

Delegation of Germany

**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HERBERT SALBER,
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**Working session II: Early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management,
conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation:
lessons learned and way ahead**

As the world's largest regional security organization, the OSCE has a particular responsibility for questions of conflict prevention and resolution on the territory of its participating States. We have discussed these questions repeatedly at numerous events over the past few years. Most recently we committed ourselves in the Astana Declaration to the concept of "comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security" and we agreed to continue to strengthen the role of the OSCE in this area in particular.

We all know of course that if we want to effectively prevent or curb conflicts in the OSCE area, especially violent conflicts, whether within a single country or between participating States, we must mobilize the necessary political will on the part of all those involved and all participating States as an expression of our fundamental convictions and the commitments we have all undertaken. The past has taught us bitterly that this is not always so easy and sometimes not possible at all. We are, however, also convinced that we as the OSCE must have the necessary strategies, structures, mechanisms, instruments and tools ready so as then to be able to intervene effectively in the course of the conflict. I therefore explicitly welcome the initiative of the Lithuanian Chairmanship, within the framework of the V to V Dialogue, to intensively study the role and options of the OSCE in the various phases of the conflict cycle.

The events of the last few months have provided us with an opportunity to take stock and have also given us new food for thought. It is now a question of selecting the areas of high priority in which we want to optimize existing structures and instruments or add new ones, where these are likely to strengthen OSCE capacities. Germany is therefore extremely keen for us to consolidate the discussions of the past few months in a Ministerial Council decision for Vilnius and visibly and perceptibly strengthen our capabilities in the various phases of the conflict cycle. The Secretariat, the Chairmanship and interested participating States are currently deciding which specific structures, procedures and instruments are to be improved, and Germany is actively involved in this effort. I do not wish to anticipate the outcome.

Against the background of actual crises and conflicts within the OSCE area over the last 15 years or so, it can be said, however, that the OSCE already has at its disposal a broad spectrum of structures, mechanisms and tools for the different conflict phases – most of which are tried and tested, but some also plagued by weaknesses. It has also been established that here and there we still lack particular capacities and instruments. Working with its partners, Germany will make intensive use of the remaining five months to illustrate that in dealing with the central topic of the conflict cycle – specifically in the areas of conflict prevention and conflict management/early action – the OSCE must become even more effective in the future.

The strengthening of our capabilities on paper is indispensable, but it is not enough. The achievement finally of real progress in the resolution of long-standing regional conflicts in the OSCE area that is also tangible for the people concerned is of considerable importance. The OSCE will also be measured by its performance here.

In Georgia, progress visible to the people must be made in practical issues, for example gas and water supplies, in the spirit of confidence-building and with the constructive involvement of all parties. Our goal is and remains that of establishing once again in Georgia a visible OSCE presence, which can work on the ground and operate freely to resolve humanitarian and security issues. As regards the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, we strongly appeal to all parties to show restraint both on the ground and in public statements and call on them to make decisive steps towards a resolution of the conflict, including the continuation of confidence-building measures along the line of contact in the conflict zone. Unlike the other regional conflicts in the post-Soviet area, the Transdniestrian conflict is not based on ethnicity, but is rather a political conflict. It can therefore also be solved by political means. Germany is actively involved in seeking progress in this matter. The Meseberg initiative of Federal Chancellor Merkel and President Medvedev has brought a tangible dynamic to the process. Our goal is to find a solution within the framework of the 5+2 negotiations, in which the OSCE is decisively involved. In doing so, we also wish to strengthen the OSCE as an instrument for peaceful conflict resolution.

Security, early warning and conflict prevention are – and have always been – a question of internal relations, of human rights protection and of the protection of religious, ethnic and political minorities. This was made very clear to us on several occasions during the past year. In June 2010, shortly before last year's Annual Security Review Conference, we were witnesses to the inter-ethnic conflict in southern Kyrgyzstan. Since early this year we have been witnessing the political upheavals in some of our Partners for Co-operation, whose transition to democracy has not always been easy to achieve. Developments even in some of the young participating States, for example in the Western Balkans, have shown that our active support in securing stability is not yet completely indispensable. Another example is the internal political development in Belarus, which is characterized by continuing and considerable repression of the political opposition, independent media and a large part of civil society and is a cause of profound concern for us. In our view, these challenges cannot be overcome by an individual organization on its own, not even by the OSCE, but demand an intelligent pooling of the efforts, experience and focuses of several international organizations. There is still considerable room for improvement here.

Conflict situations within and between States must remain high up on the OSCE agenda for the coming years. This is all the more reason for Germany to seek a specific and substantive Ministerial Council decision in Vilnius that gives clear added value to the role and possibilities of the OSCE. We are ready to work actively to achieve this.