



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe**

**Secretary General Lamberto Zannier**

**Opening remarks, Ministerial Council Vilnius**

**6 December 2011**

Excellencies,

Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address the Ministerial Council for the first time as Secretary General.

I joined the OSCE half-way through the Lithuanian Chairmanship. It has been a pleasure to work with the Lithuanian team, and in particular with you, Minister Ažubalis.

I thank you, and all of the Ministers gathered around this table, **for the trust you have placed in me.**

As we embark on two days of hard work, I would like to share my assessment of where we stand as an Organization, and my vision on the way forward.

Last year's Astana Summit, thanks to the efforts of a determined Kazakh Chairmanship, reaffirmed the OSCE's acquis of commitments and achieved consensus on two fundamental notions.

Firstly, building on the debate initiated in Corfu, it introduced a common vision of the OSCE as a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community. That vision needs now to be better articulated and operationalized. This Ministerial Council is an important step in this process, **but only a first step.**

**This will be a major task for future Chairmanships.**

Secondly, in Astana our leaders recognized that **our security and that of our neighbours is “inextricably linked.”** We need to incorporate this idea more strategically into our activities, particularly in light of the dramatic events we have seen in North Africa and in and around Afghanistan. Yesterday in Bonn, I recalled the OSCE’s actual and potential contribution to Afghanistan’s security, and this particularly due to the engagement of our **Central Asian participating States.** Our work with our Partners must reflect the real security needs of the OSCE community. And, it must be **responsive to the needs of our Partners.**

Lithuania has worked to translate the Astana vision into meaningful steps forward in all three dimensions. Our collective task over the next two days is to build on this effort, in order to provide further impetus to the work of the next Chairmanships. I recently visited Ireland and Ukraine, and can attest to their eagerness to take this process forward. And I hope that the OSCE Chairmanship for 2014 can be clarified soon, in order to provide the continuity of leadership our Organization needs.

For my part, I will work to ensure that they have my continuing support, **year after year.**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my first months in office, I have engaged with governments, parliaments and civil society. I have made efforts to strengthen relationships with other international organizations, keeping in mind the need to develop effective synergies, particularly in times of economic hardship.

I have also worked to promote the OSCE's visibility, to keep the focus on our core priorities, and to ensure that our activities are implemented efficiently. I have proposed to consolidate and streamline our tools to counter transnational threats, and to strengthen interaction between the OSCE and the academic community. And I have supported the efforts of the Chairmanship to strengthen the OSCE's capability, and in particular the capability of its structures, to address all phases of the conflict cycle.

Here in Vilnius, you are called to take concrete decisions in these areas, **and I ask for your support.**

In addition, I must bring to your attention challenges to the management of this complex Organization. The OSCE needs a more solid legal basis, to facilitate our work and to save you money, while preserving flexibility, and cost efficiency. We also need to revisit our human resources policies, in particular on maximum periods of service, in order to preserve our effectiveness and institutional memory.

In conclusion, as we continue to work together on a very ambitious political, programmatic and reform agenda in a very challenging environment, I wish to assure you that, as was the case with my predecessors, you can always count on my full support, and on the support of our highly professional and very committed staff.