

**STATEMENT BY MR. MICHAEL GEORG LINK,
MINISTER OF STATE OF GERMANY AND MEMBER OF THE
BUNDESTAG, AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 December 2012

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Colleagues,

I should like to thank the Irish hosts most sincerely for their invitation to Dublin.

As we are on an island, it is perhaps appropriate to compare the state of the OSCE with a ship sailing on the open waters of security policy and through the unpredictable sea of international politics. In fact, the OSCE ship is more like a tanker that is already in its fourth decade of service. It appears a little bit cumbersome, and some people think that this form of transport has become somewhat unfashionable: there are those who believe that the OSCE's relevance to security policy is on the decline; and at the same time old contradictions and obstacles long thought to have been overcome are resurfacing.

No, dear colleagues, the OSCE is surely a ship that has borne us to date safely through troubled seas. It helps us to negotiate the rocks and sandbanks of polarization and antagonisms among participating States, to weather the storms of international crises and avoid the shallows of mistrust and conflict.

The OSCE forms a geographical and security policy bridge from the Atlantic across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea to the Caspian Sea and beyond, now as far as Mongolia. I should like to take this occasion to sincerely congratulate the representative of Mongolia on the admission of his country as an OSCE participating State. The Organization now covers a significant area of the world and links up a billion people. The OSCE *acquis* in the three dimensions is made for these people and is intended to make their lives more secure in every respect. The comprehensive OSCE concept of security rooted in this *acquis* is unparalleled in the world and is thus of enduring significance.

All of us, the participating States, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and all OSCE institutions, bear joint responsibility for its promotion and further development.

If the OSCE did not exist or if it were weakened, our world would be less stable and predictable. Other world regions envy us for this format. In 2015 we shall be celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act. We have a lot to thank it for. It was the basis for

overcoming the division of the world and Europe into East and West, barely conceivable at the time, and last but not least for the unification of my own country.

The Helsinki+40 process is intended to show us the way the OSCE should take in the future. The IDEAS initiative launched by Federal Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle together with his counterparts from France, Poland and Russia makes a strategic contribution to this debate. Secretary General Lamberto Zannier paid tribute to this initiative in his statement early today, for which we expressly thank him.

We would like to see the IDEAS initiative followed up within Helsinki+40 and developed with further think tanks in order to make progress in the creation of a genuine security community. The report by the four academic institutions deserves attention. It offers an excellent analysis of the state of the OSCE and also contains recommendations that can and should be more than just food for thought. The report envisages the security community as a community of the 57 participating States meeting together on a basis of mutual trust and finding increasing agreement in their fundamental values and security policy assessments.

This can come about only if we overcome the current polarization in the world, which is based on resurgent traditional antagonisms and old thinking in zones of influence. We need to create more trust again through the greatest possible transparency in our behaviour as States in the area of security policy. This is essentially the mandate given at the Astana Summit to the leaders and also the parliaments in the OSCE area. In the twenty-first century the era of zero-sum games in international politics should be over once and for all.

Germany therefore regrets that it has not been possible this year to make substantial progress in confidence- and security-building measures through the further modernization of the Vienna Document. This document needs to be adapted to the realities of the twenty-first century so that it can retain its significance as an instrument for transparency and confidence-building.

For Germany, conventional arms control therefore remains an essential element for the security and stability of our continent. It needs to be revived and modernized.

In the area of non-military security we face new challenges. Transnational threats such as terrorism, trafficking in drugs and human beings, and cyber risks have the potential to destabilize States and call for determined police action. This Ministerial Council should therefore endorse the draft decisions on transnational threats so as to make the OSCE capable of acting.

There has been no progress in the human dimension since the last Ministerial Council in Vilnius. This is a particularly serious symptom of the re-emergent rifts in the OSCE region.

We emphatically support the work of the autonomous OSCE institution, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), particularly in the field of election monitoring. This important instrument should not be adversely influenced by institutional dispute. We continue to favour constructive co-operation between the ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

For Germany, human rights are the inalienable core of its foreign policy. This also applies explicitly to their protection in the era of new information and communication technologies. We are therefore systematically in favour of the adoption of decisions again at this Ministerial Council to further develop the *acquis* in the human dimension.

For the sake of its credibility, the OSCE must commit itself more actively than hitherto with respect to the conflicts existing in its region so that the vision of a security community can become a reality. An active policy of reconciliation would make an important contribution to this.

Germany supports the mediation efforts of the Minsk Group in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. At the same time, we are concerned at the continuing incidents and the lack of progress towards a peaceful solution of the conflict. The parties to the conflict should finally demonstrate their willingness to accept confidence-building measures and make their populations aware of the need for compromises.

I should like to emphasize the intensive efforts by the Irish Chairmanship to bring forward the “5+2” negotiations for a solution to the Transdnestrian conflict. We hope that neighbouring Ukraine will continue these efforts and achieve further progress during its Chairmanship in 2013. The Federal Government is also committed to this, as illustrated by the Meseberg initiative and the second OSCE conference in Bavaria in June under German patronage.

Finally, I should like to thank the Irish Chairmanship for its important work and to wish Ukraine all the best for its Chairmanship in 2013. Let us all work together to continue to develop the OSCE as a security community. We are all sitting in the same boat and must set a joint course for the future. Germany is an active member of the OSCE crew and remains willing to make its contribution to develop and strengthen the OSCE and its *acquis*.

Thank you.