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**Address to the Permanent Council of the
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
by Tánaiste and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
Mr. Eamon Gilmore, T.D.
Vienna, 21 June 2011**

As delivered

Mr. Chairperson, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the invitation to address the Permanent Council today and discuss with you some of my hopes and plans, as in-coming Chairperson, for next year.

Ireland has been an active participant in the OSCE, since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Next year, however, will be the first time we will have the honour of chairing the Organisation.

We view our year-long Chairmanship as an opportunity to project our foreign policy values on to the international stage: the values of multilateral cooperation and respect for human rights, which also lie at the very core of the norms, principles and commitments of the OSCE. Meticulous preparations for our Chairmanship have been proceeding for the last 12 months, both at our Foreign Ministry in Dublin and at our Mission here in Vienna. Since January, we have been working very closely within the OSCE Troika with Lithuania and Kazakhstan. May I take this opportunity to commend the Lithuanian delegation for what is an able and dynamic Chairmanship. We will strive to continue Lithuania's excellent work in 2012. I would like also to thank Kazakhstan for their help and advice as fellow members of the Troika.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ireland prepares to take the helm at a time of immense challenge for the OSCE. But before we discuss these challenges, let us pause for a moment to reflect on the unique strengths of this Organisation. Our combined 56 participating States, with a population well in excess of one billion, cover most of the northern hemisphere making the OSCE not just the world's largest inter-governmental regional security Organisation but also its most regionally diverse.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the OSCE has contributed immeasurably to democratic development in Europe and Central Asia. Its 16 field operations undertake vital work in assisting participating States to meet their OSCE commitments. The Organisation's human rights bodies, such as the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities work tirelessly to nurture and promote democracy and human rights in the region. We can be justly proud to be participants in an Organisation which has contributed so much to the cause of peace and stability in our region and the world, but we also must remain sensitive to the enormous challenges that confront the OSCE.

Efforts to check emerging transnational threats, such as terrorism, organised crime, illicit trafficking and others, are faltering; there is still clearly much to do in terms of entrenching

democratic freedoms across the OSCE region; and the region's protracted conflicts remain unresolved. Unless we redouble our efforts to tackle these problems, the goal of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community, reaffirmed in Astana last December, will remain an aspiration, rather than a reality.

During its Chairmanship, Ireland, with a well-established reputation as an honest broker in multilateral affairs, aims to facilitate a positive engagement by all participating States in dealing with the significant challenges facing the Organisation. We will continue to pursue the comprehensive dialogue on these issues that began with the Corfu Process in 2009 and was given renewed impetus at the Astana Summit.

Given the resource-constraints that we are all required to operate under as a result of the economic crisis, we must also ensure that the Organisation operates to the highest levels of efficiency. By focussing on the Organisation's core competences, we can carve out a more defined role for the OSCE in what is an increasingly crowded field of international organisations. We firmly believe that we now need to move from thinking to doing. In this context we, like our Lithuanian predecessors, will take the mandate from the Astana Summit to develop a concrete action plan with the utmost seriousness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ireland will adopt a pragmatic, fair-minded approach to our Chairmanship. In consultation with our fellow participating States and the OSCE's institutions and Secretariat, we aim to elaborate a set of priorities that will ensure a balanced and coherent approach to the work of the Organisation across all three Dimensions.

The OSCE is unique as a security organisation which places the inherent dignity of the individual at the core of its concept of comprehensive security. This vision coincides with what has been a long-standing focus of Irish foreign policy: to promote peace and security through respect for human rights and the rule of law. Ireland has therefore always attached a particular importance to the Human Dimension and we aim to prioritise issues within this Dimension during our Chairmanship.

One such priority issue for Ireland will be freedom of the media and, in particular, digital media. The extraordinary rise of internet-based media offers unparalleled scope for empowering citizens with information about decisions affecting their lives. We have also seen, most recently during the Arab Spring, the importance of social media as a means of voicing dissent and organising protest, playing a role that in established democracies is fulfilled by civil society. Ireland, as Chair, will seek to work with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to adapt and update media freedom commitments in order to ensure that the internet remains an open and public forum. In prioritising freedom of the media, Ireland will also be continuing the commendable work that the Lithuanian Chair has been engaged in this year in relation to pluralism in the new media and the safety of journalists.

In today's rapidly changing world, the OSCE must show itself sufficiently flexible to be able to update and develop the Human Dimension *acquis* in response to what are the most pressing human rights concerns of our day. It is for this reason that the Irish Chairmanship will be alive to any possibilities for re-affirming or enhancing OSCE commitments in other areas, including measures to tackle trafficking in human beings and measures to strengthen the right to freedom of assembly.

The defining characteristic of the OSCE is its comprehensive approach to security, which addresses the human, economic and environmental and political and military dimensions as an integral whole. Within the Economic and Environmental Dimension, we intend during our Chairmanship to make governance our core theme, with a particular focus on measures to counter corruption, money-laundering and terrorist-financing, including the exchange of best practices on asset forfeiture and recovery mechanisms.

Good governance at all levels has been widely recognised as contributing to prosperity, stability and security. By prioritising this topic, Ireland also plans to achieve synergies with other areas of the OSCE's work, such as the economic aspects of trafficking in drugs, human beings and small arms and light weapons.

The Politico-Military Dimension of the Organisation is perhaps the best developed of any international organisation. The Confidence and Security Building Measures of the Organisation make a key contribution to security in the region. They need however to be updated and tailored to a rapidly changing security environment. It is vital to continue the important work being carried out in the Forum for Security Cooperation, and we will over the coming months assist in every way possible the Lithuanian Chairmanship and the Italian and Kazakh Chairs of the FSC in delivering a substantially updated Vienna Document during 2011. This is, of course, only a stage in a continuous process and we will during our Chair promote further work on updating the Vienna Document. In addition, while Ireland is not a party to the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty, we strongly support an early resolution of the current impasse in this area. An effective Arms Control regime for Europe has been, is and will continue to be central to security in our region.

Under this Dimension also, Ireland will seek to continue work on tackling transnational threats such as organised crime, terrorism and trafficking. Indeed, the Lithuanian Chair is overseeing important discussions on the OSCE's activities in policing, combating drugs, cyber security and counter-terrorism, as well as on measures to improve the Organisation's institutional capacity for meeting these challenges. We would hope to move forward all of this important work next year. In adopting a cross-dimensional approach to tackling all of these issues, Ireland will always be mindful of the complementary role that civil society and the media can play.

We, in Ireland, know all too well the devastating cost of conflict. Through negotiation, compromise and the dedication and imagination of leaders on both sides of the divide, a lasting peace settlement was achieved in Northern Ireland. As Chair, Ireland, drawing on its conflict resolution experience, will seek to facilitate efforts to resolve the region's existing conflicts in a peaceful and negotiated manner, within agreed formats, fully respecting the principles of international law.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Ireland shares the OSCE's central precept that the only way to create a truly stable, peaceful and prosperous future for all our citizens is through an unyielding commitment to the principles of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. On a personal and professional level, I look forward greatly to working with you all in furthering this vision when I assume the role of Chairman-in-Office in a little over 6 months.

Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Secretary General de Brichambaut who will shortly be leaving his post after 6 years of outstanding service. Secretary General de Brichambaut, who cannot be here today due to travel commitments, has been a very able representative of the OSCE and has displayed remarkable energy, skill and leadership, including during times of crisis. His successor, whom we will hopefully select in the coming week, has an excellent template to follow. Thank you, Mr Chairperson.

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