

**Opening Remarks for Ambassador Renatas Norkus,
Chairperson of the Permanent Council**

Expert Meeting within the Framework of the
Conflict Cycle – V to V Dialogue:

„Strengthening the Mediation-Support Capacity within the OSCE“

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I warmly welcome you to the expert meeting on „Strengthening the Mediation-Support Capacity within the OSCE.“ This is already the third event in our planned series of V to V Dialogues on Conflict cycle.

Here let me briefly recapitulate the process we have gone through so far. As you are well aware, the ‘Corfu Process’ and Astana preparations have produced many interesting ideas and proposals on how to strengthen the OSCE’s conflict cycle related capacities. However, these ideas needed an appropriate follow-up.

Therefore, at their 15 March informal meeting, ambassadors agreed to make the next step – to bring the discussions that continued for almost two years to yet a new stage. We agreed to try to extract some useful essence from the wealth of ideas that were brought to the table.

There was a general sense that we need to focus on those proposals and ideas which have a good chance of gathering the necessary level of consensus. We also agreed on a need to “operationalize” those ideas. Therefore the Chairmanship proposed follow-on sessions at the expert level, each of which should focus on a particular aspect of the conflict cycle. We believe this to be the best way forward for elaborating a concrete outcome, including deliverables for the Vilnius Ministerial Council.

Indeed, since then the Chairmanship has felt overwhelming and still growing support to this approach. Two previous events – the expert meeting on “Enhancing the Early Warning and Analytical Capacity of the OSCE’ and the Chairmanship’s workshop on Post - Conflict Rehabilitation - have already produced a number of useful and very concrete elements that could and should be taken on board by properly reflecting them in a Ministerial Council Decision on the conflict cycle, that the Chairmanship proposed for adoption at Vilnius. There is no need to repeat that the Chairmanship’s concrete plans regarding deliverables on the Conflict Cycle were outlined in the Discussion Paper for the Ambassadorial Retreat. We are very pleased that they received overwhelming support from the delegations, including most recently during ASRC discussions.

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Dear Colleagues,

At our meeting today we will look at the OSCE toolbox in the area of dialogue facilitation and mediation. In particular, I would like to suggest, as noted in my letter of invitation on 3 June, to focus mainly on possible ways to support more effectively future Chairmanships and relevant OSCE Special Representatives, as well as the field operations in their mediation activities. This entails exploring ways to develop further a mediation-support capacity that befits the political, structural and institutional context of the OSCE. The Chairmanship believes that the development of such a mediation-support capacity in the Secretariat, if properly implemented, would enable the OSCE to enhance its capacity to act more effectively in the field of dialogue facilitation and mediation.

Here I would like to make one point absolutely clear – we are **not** aiming at expanding OSCE activities to new fields and we are **not** trying to change or modify existing mandates, but rather we proposing to consider how to enhance operational capacity to act. That is to say, how we could do better the job which we are supposed to do anyway.

In this regard, we have put forward concrete proposals. On 6 July, the Chairmanship circulated for your attention a proposal for a “Concept on strengthening mediation-support within the OSCE“. On this occasion I would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to Ambassador Greminger and the CPC for their tremendous support to the Chairmanship in preparing this proposal. We see this as a concrete deliverable for Vilnius.

We look for a constructive and business like discussion on these suggestions and hope that delegations will support them.

I would also like to extend my welcome and my gratitude to speakers who have graciously accepted our invitation to set the scene for our deliberations today.

Once again I wish to thank Ambassador Thomas Greminger of the Swiss delegation for agreeing to serve as a moderator for today’s event. Ambassador Greminger indeed was instrumental in helping the Chairmanship formulate very concrete proposals which I hope will be the focus of this meeting. And I’m very much impressed by his commitment to support further the Chairmanship by acting as a Co-ordinator of the follow-up to this meeting.

Without further occupying our precious time, let me thank you for your attendance here today. I look forward to continuing our dialogue on issues related to the conflict cycle.

It is now my pleasure to give the floor to our esteemed moderator and colleague, Ambassador Thomas Greminger.

Dear Thomas, to you I entrust the guidance of our work today (and in fact during the weeks and months leading us all to Vilnius).