

MC.DEL/25/12
6 December 2012

ENGLISH
Original: RUSSIAN

**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEKSANDR MIKHNEVICH,
FIRST DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BELARUS, AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 and 7 December 2012

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished colleagues,

At the OSCE Summit in Astana in 2010 our Heads of State or Government defined as their strategic goal the building of a common and indivisible security community in the OSCE area. The achievement of this goal could become a worthy continuation of the historic traditions of the OSCE, strengthen its role and authority and generally promote the development of an atmosphere of confidence and co-operation in the region.

However, the past two years have simply not brought us any closer to that goal. The OSCE region has not become more secure or more stable.

What is required of the OSCE today is not only to recognize the need for a return to the spirit of Helsinki but also to take real steps aimed at the good-faith implementation of the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act, including the renunciation of economic and political pressure on sovereign States.

There should be no place in our Organization for a policy of unilateral sanctions, artificial restrictions and diktat. Otherwise it is pointless to talk about the formation of a genuine security community in the OSCE area.

Over the last few years, the Organization has been rapidly losing its unique role as a forum for political dialogue and co-operation. The ambitious vision of Astana may when all is said and done remain merely fine words and an unattainable goal.

In the OSCE area, problems and challenges are multiplying, new crises are brewing and the level of trust among the participating States is falling dramatically. The work in the OSCE's first basket suffers most as a result of this situation.

Traditional transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, trafficking in human beings and drug trafficking have been joined by the threats and challenges stemming from cyberspace and social unrest connected with the financial crisis.

The rise in intolerance and discrimination may undermine the very foundations of the participating States' societies and their basic values.

Nevertheless, I should like to believe that the Helsinki+40 process initiated by the Irish Chairmanship could become a turning point in the history of the OSCE and lead to systemic improvements in its work.

To this end, however, we should deal with truly important and intelligible issues for our citizens, depoliticize the dialogue within the OSCE as much as possible and make use of the expertise of the academic community.

Freedom of movement is one such pressing issue of significance for the citizens of our countries today. We firmly believe that if we reach concrete agreements on this matter within the OSCE, this will really help to strengthen mutual trust and co-operation and prevent the appearance of new dividing lines across the OSCE area.

We need to undertake the most active efforts as a matter of urgency to restore the viability of the conventional arms control regime in Europe – this unique instrument for ensuring security and stability, which in the future should encompass all OSCE participating States without exception.

It is also important to ensure the harmonization of the rapidly developing integration processes in the OSCE area. This will enable us to make our region more cohesive, secure and prosperous and finally overcome the bloc mentality.

And, lastly, it is time to openly approach without any preconceptions the vital task of reforming the OSCE and adapting its tools to today's challenges. If we do not do this then crises will continue to grow and the Organization will lose its authority completely.

Over the last few years, serious efforts have been made to begin a substantive dialogue on strengthening the legal framework of the OSCE and agreeing on a common vision of its legal status. We have covered some ground already, but we need the political will of all States to draw up and adopt an OSCE constituent document.

The OSCE's election observation activities deserve the closest attention. It has so far proved impossible to eradicate double standards, biased approaches and subjective assessments in this area.

Ensuring equal treatment of all countries during the election assessment process, whether the elections are held in the United States of America, the European Union or Belarus is in our common interests.

We trust that the topics raised by us will become part of the dialogue and substantive work within the future Helsinki+40 process.

In conclusion, let me thank the Irish Chairmanship for the effective preparations for our meeting and welcome Mongolia as a fully fledged participant in the OSCE. We should like to welcome Ukraine – a close neighbour of ours and an important partner – as the future OSCE Chairmanship and wish it every success in that post.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.