

U.S. Mission to the OSCE

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**18th OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
CLOSING REMARKS**

**As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Ian Kelly
Vilnius, Lithuania, December 7, 2011**

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of the United States, I would like to express again our appreciation for the Lithuanian Chairmanship's dedicated leadership this year. The Chairman's priorities, including progress on Europe's protracted conflicts, the safety of journalists and media freedom, energy security cooperation, greater military transparency, and enhanced engagement with our Mediterranean partners and Afghanistan, enjoyed broad support among participating states.

We have recorded progress in some important areas: last week, after more than five years, official 5+2 talks on the Moldova conflict resumed. Today we have here adopted Ministerial decisions on the conflict cycle, enhanced engagement with partners and Afghanistan, the empowerment of women in the economic sphere, combatting human trafficking, as well as all three decisions considered in the FSC.

But that is not the full slate of results we had hoped to achieve at this meeting. The OSCE's concept of security is comprehensive. Thus, we expected that Ministers would adopt a balanced package of decisions and declarations encompassing steps in all three dimensions that contribute to our shared goal of enhancing security in the OSCE space.

Sadly, that did not happen. Despite widespread support from governments and civil society, consensus could not be reached on decisions that would commit our governments to enhance the safety of journalists, reaffirm that fundamental freedoms apply in the digital age, and promote tolerance. These decisions reflect the core of this organization's mandate: that respect for human rights is essential to the progress and security of all of our countries.

In the case of the declaration on fundamental freedoms in the digital age, the United States was proud to have been one of 25 OSCE participating states calling for a simple declaration recognizing that human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies and reaffirming that they will honor their obligation to respect the exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association. Unfortunately, this decision was never even discussed in the preparatory committee, and discussions on enhancing journalists' safety foundered, both due to objections by one participating state. And, at a time when we are witnessing growing intolerance, including anti-Semitism and attacks against ethnic minorities, such as Roma and other

vulnerable groups, such as LGBT individuals, it is troubling that some participating states could not overcome their differences and confirm our common humanity by strengthening OSCE's capacity to promote tolerance and combat hate crimes against their fellow human beings regardless of belief, background, race, legal status, or sexual orientation.

Our citizens require more of us. As Secretary Clinton noted in her intervention yesterday, human rights are not only a moral imperative, they are an essential component of international security and stability.

We also could not reach consensus, based again on the objections of one participating state, on regional statements addressing the conflicts in Georgia and Moldova, despite determined efforts by the chairmanship and tangible accomplishments to address and advance in the 5+2 negotiations.

In the first dimension, we have achieved only a technical updating of the OSCE's flagship Vienna Document and not the updating that would have made that document more relevant to today's modern, streamlined military forces. In addition, in today's exceptionally challenging economic circumstances, we would have welcomed more, and more ambitious, results in the second dimension.

The Lithuanian Chair drove us all towards a substantive package of decision. Our Chairman is not responsible for the limited results in the third dimension. No Chairman-in-Office can compel cooperation or create political will. It is up to all of us to summon the determination to honor their commitments, strengthen OSCE institutions and spur OSCE's work in all three dimensions.

As we look to 2012 and our onward work, we must keep our focus on issues of principle and concern to people living in this vast region and to our partners beyond it: Human dignity and democracy, justice and tolerance, prosperity and peace. These great issues of our time will not go away. That is the reality, on line and off. And consensus or no consensus, we will continue to grapple with them, here within the OSCE and every day within each of our countries and across the international community.

We would like underscore the importance of dialogue with civil society, and welcome the recommendations of the civil society parallel conference, and the creation of the "Civic Solidarity" platform.

My government continues to believe in the great promise of Helsinki. To realize it, we remain committed to working with our fellow states and with civil society across this region. In that spirit, we look ahead to our deliberations under the Irish Chairmanship.