



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 846th (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 JANUARY 2011

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF LITHUANIA,
H.E. MR. AUDRONIUS AŽUBALIS**

Mister Chair!

1. The Holy See joins other Delegations in warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Audronius Ažubalis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, to the Permanent Council, as well as in congratulating him on the assumption of his duties as 2011 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. Congratulations also to you, Ambassador Norkus, and to your co-workers!

2. In assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE, Lithuania becomes a symbol which can only encourage the search for negotiated solutions to all conflicts still burning in the OSCE area. In fact, in today's context, diplomacy is being led to take new forms. Diplomacy has among its principal concerns today the desire to create opportunities for negotiation so that there will be less risk of conflict between cultural, ethnic or religious communities and that there will be closer cooperation between States, human dignity will be better respected and peace affirmed. As Mr. Ažubalis has observed, synergies between regional and sub-regional organizations are vital for building a stronger security community. Indeed, on the regional and local levels, the value of solidarity is an essential resource for building a human community in a given country or among several countries.

Mister Chair!

3. 2011 will be milestone year for the OSCE. Lithuania assumes the leadership of the Organization in an anniversary year for her, as well as in the period immediately following the recent OSCE Summit in Astana – the first for our

Organization in eleven years. The Holy See would like to reiterate the importance of building the follow-up to the Summit on the principles contained in Helsinki Final Act and in other agreed OSCE documents. They form a unique set of tools that are still valid for addressing current security challenges, as well as for the consolidation and preservation of peace. In addition, the Summit of Heads of State in Astana equipped us with clear indications, as contained in the Astana Commemorative Declaration: Towards a Security Community, of how to face today's challenges in order to enable present and future generations to live in harmony and security. We should build our activities and efforts on this achievement.

In this context, the defense of fundamental freedoms and human rights is receiving more attention in our area today. Indeed, the true interest of nations cannot be thought of solely in terms of political strategy, military strength or economic development. Social unity, above and beyond political models and economic diversity, cannot be achieved without respect for the primary values of justice, peace and the dignity of the human person.

4. Human rights lie at the origin and basis of international life. The most fundamental of these is the right to life and to live in dignity; the right to a natural family, the primary cell of society and driving principle of public life; and the right to freedom of religion, to which the Holy See attaches great importance. The topic of freedom of religion is truly of primary importance in the world today. In this context, Pope Benedict XVI, in his 2011 World Day of Peace Message, said: *"It is painful to think that in some areas of the world it is impossible to profess one's religion freely except at the risk of life and personal liberty. In other areas we see more subtle and sophisticated forms of prejudice and hostility towards believers and religious symbols.... This situation is unacceptable, since it represents an insult to God and to human dignity; furthermore, it is a threat to security and peace, and an obstacle to the achievement of authentic and integral human development. To deny or arbitrarily restrict this freedom is to foster a reductive vision of the human person; to eclipse the public role of religion is to create a society which is unjust, inasmuch as it fails to take account of the true nature of the human person; it is to stifle the growth of the authentic and lasting peace of the whole human family"* (No. 1).

It is only on the condition that these freedoms are respected that other aspects of international life can find their full sense. We cannot but agree with the Lithuanian Chairmanship that without a human dimension, geopolitics, economic and financial exchanges and intercultural dialogue would be limited merely to the logic of special interests, which is never far removed from the logic of force.

5. In conclusion, Mister Chairman, as Lithuania assumes Chairmanship of the OSCE, my Delegation is pleased to offer good wishes for your country's period in office. And I assure you of my Delegation's desire to cooperate with you in promoting peace and the advancement of individuals and peoples.

Thank you, Mister Chair!