

**Address by Mr. Eamon Gilmore T.D., Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE,  
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to the Permanent Council,  
Thursday 12 January 2012**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address the Permanent Council today as Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. It is a great responsibility for me, and a first for Ireland, to have this opportunity to make a tangible contribution to the promotion of European peace and security.

I can assure you that I am looking forward to the challenge and will be determined to pursue the principles and aims of this Organisation in a balanced and pragmatic manner.

I am firmly committed to the OSCE's concept of a common, comprehensive and indivisible security, based on a cross-dimensional set of agreed principles and commitments. As Chairperson-in-Office, I will work to promote progress across all three Dimensions and I look forward to your cooperation to achieve this.

The OSCE has played a pivotal role in shaping the development of security across its vast geographical territory. The pledge of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 to end East West divisions and build a more secure Europe marked a crucial historic breakthrough. The Helsinki Final Act also highlighted how effective multilateralism can serve to resolve embedded and complex divisions.

The profound political and economic transformations which we are witnessing today in various parts of the globe demonstrate once again the need for effective multilateralism, as do a number of ongoing regional conflicts and the growth in transnational security challenges. As we approach the fortieth anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015, a significant milestone, it will be important for our Chairmanship and future Chairmanships to identify common priorities which will help us to build on the unique strengths of the OSCE and to develop the specific contribution which the Organization can make to tackling these global challenges. I believe it is important to adopt a strategic, longer-term approach if the OSCE is to make an effective contribution to ensuring the security, stability and prosperity of the one billion people which this Organisation encompasses.

Through its inclusiveness and as a co-operative power, the OSCE continues to play a significant role in conflict resolution and in the promotion of peace, security and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

A significant aspect of the Organization's work is undertaken by its field missions and I acknowledge today the presence of the Heads of the seventeen OSCE Field Operations. I commend all aspects of their work in furthering the goals of the OSCE. I would like to highlight, in particular, the immense contribution made by the field missions in relation to inter-ethnic cooperation, the promotion of the rule of law and in conflict prevention and resolution.

Ladies and Gentleman,

I would like now to set out some of the priorities of the Irish Chairmanship. Let me assure you that, as Chair-in-Office, I will be applying the principles of balance across the three dimensions which are the hallmark of all successful Chairmanships. We will be ambitious in taking forward work in all areas in 2012 and will do everything in our power to achieve concrete results and to deliver tangible benefits. We will be concentrating on quality over quantity and substance over form. For example,

we will as Chair aim to build consensus around a small and balanced package of substantial decisions and declarations which can be adopted by the Ministers when they meet in Dublin next December.

As I indicated when I addressed the Permanent Council last June, Ireland has always attached a particular importance to the Human Dimension and we will aim to prioritise Human Dimension issues during our Chairmanship. We will approach our work in this area, imbued with the spirit of Helsinki: working to achieve full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions and the rule of law, and working towards full implementation of OSCE Human Dimension commitments.

The continuing threat to fundamental freedoms and human rights in a number of OSCE participating States is a cause of real concern. The Irish Chairmanship will work closely with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities to address specific instances where OSCE commitments are not being met, and to take forward a number of key issues. Our priorities in the Human Dimension will be reflected in the choice of topics for Human Dimension meetings during 2012, as well as in the work programme for the Human Dimension Committee. In drawing up our priorities, we have been guided by the need to strike a balance between the different areas of work in the Human Dimension, and by the somewhat conflicting need to ensure continuity and cohesion, while ensuring that there is a good rotation of topics from year to year.

Our first priority in the Human Dimension will be internet freedom. As in other parts of the world, the threat to freedom of expression online is ever-present in the OSCE region, and appears to be growing. The Irish Chairmanship will continue the excellent work done by Lithuania to highlight the simple fact that human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies, but extend into the digital age. We will work to ensure that existing OSCE commitments in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of the media apply to all forms and means through which these freedoms are exercised.

As part of these efforts, we intend to organise a Human Dimension meeting in Dublin next June for OSCE participating States, at which we will aim to move towards a common understanding of the issues at stake. We will ensure the involvement of other key stake-holders, such as civil society and ICT companies, who can help us to deepen our understanding of some of the complex issues raised by the internet. I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that a majority of Governments, including my own, are still grappling with the implications of rapid technological change. We can all benefit from an in-depth discussion of this kind.

Human Dimension meetings are also planned on a range of other topics. I believe that there will be particular interest in our proposal to focus on racism, discrimination and intolerance in sport, in view of the European Championships in Poland and Ukraine this year and the Olympic Games in the United Kingdom. We are all too familiar with manifestations of racism and other forms of discrimination and intolerance against sportsmen and women. This is a particularly damaging and dangerous phenomenon because of the danger that younger sports fans may learn new prejudices or have existing prejudices reinforced by their role models.

Other priorities for the Irish Chairmanship include trafficking in human beings, freedom of association and assembly, professional and ethical standards in democratic life, freedom of religion or belief, and the legislative process. Further details will be provided in the Human Dimension Committee next week. It is my hope that early agreement can be reached on the package of meetings, so that planning for the individual events can begin as soon as possible.

Ireland is also committed to taking forward, in parallel, the process of review of Human Dimension meetings, which was begun under the Lithuanian Chairmanship. We share the view that it would be unrealistic to expect the emergence of consensus on any modifications to the current arrangements without an extensive and comprehensive discussion among the participating States. We look forward to facilitating such a discussion, following the presentation of the consultancy report on Human Dimension meetings, which has been commissioned. We will aim to conclude these discussions in the second part of 2012.

In Astana, participating States reaffirmed categorically and irrevocably that Human Dimension commitments are of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of States. This gives expression to the truth that human rights are universal and inalienable and that States are accountable for their obligation to uphold these rights. In the knowledge that none of our States can claim to have a perfect human rights record, we should dedicate ourselves to working in good faith and in a spirit of cooperation towards full implementation of our shared commitments. Ireland hopes to be able to count on your goodwill and constructive engagement to that end.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Politico-Military Dimension of the Organisation is perhaps the best developed of any international organisation. The confidence and security building measures we adopt and implement together make a key contribution to security in the OSCE region. Our success in implementing them is a measure of our collective commitment to enhancing that security.

While we continue to achieve much together in this field, recent developments, both within the Organisation and elsewhere, point to the value in taking stock of where we stand in terms of our collective efforts to enhance arms control, prevent and resolve conflicts and ensure stability and security across the OSCE area. Looking forward, we need to chart a path in the Politico-Military Dimension towards the goal of the Security Community identified at the Astana Summit.

With this in mind, the Irish Chair will invite participating States to reflect during 2012 on the building blocks available to us in the areas of arms control, conflict prevention and resolution and transnational threats and the steps we can take together to achieve the Security Community. I would propose that this consideration form one of the themes for the Annual Security Review Conference later this year.

The steps we take to enhance our security need to be updated and tailored to a rapidly changing environment. We achieved good results last year in updating the Vienna Document, and I commend the Icelandic, Italian and Kazakh chairmanships of the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC) as well as the Lithuanian Chairmanship for their efforts in this regard. Having recently chaired the FSC ourselves, we fully appreciate the importance of the work carried out in this area. The decisions at Vilnius create a basis from which further progress can be achieved and we will work with the FSC chairs for 2012 to build on this platform. In addition, while Ireland is not a party to the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, we urge those who are to continue discussions to overcome the current impasse in this area. As I said when I addressed you in June, an effective arms control regime for Europe has been, is and will continue to be central to security in our region.

Under this Dimension also, Ireland will seek to continue work on tackling transnational threats such as organised crime, cyber threats including cyber-crime, drugs, terrorism and trafficking. We secured agreement in Vilnius on an important decision in this area which will better equip our

Organisation to respond to these threats. Building on this, the Irish Chairmanship will take early steps to revisit those issues on which it was not possible to achieve agreement at Vilnius and will bring forward proposals for consideration by the participating States. It is our hope that we will be able to continue the work achieved in previous years on issues such as combating the scourge of drugs and the menace of organised crime. At the same time, we will look to new challenges such as that of cyber-security, an issue of growing concern for all of our societies. In adopting a cross-dimensional approach to tackling these issues, Ireland will always be mindful of the complementary role that civil society and the media can play.

We achieved a substantial Decision at Vilnius on the conflict cycle, which further enhances the OSCE's capacity to prevent and respond to conflicts. Working with the Secretary General, the Irish Chairmanship will focus on implementation of this Decision so as to help the OSCE to deepen its involvement in all phases of the conflict cycle and to strengthen its capacity to tackle conflict, from prevention to resolution.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will seek ways in which progress can be made towards lasting settlements of a number of conflicts in the OSCE area. Among these are the conflicts in Moldova regarding the territory of Transdniestria; in Georgia regarding the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia; and the conflict which is the subject of the Minsk process. I have nominated two Special Representatives, Ambassador Pádraig Murphy and Ambassador Erwan Fouéré, to assist and advise me on these issues during the Irish Chairmanship. I hope that they will enjoy your full support.

As regards Moldova and Transdniestria, I congratulate Lithuania on the successful resumption of official "5+2" talks. We stand ready to build on this momentum and we look forward to welcoming the participants to Ireland early this year.

The situation in Georgia is a matter of particular concern. Ireland strongly supports the Geneva Discussions in facilitating engagement and a way forward for all concerned.

We also commend the continuing work of the OSCE's Minsk Group in addressing the long-running dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh and look forward to working closely with the Co-Chairs and other members of the Minsk Group during the year.

We in Ireland know all too well the devastating cost of conflict. Through negotiation, compromise and the dedication and imagination of the two Governments involved and leaders on both sides of the divide, a lasting settlement was achieved in relation to Northern Ireland. This experience may be of benefit in facilitating the efforts which are needed to resolve outstanding conflicts in the OSCE region, using the tools of peaceful negotiation and agreed formats and respecting fully the principles of international law. In this spirit, I will host a conference in Dublin on 27 April which will present aspects of the Northern Ireland example as a case study. While each conflict situation is different, I hope that in sharing our experience we will assist and encourage those engaged in seeking lasting settlements to conflicts in our region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The work of the Economic and Environmental Dimension is particularly relevant today in view of the significant global economic and environmental challenges which we all face.

Ireland's core theme for the Economic and Environmental Forum, which will conclude in Prague in September, will be the promotion of security and stability through good governance. There will be a particular focus on measures to counter corruption, money-laundering and terrorist financing. The

two preparatory conferences will take place in Vienna and in Dublin. I would like to commend the work currently being done in this area by the Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE field missions.

Ireland will also initiate, within the Economic and Environmental Committee, a review of the 2003 Maastricht Strategy Document to determine if this document needs to be adapted to the evolving economic and environmental challenges, and we will present a progress report by the end of 2012.

In conclusion,

I wish to extend warmest thanks and appreciation to my Lithuanian colleague, Minister Audronius Ažubalis, for his excellent stewardship of the OSCE over the past twelve months. In addition, our thanks go to the Lithuanian Chairmanship Taskforce, chaired by Ambassador Paulaskas, and to the Vienna Team chaired by Ambassador Norkus. I look forward to further co-operation with Lithuania in the Troika format. I am also very pleased that Ukraine has joined us in the Troika.

I wish also to thank Kazakhstan for the role it played in the Troika last year. As Chair, Ireland will continue to work towards the goal of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community which was reaffirmed at the Astana Summit in 2010 under Kazakhstan's able Chairmanship.

My colleagues and I look forward to working very closely this year with the Secretary General of the OSCE, Lamberto Zannier, and his excellent team.

We also look forward to working with our OSCE Partners, and in particular to making progress on the application from Mongolia to become a full participating state.

We also look forward to close cooperation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The Parliamentary Assembly acts as a key link between Governments and the Parliaments of the OSCE countries and it will be a pleasure to take this fruitful dialogue forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A busy year lies ahead as we embark together upon our common work. Your support and cooperation is vital and I look forward to working closely with all of you. There are of course many other issues on which the Irish Chair will aim to achieve progress and we will be circulating further proposals on these shortly.

I can assure you that our traditional céad míle fáilte (one hundred thousand welcomes) await you when you arrive in Dublin for the Ministerial meeting next December!

Thank you.