiree held at the Estonian House in New York City, the address of Minister of Defence Aaviksoo was read out loud by Colonel Meelis Kiili, Estonia's defence attaché in the USA.

The mine-hunter Sakala, in the 13th rotation of the NATO Response Force, crossed the Atlantic Ocean together with the NATO mine countermeasures squadron in the second half of August. During its crossing, the Sakala practiced refuelling and providing assistance at sea. The Sakala will participate in mine countermeasures exercises in Canadian waters and in the biggest naval exercise of the year in the United States, where it will practice collaborating as part of an aircraft carrier task force.

The mine-hunter Sakala is the first ship in the Estonian Navy to cross the Atlantic Ocean. To date, of the vessels in the Estonian national fleet only the border guard ship Valvas, in 1997, has crossed the Atlantic Ocean one-way since World War II. The NATO Response Force, NRF, was created in 2003 as a unit uniting integrated sea, land and air forces in order to perform tasks for the North Atlantic Council. The NATO Response Force unites elite units that may be sent within five days to various locations worldwide to carry out military tasks. It may be used both in a collective defence operation carried out based on the North Atlantic Treaty and in military operations organised for the purposes of preserving or restoring peace on the basis provided in Chapters VI and VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Previously, the Navy flagship Admiral Pitka, mine-hunters Admiral Cowan and Sulev, as well as explosive ordnance disposal units and military police units have served in the NRF.



The Estonian mine-hunter Sakala on its stop in New York, 9 September.

Collective Cyber Defence Depends on Preparation

9 September (BNS) - **Creating an effective response capability against cyber attacks requires a major co-operative effort both within and between countries, Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves said in his speech at the Cyber Conflict Legal and Policy Conference in Tallinn on Wednesday.**

The president said that changes in technology or the sudden application of new technology are making the protective mechanisms we are used to obsolete.

The DDOD attacks against Estonia in May 2007, although not technically very complex, were of great significance for several of reasons, Ilves said, as they were intended to create social unrest in response to the domestic policies of a democratically elected government and so represented an intervention against a democratic system, but using hitherto unused methods as a continuation of policy by other means.

"Evidence exists to suggest that the attacks may have been partially state-sponsored," he said.

"The recent US report of the Cyber Consequences Unit examining the cyber campaign against Georgia suggests that the organisers of DDOS attacks against websites in that country had advance notice of Russian military intentions. In a word they were apparently co-ordinated with a country's military and so constitute a possible infringement upon

national sovereignty and, more alarmingly, may well illustrate a new stage in the development of cyber warfare. A public-private partnership, if you will," said Ilves.

"We have seen evidence that from a technical standpoint, cyber attacks are growing more complex, moving beyond the relatively unsophisticated DDOS type. There are alarming signs that their use by state and non-state entities is growing, not diminishing," the president said.

He said that on the national level substantially better co-ordination between and within different departments was necessary.

"The key to any adequate strategy, however, rests in actions at the international level. After all, cyber attacks, cyber crime, and cyber terrorism are almost a priori cross-border issues. Those responsible for malicious cyber-acts need jurisdictional lines to hide behind," he said.

"The willingness of a country to be bound by the European Convention on Cybercrime almost serves as a litmus test for a country's preparedness to cooperate in this field. In this light, it is extremely regrettable that Russia has chosen not to be a party to the convention," said Ilves.

Speaking of NATO, Ilves stressed that Article 5 provides the ultimate mechanism of international protection in case of an armed attack against NATO nations.

Recent cyber incidents have, at least in the opinion of decision-makers, not reached the threshold of an armed attack, but are still a great concern to the international community.

In questions related to international peace and friendly relations in the cyber domain, the implementation of Article 5 is tightly related to how nations will perform on Article 4 -- preparedness. That is, general co-operation on combating cyber crime and exchanging information about threats and defence.

Collective defence will reside on individual defence. Individual defences need to be co-ordinated and concerted to avoid legal grey areas that allow evil-doers, as in the case of so-called "patriotic hackers" or outright espionage, to escape legal accountability, he said.

And once a cyber conflict actually crosses the Article 5 threshold, the legal and policy mechanisms created in peacetime and used to foster Article 4 co-operation will be the key basis for co-ordinated response, said Ilves.

Chief of Estonian Defence Forces Discusses Co-operation in Denmark

12 September (BNS) - **Estonian Defence Forces Commander Lt. Gen. Ants Laaneots, who paid an official visit to Denmark at the invitation of his Danish colleague Adm. Tim Sloth Jorgensen, mapped out future co-operation of the countries' armed forces at a meeting with Admiral Jorgensen.**

Topics under discussion were the new strategic concept of NATO, military operations necessary for complying with Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the protection of the Baltic airspace, development of the Baltic Defence College, the situation in South Afghanistan, and future co-operation between the Estonian and the Danish defence Forces, the General Staff said.

Denmark is one of the NATO countries whose troops are participating in combat operations in the

restless province of Helmand in southern Afghanistan.

Laaneots observed the Loyal Jewel exercise of the Danish Division that is part of the training program of the NATO Response Force.

Together with Danish and Lithuanian units, the Estonian 1st Infantry Brigade has been linked to the Danish Division. The link includes training so as to ensure full interoperability of the staff and units and their ability to carry out joint operations.

Cool Lion 2009, the computer simulation exercise held in Estonia last week, was the first joint exercise of the Estonian brigade and the Danish Division after the linkup.

The Danish Division is the largest unit of the country's ground forces and one of the four divisions of NATO's Northeastern Corps. The staff of the Danish Division will make up the command element of the NATO response force NRF-14 next year, of which the joint Baltic infantry battalion will be part.

On Friday Laaneots visited the Skrydstrup air base, where fighter jets of the Danish Air Force policing the Estonian airspace are stationed. Denmark confirmed its readiness to continue guarding the Baltic skies.

Laaneots returned to Tallinn on Friday night.

Baltic Air Policing Training Events Increasing in Scale

15 September - **While visiting F-15 fighter aircraft at the Tallinn Airport yesterday, Permanent Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defence Riho Terras said that the air policing training events of the Baltic States were increasing in scale and complexity every time.**

The permanent undersecretary of the Ministry examined the F-15 Strike Eagle fighters from the United States, which had taken off from Great Britain, and met with their pilots, who before yesterday conducted a co-operation exercise in West-Viru County with the next Estonian infantry company headed for Afghanistan.

According to Terras, yet another air policing training event is confirmation that NATO's territory is one whole and its defence the joint task of the allies. "Regular air policing training events like this, and the knowledge that NATO has decided that the air policing mission in the Baltic States would remain operational through at least 2014, significantly increase security in the NATO air space as a whole," Terras said.

According to Terras, the events, including successive new training elements, also signal the constantly growing capability of the Estonian Air Force and its improving co-operation with allied forces. "The Forward Air Controllers, who practiced with US fighters in West-Viru County today, will increase the security and safety of our Afghanistan contingent. Also, the roll-out of this capability will be important for strengthening Estonia's primary independent defence capability," Terras affirmed. On Monday and Tuesday, F-15E fighters from the United States Air Force will conduct, as part of the 4th Air Policing Training Event in Baltic air space, a co-operation exercise over Estonia with the next company of the Scouts Battalion headed for Afghanistan and the Forward Air Controllers of the Estonian Air Force.

In the course of the exercise, the Forward Air Controllers will practice, for the first time in co-operation with the NATO fighters, the co-ordination

of fire support during a infantry operations. The co-operation exercise with the fighters will be conducted as part of the BAM-7 exercise of the Scouts Battalion in West-Viru County. The exercise will be part of the training for a new capability of the Air Force, the Forward Air Controllers. The second part of the 4th Air Policing Training Event in Baltic air space will be conducted next week, with a focus on the development of air surveillance and air defence capabilities.

Baltic air policing training events have been conducted since October 2008. The last defence exercise in Baltic air space was conducted in July 2009. In the course of the exercise, NATO air force units practiced the delivery of international aid packages to an unknown region and the securing of air space control under the conditions of electronic countermeasures.



Permanent Undersecretary Riho Terras visiting participants in the Baltic air policing training event, 15 September.

Exercise in Close Air Support Fire Control Ends in Estonia

15 September (BNS) - **In a training event this week, Estonian forward air controllers to be deployed in Afghanistan soon for the first time conducted an exercise in the control of airborne fire for the support of a tactical operation of land forces.**

The exercise was held in co-operation between the Scouts Battalion and NATO fighter jets flying out from RAF Lakenheath.

"Training of the first close air support forward air controllers for the Estonian air force has reached its final stage, and we are preparing to send them to Afghanistan together with an infantry company in the near future," Estonian Air Force Chief of Staff Maj. Jaak Tarien was quoted by military spokespeople as saying on Tuesday.

The chief of staff added that close air support was a very efficient and widely used means of fire support in Afghanistan because of the large size of the operation area there.

The British instructors observing the exercise said that information exchange between the commander of the infantry company, Capt. Sergei Guselnikov, close air support controller 2nd Lt. Ivo Koiv and pilots of the US F-15E jets that took part in the exercise went well.

The F-15E Strike Eagle jets took off from the Lakenheath air base in the UK on Monday morning, supported the BAM-7 exercise of the Scouts Battalion, landed at Tallinn airport and were

preparing to return to their home base Tuesday evening.

The task of a close air support forward air controller is to visually identify a target, call aircraft with fire support capabilities and guide the operation of the aircraft.

ESTCOY-9, the Estonian infantry company to be next sent to Afghanistan, is holding an exercise in the conducting of patrols, setting up of checkpoints and the operation of checkpoints, acting in dangerous areas and in the event of the detection of an improvised explosive device.

The BAM-7 exercise started on Monday and lasts until September 24.

The second phase of the Baltic Region Training Event IV (BRTE IV) will be conducted in Lithuania's air space on 22 September, focusing on the development of air surveillance and air defence capabilities.

Open Spirit Operation in Estonian Waters Turns Up Almost 100 Explosive Devices

11 September (BNS) - **This year's largest mine hunting operation in the Baltic Sea, Open Spirit 2009, turned up nearly 100 explosive devices.**

By Friday morning the participating units had found 90 explosive devices, including 85 naval mines, of which 60 have been rendered harmless by now.

Several of the devices are located in places where they cannot be detonated, such as in the vicinity of underwater cables. Open Spirit ends on Friday.

The Defence Forces headquarters confirmed that participants in the operation strictly observed environmental and safety regulations when detonating explosive devices and explosions have been agreed with the Environmental Inspectorate, Maritime Administration and the border service.

The rarest of the finds is probably a Russian naval mine dating from 1877 which the German mine-hunter Passau found in an area to the north of Naissaar Island on Sunday. A few days earlier the same vessel had located a rare old mine with a wooden outer shell.

The main operating areas of Open Spirit 2009 were situated to the northeast of Hiiumaa Island and around the island of Naissaar off Tallinn. Participants include 16 vessels from Estonia, Germany, the United States, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and France. For the first time a joint US, German and Estonian mine divers task group is taking part.

The Baltic Sea and in particular the Gulf of Finland is considered one of the most mine-infested sea areas in the world. According to varying estimates, around 80 000 naval mines were laid in the Baltic Sea during the two world wars. Almost 600 explosive devices have been found in Estonian waters in mine countermeasures operations since 1994.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Hydro, Wind Energy Production Rise in Estonia in 2008

11 September (BNS) - **Estonian enterprises produced 1.5 times more wind power and one-third more hydro power in 2008 than in the year before, Statistics Estonia said on Friday.**

Estonian enterprises produced 133 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of wind power and 28 GWh of hydro power during 2008. A remarkable rise in the generation of wind power took place in 2005, when the volume increased sevenfold compared with the preceding year. After that the production of wind energy has been increasing too, but not so fast.

The increase in the production of hydro power was more stable and slower during the 2005-2008 period. Even though the share of renewable energy in overall electricity production is relatively small, it has grown from year to year and accounted for 1.5% of total output in 2008. In 2007 the respective ratio had been 0.9%.

Electricity production from renewable sources has been increasing in Estonia since 1995, Statistics Estonia said.

Power plants in Estonia continued the environmentally cleaner combined heat and power (CHP) generation. In 2008, there were 17 CHP plants in Estonia that gave about 9% of total electricity output and 30% of thermal energy.

Compared to 2007, electricity production through CHP generation increased about 5%.

The economic decline reduced the domestic consumption of energy by about 4% in 2008 compared to 2007.

The export of energy products decreased in 2008. Exports of electricity decreased 16% mainly as a result of an almost twofold drop in exports to Latvia.

Imports of energy products decreased by about a tenth as 20% less motor fuels and 4% less natural gas was imported compared to the previous year.

Imports of electricity increased about fourfold, mainly on account of partial replacement of own production with imported electricity. Imports of electricity from Latvia were over two times bigger and from Lithuania about four times bigger compared to 2007.

Silmet Makes Profit of EUR 1.4 Million Last Year

9 September (BNS) - **The Estonian rare-earth metals producer AS Silmet made a profit of 22.4 million kroons (EUR 1.4 mln) last year; in 2007 the company made a loss of 3.6 million kroons.**

On the basis of Silmet's 2008 financial year report the company's operating profit was 33.3 million kroons last year; the year before the operating loss was 2.8 million kroons.

The profit made it possible to cover last year's loss and increase equity to 173.5 million kroons, the report said.

Silmet's sales proceeds last year totalled 488.5 million kroons, nearly 20% more than in 2007. The company achieved its growth in sales thanks to physical growth in the sales volume as well as to the higher prices of ready-made products.

Sales in European countries accounted for 236.9 million kroons of the sale proceeds, followed by the United States with 122 million and Japan with 82.4 million kroons.

The company points out in its report that it managed to double the sales of rare-earth metals, thus becoming a real alternative to Chinese products.

In connection with the contraction of sales in Q4 last year and unclear outlooks of the market conditions of rare-earth metals the company

postponed the implementation of its long-term investment programs.

Last year Silmet had an average of 527 employees, over the year the average number of employees contracted by 22.

Silmet's mother company is the Swiss-registered Zimal S.A.

CULTURAL NEWS

Arvo Pärt to Receive Honorary Doctorate from University of Liège

15 September - **The Royal University of Liège in Belgium will present Arvo Pärt with an honorary doctorate on Thursday, 17 September.**

Six other musicians and composers will also be earning the title: Dick Annegarn, Anthony Braxton, Henri Pousseur (posthumously), Frederic Rzewski, Archie Shepp and Robert Wyatt.

The honorary degrees will be presented during the opening ceremony of the academic year, and Arvo Pärt confirmed to Klassikaraadio that he will be participating in the event.

Previously Pärt has received honorary doctorates from the Estonian Academy of Music, Tartu University, Durham University, University of Freiburg, University of San Martin, and the University of Sydney.

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