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**PERMANENT DELEGATION  
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**FAREWELL ADDRESS**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
28 July 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and dear friend Renatas, and thank you, esteemed Doyenne and dear old friend Maria-Pia, for your almost excessively kind and generous words. And funny, too. As you know, you are my oldest friend and acquaintance in our very closely knit OSCE community, for our cooperation goes back to Brussels and 1995, when you were a very young, but already experienced and competent representative of the Principality of Liechtenstein in the European Economic Area cooperation, whereas I was Deputy Secretary-General and Head of EFTA's Brussels Office, and a loyal servant of the four remaining EFTA countries. Since our paths crossed again here in Vienna, you have been one of my most important partners and colleagues, since we usually meet 3-4 times a week for joint consultations in our wonderful Likeminded Group, about which you co-authored a very informative article together with my predecessor. So I have had ample opportunity to benefit from your wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as your good judgment and sound common sense, not to mention your generous hospitality. An absolute highlight among all the wonderful working lunches and dinners I have enjoyed here, was when I, as you just said, was left speechless by suddenly and unexpectedly finding myself as a one-time honorary member of the lunch club of the Lady Ambassadors of the OSCE a couple of weeks ago.

As apparent from your review of my diplomatic career over almost 40 years, most of it has been devoted to multilateral, and mainly economic, cooperation, except for

a very rewarding experience of 4 years as Ambassador to Iceland, immediately before my tenure here.

In multilateral cooperation, patience is one of the most important virtues, because progress is often painfully slow. But if I look back on what has happened in the world on my watch, which started in January 1972, the progress achieved is almost unbelievable. And I can confidently claim that some of the efforts I have been part of, both in European integration and in world-wide cooperation under the aegis of the UN, have contributed decisively to many of the monumental changes for the better that we have seen.

The OSCE also has a proud legacy in developing cooperation and security in our area, stretching around the world and covering about the upper third of our planet, at least if we also include the increasingly important cooperation with our partner countries. In later years, the contributions to bring about peace, stability, democracy and prosperity in the Western Balkans have probably been the organization's most important practical achievements. There are still tasks that have not been completed, both in the Balkans and now even more in other regions, so there will be no shortage of meaningful challenges for the organization, whose potential is far from being fully exploited, and whose usefulness is not always sufficiently recognized. Promotion of the rule of law, for example, is a necessary prerequisite for economic development, and if there is rule of law for enterprises, there will also be rule of law for individual citizens. The comprehensive approach to security, based on common values, is the trademark of the OSCE. Real security can only be achieved when it is founded on democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law, tolerance, and rejection of all forms of extremism. And this will become more and more important if we are to be able to live together in our increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies.

Paradoxically, international organizations usually get more political and media attention when they fail than when they make steady, but unspectacular progress. I am tempted to recall a story about an Icelandic lady with no less than 17 children. Asked about how she managed to divide her attention fairly between all these children, she answered: "Well, unless they are sick or misbehaving, they won't get much attention from me." The sad fate of her healthy and well-behaved children often also befalls international organizations. A recent example is when the OSCE

was not able to prevent the war in Georgia in 2008, which brought us back on the political and public radar screen, through a major setback for cooperation in our area. I sincerely hope that ongoing discussions will bring about the desired strengthening of our conflict prevention and crises management toolkit, and also get cooperation on arms control back on the rails, but I must confess that I have been disappointed by the very modest progress achieved so far. I hope for good and substantive results from Vilnius. If it should turn out that even more patience is needed before decisive progress can be harvested, I will still take this opportunity pay in advance a sincere and well-deserved tribute to Lithuania for a most competent, friendly and efficient Chairmanship, as was particularly clearly demonstrated in the recent process of finding a new Secretary-General. And, as you know, Renatas, I am a big fan and admirer of your cool and soft-spoken style, and your quiet and unruffled response to all kinds of provocations, including a couple of unforgettable one-liners.

I also owe a special vote of thanks to the preceding chairmanships Spain, Finland, Greece, and Kazakhstan, and to a total of 9 EU chairmanships, as well as the US and Russia, with whom we have benefited from regular, pleasant and useful consultations. There are so many others who also deserve a special mention, but that would require breaking all reasonable time limits.

It is a remarkable coincidence that about an hour ago, I reached the fairly ripe old age of 68 years, which is mandatory retirement age for Norwegian ambassadors (although I will be allowed to continue working in the Ministry for two more years if I so wish). I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to crown my career in this extraordinarily interesting and rewarding position, where the best part has been the very close and friendly interaction with all of my wonderful colleagues, including of course present and former Secretary-Generals and CPC Directors, as well as other hardworking and always helpful members of the Secretariat. Informal contacts and “Gedankenaustausch” are the bread and butter of the multilateral diplomat. All the regular and ad hoc consultations, combined with a lot of receptions, lunches and dinners, have provided ample opportunities to collect information and compare notes and analysis with insightful and well-informed colleagues in a manner which has been both friendly, pleasant and useful. Joint visits to some very exciting new destinations, with exhausting, but very interesting programs, have been another big benefit of my OSCE assignment, not least because

they also have offered excellent opportunities to become better acquainted with many wonderful colleagues.

Dear colleagues, meaning not only fellow ambassadors, but also colleagues at all levels in the delegations and the Secretariat from whom I have drawn so much benefit; I count you all as friends, and I shall miss you sorely, starting tomorrow.

I must also thank our usually unseen, but indispensable friends the interpreters, and apologize for the occasions when I have tried to squeeze a 6-minute statement into a 5-minute timeframe by speaking too fast, and for departing liberally from the written texts handed in in advance. Also, I must not forget all the friendly and helpful people in the documents, security and conference services, and all the others who make things go round.

I must also pay a tribute to my own dedicated staff, which during my time here has dwindled from five to three regular diplomats and a very diplomatic military adviser, two Personal Assistants and a trainee, thereby necessitating even harder work on the part of the remaining stalwarts. Warmest thanks to my Deputy Asbjørn, who is also leaving, to Lars, Terje, Barbara, Unni and Sofie. And to my patient wife Torbjørg, who is with me here today, and who has also enjoyed and appreciated very much the warm and friendly relations prevailing in the OSCE family, extending also to our spouses. By the way, she takes the whole credit for the personalized Christmas cards Maria-Pia referred to.

Both we and our fairly numerous visitors from family and friends in Norway have also appreciated the magnificent surroundings presented by our host city and country. Unfortunately, the demands of our heavy schedule have been such that we leave without having experienced more than a small fraction of Vienna's and Austria's many attractions. So we obviously have to come back.

Thank you for your attention, and good luck!