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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Petras Vaitiekūnas  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, at the Fifteenth Meeting of the  
OSCE Ministerial Council  
Madrid, 29-30 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to our colleague Miguel Ángel Moratinos and to his professional and dedicated team for their work during this year's Chairmanship-in-Office and for their warm hospitality in Madrid.

We gathered here in Madrid to take stock of OSCE's accomplishments and to reaffirm strategic directions for its future work. Since 1975 Helsinki Conference the purpose of this organization has been to build a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. With this in mind, we encourage the OSCE to reinforce its practical activities in promoting our basic values, norms and commitments within all three OSCE dimensions, while being guided by our comprehensive approach to security.

The OSCE remains an indispensable instrument of assistance to its Participating States in implementation of their commitments with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity and values, democracy and the rule of law. In this regard, we commend the continued significant contribution of OSCE institutions and field operations. In particular, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), through its election related activities, plays a crucial role of assistance to all of us. We therefore reiterate our call upon all OSCE Participating States to create and maintain the necessary conditions to permit ODIHR implement its mandate in election monitoring before, during and after an election, including ensuring an improved follow-up to its recommendations.

Mr. Chairman,

Protracted conflicts that continue to have a negative impact on security, stability and development shall remain a major target of the OSCE's work. The OSCE and its executive structures must be encouraged to employ all necessary resources, energy and creativity with a view to finding peaceful and lasting resolution to all of them. We welcome that OSCE is doing much in promoting dialogue, building confidence and cooperation within the conflict regions. In this regard, we reiterate our full support to OSCE Economic Rehabilitation Programme in South Ossetia, Georgia, to which Lithuania has made a substantial contribution.

Mr. Chairman,

Lithuania is concerned about the announced intention of the Russian Federation to suspend its participation in the work of the CFE Treaty. We hope that the States Parties to this Treaty will be able to resolve outstanding disagreements and will reaffirm their determination to implement fully all their obligations and commitments arising from the Treaty and its associated documents.

Fulfilment of the remaining commitments on Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, undertaken in the OSCE Istanbul Summit in 1999 and reflected in the CFE Final Act, remains crucial. We welcome the progress achieved by the Russian Federation and Georgia on the withdrawal of

Russian forces from Georgia. However, we see the continuing lack of progress on the withdrawal of Russian military forces and equipment from the Republic of Moldova and call for its immediate resumption and completion.

Mr. Chairman,

Countering terrorism is a priority for the Spanish chairmanship. Lithuania has also made its contribution to the work of the OSCE both within the Security Committee in Vienna and from the capital. We welcome the active role of OSCE and its Action against Terrorism Unit in promoting cooperation among relevant regional and sub-regional organizations in this important field. We are also encouraged by the outcomes of the OSCE political conference on public-private partnerships in countering terrorism, held at the initiative of Russia and the United States, and would be interested in meaningful follow-up activities.

OSCE's dialogue, co-operation and joint activities with its Partners for Co-operation promote our common security. In this context, we would welcome increased OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan, in particular, through close collaboration with Central Asian Participating States, in a number of important fields, such as border management, police co-operation and fight against trafficking in drugs. Being a leading nation in the Province Reconstruction Team in Ghor, Lithuania has a particular interest to this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to secure predictability in the work of our organization, we consider a decision on future chairmanships based on a sequence for 2009, 2010 and 2011 as a matter of absolute priority for this meeting. In this regard we expect that through good will of all Participating States a compromise solution acceptable to three candidate countries and all parties concerned will be found.

Already in 2004 Lithuania announced its candidacy for Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. For our chairmanship we offer continuity and active engagement in promoting the implementation of OSCE commitments, encouraging regional cooperation and countering old and new threats to security and stability.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to wish Finland, our incoming Chairmanship, the best success in 2008, and to assure her of our close cooperation, active engagement and strong support in promoting values and principles of our Organization.

Thank you.