

**Opening Statement by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Mr Eamon Gilmore TD,  
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland  
19<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council  
Dublin, 6 December 2012**

Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to welcome you all to Dublin. Since we last met in Vilnius exactly one year ago, we have had a busy and eventful year. When I addressed the Permanent Council at the start of Ireland's Chairmanship, I committed to pursuing the principles and aims of this Organisation in a balanced and pragmatic manner – namely promoting a peaceful and secure environment for all our citizens. We have made much progress, and we come to the Ministerial Council determined to advance our shared aim of a common, comprehensive and indivisible security community; a community of shared values.

At the beginning of my period as Chairperson-in-Office, I stressed the need for quality over quantity and substance over form in what we do. The balanced set of decisions we have put before you is a direct result of this practical approach. We have taken our role as an impartial Chair seriously, and have not sought to favour one constituency over another. Like all Chairs, we were not in a position to satisfy everybody, but we stand over the package we have presented for your consideration and approval.

An integral part of our package this year is the Helsinki+40 proposal which we developed in order to give a longer-term perspective to the work of the Organization. We reaffirmed our shared commitments at the Astana Summit, and successive Chairmanships were tasked with taking forward work on implementing those commitments. With this in mind, we have worked carefully with our Troika partners, Lithuania and Ukraine, future Chairmanships, Secretary General Zannier and the wider OSCE community to come up with such a plan. The proposal on the table

reflects the common wish of participating States to work together in a more coordinated manner as we look towards the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, our founding document, in 2015.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, we have already successfully steered three decisions through the Permanent Council in Vienna on *Policing, Drugs and ICT security*. I hope we can also agree a fourth decision on *Counter Terrorism Mandates*, which will allow for the adoption of a Ministerial Decision recognising progress made in this area. The ICT security working group is already up and running and I hope we can adopt another decision at the Council on this area of work. We also look forward to adopting the decisions transmitted to the Council from the Forum for Security Cooperation.

In the Economic and Environmental Dimension, a comprehensive and ambitious Ministerial declaration on *Good Governance* is at an advanced stage of discussion and I expect that we will adopt it tomorrow. I was pleased that we were able to champion good governance this year, and to share our national experience in the area of the seizure of criminal assets.

I outlined at the start of the year my determination to achieve a balanced package of decisions, including in the Human Dimension. Our proposals on *Strengthening Media Freedom* and on *Combating Racism and Xenophobia* have been broadly welcomed by participating States, and I expect that a package will be agreed before we conclude tomorrow. I would like to recall here our successful Conference on Internet Freedom, which took place in Dublin Castle last June, and provided an excellent opportunity for debate and dialogue among the 280 participants from participating States, civil society, academia, media groups, and the ICT industry. One message that emerged very strongly from the debate is the clear recognition that OSCE commitments in all three dimensions apply across all mediums and regardless of technologies.

Excellencies,

I also gave a commitment at the start of the year that Ireland would share its experience of conflict resolution as Chair-in-Office. I was delighted to host a major conference on this theme in April in Dublin. At that conference, I gave a commitment to provide more detailed briefings of the Northern Ireland peace process, which we have done on a number of occasions this year. I renew that offer today as a demonstration of our commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflicts in our region.

I am happy to report that some progress has been made in relation to the protracted conflicts. Five meetings in the framework of the Transdniestrian settlement process took place this year, the most recent only last week at Farmleigh House in Dublin. This marks a considerable activation of the process since the resumption of official talks one year ago in Vilnius, after a gap of almost six years. Under the able chairmanship of my Special Representative, Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, the participants have agreed on key principles and procedures for the conduct of negotiations, as well as on an agenda for the negotiating process. I look forward to negotiations taking place in all three baskets, with the view to achieving a comprehensive settlement of the problem. Increased engagement between the sides has also been marked by positive developments on the ground, such as the resumption of railway goods traffic in April. I hope that all concerned will work to maintain the momentum created this year. I know that our Ukrainian colleagues are approaching their task of chairing these negotiations next year with seriousness and determination and I wish them well in advancing the process towards a comprehensive settlement.

The Geneva International Discussions, now in their fifth year, have proved their value as a forum to address security, stability and humanitarian issues in the aftermath of the 2008 war in Georgia. My Special Representative, Ambassador Pádraig Murphy, contributed significantly to these discussions as Co-Chair on behalf of the OSCE, as well as co-facilitating the Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, of which by the end of the year there will have been no fewer than 13 meetings in 2012.

These meetings are vital to ensure calm and stability on the ground. Unfortunately, no meetings of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism have taken place since March – I hope that meetings can be resumed as soon as possible.

The upsurge in violent clashes in April and during the summer on the line of contact and on the Armenia-Azerbaijan border, as well as other worrying developments, show clearly the continuing and urgent need for progress to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I call on all sides to engage seriously with each other and with the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group to end this conflict, which has brought suffering to the people of the region for too long. I wish to thank my Personal Representative, Ambassador Kasprzyk, for his untiring efforts to safeguard the ceasefire and contribute to progress towards a resolution of the conflict.

In South Eastern Europe, we saw the closure of the OSCE Office in Zagreb. The successful implementation of the Office's mandate in assisting in Croatia's democratic development is a positive sign of the OSCE's capacity to assist participating States, and is undoubtedly a success story. The successful facilitation of voting by Serbian citizens in Kosovo in May, by the OSCE Mission is another example of the OSCE's strengths, as demonstrated through its network of field missions. This task was carried out with great skill. I congratulate Secretary General Zannier and his team for the contribution they made to that electoral process.

I welcome the presence at the Ministerial Council of Parliamentarians from across the OSCE area. I was delighted to participate at the annual meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly in Monaco in July. Your presence is a welcome reminder of the need for us to pay attention to the concerns of citizens, in whose interests we all work. The work of ODIHR and the Parliamentary Assembly in election monitoring is one of the key tasks of our Organisation. It is also one of the most visible manifestations of the OSCE's presence across our region, and I encourage the two bodies to keep up their excellent work in the name of the OSCE. I commend the work done by the Director of ODIHR in promoting democratisation and in protecting human rights.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the High Commissioner for National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, both of whom embody the values we all share. The High Commissioner's office has worked tirelessly over twenty years, perfecting the art of quiet diplomacy in carrying out its mandate. The Representative on Freedom of the Media has also consolidated the unique role of her office, as a champion of media freedom, both online and offline.

I would also like to acknowledge and welcome the presence at this opening session of a large number of NGOs and other civil society representatives from across the OSCE region. I wish to thank in particular the representatives of the Civic Solidarity Platform, whom I look forward to meeting after this session, in order to receive a set of civil society recommendations to participating States. I will also receive the Dublin Declaration, which was agreed at a civil society meeting in Dublin Castle yesterday, and which focuses on the protection of human rights defenders in the OSCE region. Participating States have already formally recognised the need for protection of human rights defenders, but concrete work in this area remains disappointing and is something that requires further attention in the months and years ahead.

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we strive to implement our common commitments under the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter, the Istanbul Charter and the Astana Commemorative Declaration, let us work together constructively to agree a set of decisions that will benefit the citizens of all participating States and Partners. In so doing, we will also demonstrate the continuing relevance of the OSCE. As we approach 2015 and the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Helsinki, let us recommit ourselves to our Organisation, true to its founding values, and reinvigorated to meet the challenges of our times and the expectations of our citizens.

Thank you.