



## Latvijas Republikas Valsts prezidenta kanceleja Prezidenta preses dienests

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### **Address by the President of Latvia Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga at the first session of the 9th Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, Saeima House, 7th November 2006 (Excerpt)**

In two weeks the attention of the world will be focused on NATO Summit in Riga, which takes place merely two and a half years since our accession to the Alliance. The current debates center around the ways for NATO to be reborn in a new quality as an organisation of global security. Decisions are expected to be made in Riga that will bring the Alliance onto a new level of political and security philosophy. The choice of Riga as the host of the Summit testifies that our international partners rely on us and asserts our abilities to integrate in the common NATO defence system in compliance with the highest standards. This Summit of NATO will sweep away the last bits and pieces of the Iron Curtain, that occasionally still keep emerging in some spots in the world, and will attest that Latvia has become an irretrievable part of the NATO security area.

At the same time with this significant international forum, Latvia marks the conclusion of another development phase in the growth of its Armed Forces. On 24th November 151 soldiers of the last compulsory conscription will complete their military service and thus the transfer to a professional army will be made. The Saeima has a serious role to play in the decision-making about the engagement of Latvia in international security measures and peace missions. Latvian soldiers have already in the best possible way asserted themselves in international operations: currently they take part in peace-keeping missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and in the OSCE mission in Georgia. This is just one of the reasons why it is important to ensure adequate defence budget: without funds we shall be unable to provide neither for the security of other countries, nor for our own.