

**Statement by H.E. Audronius Ažubalis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Chairperson-in-Office of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, at United Nations Security Council. United Nations, New York, 15 February 2011**



Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the Security Council as Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE. With 56 participating States spanning the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region, the OSCE is the world's largest regional organization under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. We value highly the close co-operation that we enjoy with the UN in the maintenance of international peace and security.

The OSCE Summit, held in Astana last year, set the strategic direction for the Organization. In Astana, OSCE Heads of State and Government recommitted themselves to “the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals”.

This message was echoed by the UN Secretary General who, at the Summit, spoke eloquently of the “core principles and common values” on which both organizations are based, and called for closer co-operation in order “to expand peace, advance human rights, generate sustainable development, and build a safer world”. Lithuania's Chairmanship of the OSCE will try to work towards the realization of these goals.

Excellencies,

Allow me now to present our Chairmanship's priorities:

tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts;

improved implementation of media freedom commitments;

strengthened OSCE response to transnational threats, including those emanating from outside the OSCE area;

Enhancing the OSCE's role in the area of energy security; and, finally, promoting tolerance education throughout the OSCE area

*Let me address some of the central issues this year:*

*Protracted Conflicts:*

As Chairman-in-Office, I place the high priority on seeking progress in the resolution of these conflicts, fully respecting the norms and principles of international law enshrined in the United Nations Charter, as well as the Helsinki Final Act.

We will continue to pursue active OSCE participation in the political process aimed at settling the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. During my recent visit to Chisinau and Tiraspol, I met with the political leadership on both sides of Nistru river to discuss the settlement process. I remain cautiously optimistic, especially after recent consultations with my counterparts in Moscow, Kyiv, Berlin and Brussels, that this year we will be able to resume official negotiations in the 5+2 format.

The OSCE role in pursuing a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict through stronger engagement by the Co-chairs of the Minsk Group will be maintained. We invite the conflict parties, and other OSCE participating States, to consider options for confidence-building measures and strengthening the OSCE monitoring activities, particularly in light of growing tensions on the ground.

The Chairmanship remains committed to the OSCE's active engagement in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions to reduce tensions and build trust among affected communities. Geneva is an unique forum in the sense that three major international actors – the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations – plus US, Russia are closely working together for the security and stability in the region. Full-fledged participation of the Representative of the UN is extremely important for the success of this process. Therefore there is a vital need to find here in New York a long-term arrangement ensuring continuous UN representation at the Geneva talks. We will urge all participants to take full advantage of the Geneva framework to develop measures to improve security and alleviate humanitarian needs. We will work with the participating States to explore possibilities for extending the OSCE's activities on the ground, including through a meaningful OSCE presence.

#### Mr. President,

As Chairman I place media freedom in general and the safety of journalists in particular very high on the Chair's list of priorities for 2011. As a former journalist, I understand the importance of being able to work in an environment free of intimidation. Working with the OSCE Representative of the Freedom of the Media, we will organize a conference on the safety of journalists in Vilnius in June. I look forward to an active UN participation in this event.

In my region, it was disappointing that OSCE standards, including media and election standards, were not met during last December's Presidential elections in Belarus.

The Chairmanship also regrets the decision by the Government of Belarus to terminate the work of the OSCE Office in Minsk. The Office has provided valuable assistance to Belarus, to the people and the government in strengthen institutions, consolidating the rule of law and in fostering relations between the government and civil society in accordance with OSCE principles and commitments. In our view, this work is not complete. We remain engaged in consultations with the Belarussian authorities to explore ways in which the OSCE can continue to support the government and people of Belarus.

During the Lithuanian Chairmanship, programs to develop tolerance education and to combat hate crimes and all forms of discrimination will be encouraged and further promoted.

### *Recent and current crisis*

Crises and conflicts in the OSCE region over the past several years have demonstrated the urgent need to strengthen our Organization's capabilities to act effectively across the entire conflict cycle. The OSCE does this in a variety of ways including through its field presences, the work of its Vienna-based Secretariat, and through its three specialized institutions.

We must provide early warning when there are signs of smoke. Despite progress in recent years, some areas of the OSCE are – like parts of the Caucasus, South Eastern Europe and Central Asia – remain vulnerable.

Early warning must be followed by early action. That is why we have been quick to respond to the recent event in Albania. In close coordination with the European Union and other concerned parties, we have engaged in a continuous dialogue with government and opposition leaders. We will continue, via the OSCE field presence and in cooperation with our international partners, to monitor the situation and provide assistance where we can. I trust that our efforts will help to reduce tensions there.

Last year, the OSCE community was faced with a crisis in the Fergana Valley. The situation has calmed down to some extent, but tensions remain. The OSCE's Community Security Initiative (CSI), developed jointly with Kyrgyzstan is the key international response to the violence in this fragile state. As we speak, OSCE personnel are deploying to southern Kyrgyzstan. This Initiative will help the Kyrgyzstani authorities address the specific security situation that evolved in the country after the June events. In implementing the CSI, we stand ready to co-operate with the UN to achieve the maximum synergy from our efforts.

Excellencies,

Let me now turn to OSCE Cooperation with the UN.

A longstanding example of successful OSCE-UN cooperation in the field is Kosovo. Here the OSCE Mission (OMIK) continues to implement its mandate under UN Security Council resolution 1244, as an integral pillar of UNMIK. It is the Lithuanian Chairmanship's intention to ensure that OMIK continues to play its agreed role, working to ensure the security and well-being of all communities in Kosovo. The Chairmanship shares UN concerns about reports of human organ trafficking in Kosovo during the 1990's, and support the call for an independent investigation and clarification of the facts.

Following the Serbian and EU-sponsored resolution on Kosovo adopted by the General Assembly last September, the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue offers a concrete opportunity to move forward on issues of mutual concern and to improve the lives of ordinary people. The OSCE stands ready to contribute to this process in areas where it has the relevant expertise.

In Astana, the OSCE's participating States agreed that in facing emerging threats, such as terrorism, organized crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, "greater unity of purpose and action must be achieved."

Recognizing the leading role of the UN in the fight against terrorism, the Lithuanian Chairmanship is firmly committed to fruitful co-operation with UN bodies in promoting the universal legal framework against terrorism. At the Astana Summit, the UN Secretary

General called upon the OSCE to join the fight against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Working with the participating States the Chairmanship will facilitate the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540 (UNSCR 1540).

We also intend to step up our response to organized crime. As a regional arrangement of the United Nations, we can do more to help states implement the Palermo Convention and its three Protocols. We will also look at how to strengthen the capacity of participating States to respond to emerging challenges, like cyber security. To this end, we intend to hold an OSCE conference on this topic during our Chairmanship. Active UN participation to this event would be most valuable and highly appreciated.

Excellencies,

Lithuania, based on its own experience in the Baltic region, believes strongly in the value of regional and sub-regional co-operation. We see co-operation also at this level as a tool to promote genuine security and stability, to resolve conflicts and to achieve sustainable economic development. In our inter-connected world, we must put a special focus on co-operation between the OSCE and adjacent regions.

In that spirit, the Lithuanian Chairmanship will intensify its work supporting UN-led international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, which is an OSCE Partner for Cooperation. Our primary goal will be to counter the transnational threats stemming from its territory. We will work through concrete projects, in close co-operation and co-ordination with the Afghan authorities, our own Central Asian participating States, the UN and other international actors and organizations active in the region.

The OSCE experience could also be an example to other regions of the world, including among our Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. We stand ready to share our experience and expertise where it is needed, for example in the Middle East and the Korean Peninsula. Twenty years ago, the OSCE played a key role in managing the challenges of transition in Eastern Europe. In these times of dramatic change in Tunisia and Egypt, perhaps the OSCE toolbox as well its principles and institutions could provide inspiration to others.

We will continue to share the wealth of OSCE experience in cross-dimensional security with other regional organizations, such as the African Union, the League of the Arab States, the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), the ASEAN Regional Forum and the Organization of American States.

Thank you for your attention, Excellencies, and we look forward to on-going practical cooperation between the OSCE and the United Nations. The more effective that the OSCE can be in promoting security and cooperation in Europe, the more time this Council will have to devote to other challenges in other areas of the world.