



Statement

by

H.E. Ambassador Christopher Grima

Permanent Representative of Malta

to the OSCE

At the 18th OSCE Ministerial Council

Vilnius, 6th – 7th December 2011

Mr Chairman,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by expressing sincere appreciation to our Lithuanian hosts for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us since our arrival in Vilnius and to also thank Lithuania for the efficient organization of this meeting.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Government of Lithuania for the professional manner in which it has steered the work of this Organization over the past twelve months and for its unwavering commitment to strengthen security throughout the OSCE region.

Malta naturally aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I will therefore only add a few additional reflections on issues important to my delegation.

Mr Chairman,

Just over one year ago, Heads of State or Government gathered in Kazakhstan for the first OSCE Summit in eleven years. In Astana the 56 OSCE participating States recommitted themselves to all OSCE norms, principles and commitments across the three dimensions and to common and indivisible security throughout the OSCE region.

The promotion and respect for democracy, human rights and rule of law remain at the heart of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. My Government attaches considerable importance to the work of this Organization in the human dimension and commends ODIHR for its invaluable contribution in this area. We all recognize that ODIHR is well-positioned to also support Mediterranean Partner countries in their transition to democracy particularly in the human dimension with electoral reform and assistance on the independence of the judiciary areas possibly deserving closer consideration. We are grateful to ODIHR Director Janez Lenarcic and his able team for their efforts over the past year following developments in the Mediterranean.

Mr Chairman,

As early as the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, the OSCE has recognized that security in Europe is closely linked with security in the Mediterranean as a whole. Time and again, the OSCE has reaffirmed this principle, most recently at the highest level through a Declaration adopted by the OSCE Heads of State or Government in Astana in December 2010. Few participating States at the time could have predicted the historic events that were about to unfold in the Mediterranean – events that have forever transformed the political and security landscape in the region. Developments in the Mediterranean throughout the past year have brought into sharper focus the vision of our founding fathers. These developments have clearly also added to the burden of responsibility on this Organization to take further steps towards genuine partnership for the benefit of our common security.

Mr Chairman,

Events we are witnessing across the Mediterranean are nothing short of historic. It is a time of great hope but also a moment of considerable uncertainty and also risks. We are nevertheless witnessing nothing less than a revolution for freedom, dignity and better opportunity driven by courageous young people throughout the region who we must not fail. The record of the OSCE in democracy building speaks for itself. It is time to harness OSCE experience to the needs and aspirations of the people of the Mediterranean. The OSCE should seek to nurture and take forward the reform efforts in the Partner countries. We would also

encourage the Mediterranean Partner countries themselves to come forward with specific ideas and projects that draw on the experience and expertise of the OSCE. The draft Ministerial decision on the Partners for Cooperation provides a sound basis for enhanced cooperation and represents a further step towards developing a deeper and more comprehensive relationship with our Mediterranean Partners for Cooperation.

Malta believes that the OSCE also has a role to play in assisting Libya in its transition to democracy through cooperation in a number of areas and we hope that relations between Libya and the OSCE will be established in the near future. In the meantime, we encourage the incoming Irish Chairmanship to reach out to Libya and to facilitate a better understanding with the Libyan authorities of what the OSCE can offer.

Mr Chairman,

We are living another turning point in the history of the Mediterranean. The OSCE as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter has a particular responsibility to support these fledgling but also fragile democracies. But the Mediterranean is also badly in need of a broad forum for political dialogue which my delegation believes would benefit greatly from the three-dimension approach to security of the OSCE. In consultation with Mediterranean Partners perhaps the time has come to revisit the proposal made a number of years ago by Italy and Spain to launch a Conference for the countries of the Mediterranean modelled on the OSCE process. Malta remains particularly attracted to this idea. It is useful to recall at this juncture that in Helsinki participating States declared their “intention of maintaining and amplifying the contacts and dialogue as initiated by the CSCE with non-participating Mediterranean States to include all the States of the Mediterranean...” Undeniably the OSCE is a living demonstration of what can be achieved when States of different histories and cultures come together to pursue dialogue and cooperation on the full range of issues that affect their common security. It has developed mechanisms, set up institutions to ensure continuing dialogue among participating States reducing inequalities and tensions on our continent. We are convinced the creation of similar structures for the countries of the Mediterranean for continuing dialogue among the countries of the region would contribute to peace and stability in the Mediterranean and in the OSCE region itself. We believe that over time this would create a Mediterranean security community that would be able to engage in a continuing dialogue with this organization transforming the OSCE region into a security community that also includes the Mediterranean.

Mr Chairman,

Many of today’s challenges are increasingly complex, decreasingly respect national borders and cut across a number of areas. With its comprehensive approach to security the OSCE is well-equipped to make a contribution to international peace and security in the 21st century. As people and goods move across borders with increasing ease, threats to security are progressively more transnational and some may even find their origins in different regions. For this reason we commend the efforts of the Lithuanian Chairmanship to strengthen the executive structures of the OSCE to ensure that this Organization responds more effectively to the threats and challenges of our time. We also welcome the recent discussion on cyber security. We hope that it will be possible to adopt a decision at this Ministerial and believe that the OSCE can play a valuable role in addressing this challenge.

The proliferation or illicit transfer of small arms and light weapons is also a potential source for instability within and among participating States as well as between different regions. In collaboration with the Conflict Prevention Centre, Malta is therefore pleased to host an OSCE regional workshop in early 2012 on licensing of dual use goods and controlled commodities including small arms and light weapons, bringing together officials from customs services and licensing authorities from the Mediterranean region.

The protracted conflicts continue to present a threat to security in the OSCE region. We must redouble our efforts to settle these conflicts in a negotiated and sustainable manner within existing formats.

Mr Chairman,

OSCE Field Missions continue to perform essential work on the ground and the role they play in strengthening security and cooperation throughout our region should not be underestimated. In so far as the OSCE Office in Zagreb is concerned, we commend the highly professional work of its staff and of the Croatian authorities to fulfil the mutually agreed targets and are ready to support its closure along the lines which have been proposed by the Lithuanian Chairmanship.

At the same time, my delegation welcomes the interest in the OSCE expressed by Mongolia and its desire to upgrade its status from Partner country to that of a participating State. We welcome its pledge to implement all the principles and commitments of this Organization and would be pleased to welcome it into the OSCE family.

We also applaud the efforts of the Lithuanian Chairmanship to secure consensus on the OSCE Chairmanships for 2014 and 2015 and can fully support its proposal for Switzerland and Serbia to lead this Organization over these two years.

Mr Chairman,

Before concluding I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our new Secretary-General Lamberto Zannier who has brought a wealth of experience to this Organization and to thank him and the dedicated staff of the Secretariat for their diligent work. Allow me also to express our sincere best wishes to the incoming Irish Chairmanship and wish it well at the helm of this Organization during what promises to be a challenging year ahead.

Thank you.