

Statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, H.E. Ms. Maia Panjikidze at
the OSCE Dublin Ministerial

6 December 2012

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to address you today. My deep gratitude goes to the Irish Chairmanship and personally to Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore for their efforts to enhance the role and efficiency of the OSCE. I also want to thank the Irish people for their wonderful hospitality here in Dublin. Let me welcome our Ukrainian friends and wish them success in the coming year.

We have gathered today to elaborate a vision for this organization, a vision that will allow it to stay true to the values and principles of Helsinki that brought us together some 40 years ago. I am here to affirm that these values continue to be relevant today, even though - and, perhaps, especially since - they are not always upheld.

My predecessors have often stressed with profound regret, that the role of the OSCE in addressing Europe's security challenges has diminished. As preparatory deliberations have shown, the OSCE remains in a concerning state of uncertainty. Its mechanisms are often hamstrung by veto and its political will is sapped by the difference in vision and values among the participating States.

If successive Chairmanships and the participating States censor their aspirations, ever mindful of how little is feasible under these fundamental differences of views, the domain of the possible will continue to narrow every year.

We need a strong roadmap for the years to come, a structure to overcome this quagmire. We need to give a clear, substantive agenda to our incoming Chairmanships, so that they can apply OSCE's instruments and mechanisms to the very concrete problems we are facing collectively. Discussions on Helsinki +40 have so far failed to meet these hopes.

In my view, the OSCE has the mechanisms to respond to the challenges we face. Our achievements should make us proud: OSCE has achieved headway in seeking durable solutions to displacement and in property restitution, in addressing war crimes; in promoting the due process of law, police reform and local governance, in addressing hate speech and xenophobia, in promoting the freedom of the media.

These achievements can be replicated. But we cannot make OSCE more effective if we limit our ambitions to fine-tuning its mechanisms and institutions.

We cannot make the OSCE more relevant while the participating States equivocate in their commitment to the principles and values this organization was set to represent. We have gone through the Corfu Process, hoping for tangible and positive results. Despite our commitment and our dedicated work, these efforts have come to naught.

We cannot contemplate, neither can we afford another failed process. We cannot continue to move from one Ministerial cycle to another not daring to admit that the main security challenges in the OSCE will remain unaddressed.

Lacking the positive impulse, the incoming Chairmanships will be compelled to continue their race towards the lowest common denominator – a practice that has frustrated those who expect solutions from us. An intention of the incoming Chairmanships to work closely together is a very positive signal, and we, Ladies and Gentlemen, need to offer them support by providing a clear, substantive agenda to their partnership.

Allow me to share with you, my distinguished Colleagues, our expectations for this meeting:

We must grant the incoming Chairs and the participating States a clear mandate for achieving tangible progress in addressing existing conflicts in the OSCE area. This organization has championed the idea of comprehensive security, where states live in Europe free of conflicts, dividing lines and spheres of influence. We have repeatedly and jointly declared that the security of the participating States cannot be achieved without each individual being assured of their rights, legal certainty and justice.

We no longer seem to have the courage of Helsinki to name, address and resolve the conflicting world-views. As a result, we fail to leave our mark in solving the real conflicts on the ground. This is why it we must set clear expectations of results, rather than just speak about process and intentions.

It is profoundly disappointing that once again this forum has failed to adopt a Political Declaration. Therefore, it is logical and imperative that the *Helsinki+40* Document is adequate in addressing the existing security challenges.

We must safeguard the autonomy of the independent institutions and their ability to fully exercise their mandates in ensuring protection of minorities, aiding democratization and fair elections, and promoting the freedom of the media. Georgia is particularly grateful to OSCE/ODIHR for the positive role they played while observing the recent parliamentary elections. We are looking forward to further cooperation in perfecting the election legislation and election monitoring. We are deeply grateful to High Commissioner Vollebaeck for his tireless efforts in monitoring the human rights situation and for his advice. We also want to thank Representative Mijatovic for her continuous involvement and assistance.

In Georgia, security challenges relevant in the 20th century still persist and occupation is a fact of our daily lives. The principles of security community are therefore keenly relevant for my government.

I am profoundly disappointed that yesterday we have missed an opportunity to offer OSCE's vocal support to the Geneva International Discussions. Our Russian colleagues walked away from the drafting table after having first engaged in the process. The new government of Georgia has expressed its readiness to dialogue. Our counterparts apparently need more time for calibrating their response.

This impasse highlights once again the need for active international engagement. We are convinced that the OSCE can and must enhance its role in the Geneva International Discussions. We would welcome efforts by the incoming Troika to enhance continuity of the OSCE participation. In the same vein, the OSCE shall get involved in the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism to cover the full range of issues that are addressed in Geneva.

My government has set out to prioritize programs and activities that help build confidence and could become a tool for mending the social texture across the war-torn communities in Georgia. The OSCE ran an extremely successful Economic Rehabilitation Program before 2008, helping improve livelihoods and restore ties between Georgian and Ossetian villages. Similar effort will be very useful now.

In that regard, let me express our readiness to work with the incoming Chairmanships in good faith and constructive spirit to resume a full-fledged and multi-dimensional OSCE presence in Georgia. I still hope, that a speedy decision can be taken for establishing the OSCE Support Team, not as a substitute to the full field Mission, but as an interim backup to the confidence building measures that OSCE has implemented across the dividing lines.

Dear Friends,

Georgia has shown that even under duress, she has the willpower to defend our shared values. We in Georgia live in a time and at a geographic place, where diplomatic formulas stand the harshest test of reality.

And from this vantage point, let me conclude by saying that the OSCE is more than a worthy idea. It can be an effective tool if we stand firm in our convictions.

Let us talk frankly and recognize this is no longer the case. Let us set the course towards mending what is apparently broken.

We must address the root causes of conflicts and problems, rather than gloss over them. If we fail when the next crisis strikes, this worthy institution will be reduced to irrelevance – because we lacked the courage our values demanded. Let us act jointly now to reach for the spirit of Helsinki.

Thank you very much.