

ENGLISH only

**Address by H.E. Dr. Antanas Valionis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of Lithuania, at OSCE Permanent Council meeting
27 October 2005**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I really appreciate this opportunity to speak to this distinguished audience. I have never doubted the future of OSCE. It was built and continues to grow on the sound foundation of common values, which together with our political commitments constitute the current *acquis* of OSCE.

The future of this organization highly depends on our abilities to preserve this foundation and build on it further while responding to challenges and tasks of the 21st century.

My vision of OSCE builds on three basic elements:

- **first**, we need an organization which is **active** in fostering political dialogue among Participating States,
- **second**, we need an organization which is **flexible and quick** in responding to contemporary challenges,
- and **third**, we need an **effective** organization which is capable of producing objective evaluations and policy recommendations.

Strengthened along these lines, where appropriate and necessary, the OSCE would highly improve its own visibility, thus also adding to its public profile.

In this context I would like to present Lithuania's view by outlining three aspects of strengthening which we consider significant to this process.

First, the capabilities of ODIHR have to be strengthened by providing this autonomous institution with sufficient resources to perform its tasks. The expertise and the working methods of ODIHR are widely acknowledged far beyond the OSCE's geographical area. Thus, we should grasp this opportunity and build on our comparative advantages. In this regard, post-election follow-up is an area that deserves our attention.

Second, we could pursue a broader multi-dimensional approach to security and translate it more actively into OSCE's day-to-day activities, most notably in the field. Here, we believe, the potential is still unused. For example, energy security issues could be addressed in the OSCE framework, and we are determined to work in this direction.

And last but not least, the strengthening of the Secretary General's role would not only improve management and transparency in the secretariat, but would also endow the OSCE with a more distinct profile and continuity.

Whatever is the outcome of the discussions, we should never forget that the purpose of the OSCE is the action on substance rather than perpetual reform of its working structures. And it is the political will of Participating States rather than structures themselves that set this Organization in action.

Going straight to the substance, I would like to focus on the election monitoring. At the end of this year, as well as throughout 2006, a series of elections will be held in the OSCE area. In some cases, elections may have a profound impact on long-term security in these countries and in the region. This fact will put some extra work on ODIHR, including us all.

All OSCE members have a legitimate right to protect democracy, human rights, rule of law and free media within the limits provided by the OSCE. Lithuania considers free and fair elections, conducted in accordance with OSCE commitments, as an ultimate value. My country not only carefully follows the OSCE's electoral scrutiny but also shares her experience with other states. We urge Participating States to be supportive for OSCE's observation both in issuing timely invitations to ODIHR for monitoring of elections and in seconding their personnel to ODIHR missions.

Unresolved conflicts in the OSCE area is another important issue. We should spare no effort in using all tools at OSCE's disposal in order to solve conflicts. To this end, OSCE has to reinforce its capacities of building confidence and political dialogue. OSCE could better employ its field missions for monitoring, assessing the needs and building capacities of local authorities, especially in such areas as police and border guard. In addition, OSCE could raise awareness of other international actors and use their comparative advantage for resolving conflicts.

Mr. Chairman,

The progress reached between Tbilisi and Moscow on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia is encouraging. We welcome the joint declaration signed by the two governments in Moscow this May. It gives us grounds to believe that this long-lasting issue will be finally solved by 2008.

We are also encouraged by the EU decision to launch a Border Assistance Mission on the Moldova-Ukraine border. In addition, the EU is joining an expanded 5+2 negotiations format on the Transnistrian issue. We regard these two facts as a practical and welcome contribution to the settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

Yet, this is just the beginning. Many more preconditions ranging from demilitarization to democratization of the region will have to be met to achieve a long term solution.

Within the next few months, the international community will enter a decisive phase in defining the future status of Kosovo. Without any prejudice to the outcome to these deliberations, one thing is clear for now – Kosovo will need a continued and active OSCE involvement and assistance to succeed.

We also very much value the important role of the OSCE played in Central Asia in all three dimensions.

May I take this opportunity to commend the efforts of my colleague and our Chairman-in-Office Dr. Dimitrij Rupel for his special attention to conflict resolution, which he has demonstrated so vividly during his numerous visits to the countries and regions concerned.

Our nations play an important role in promoting common values across the borders, but alone they can achieve only a limited success. We need to pool our responsibilities under the auspices of major international organizations, such as United Nations, European Union, NATO, OSCE and Council of Europe. Thanks to this effort, Lithuania contributes today to many international missions, not least in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and in the future, we believe, our participation will only grow.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE is a regional organization. Therefore, it has a role to play in cultivating regional partnerships. The OSCE offers a network in which different sub-regional constellations can engage with each other and share their best practices. Lithuania believes that such sub-regional organizations as the Council of the Baltic Sea States should develop new partnerships with their counterparts in South East Europe, Black Sea Area, Caucasus or Central Asia. This kind of cooperation would enhance good neighborly relations and would contribute to Euro-Atlantic and cross-cultural dialogue. Lithuania promoted this idea rather successfully during its chairmanship of the Council of Europe. Now we are committed to pursuing it within other international organizations, including the OSCE.

The OSCE's relations with our partners in Asia and the Mediterranean are among the most valuable aspects of our organization's work. In maintaining and developing these contacts we not only understand each other better, but also can share our experience and build new bridges of trust and cooperation.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to conclude with a short remark on the chairmanship calendar of this organization. Last year Lithuania submitted a formal application to assume the OSCE chairmanship responsibilities in 2010. Please accept this application as our sincere determination to increase our burden sharing within the OSCE framework.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, allow me to wish you best success in organizing the forthcoming Ministerial Council on 5-6 December 2005. We look forward to constructive and productive discussions in Ljubljana.

Thank you.