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**ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC,
H.E. JIRI SCHNEIDER,
AT THE OSCE MINISTERIAL MEETING, Vilnius, 6 December 2011**

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentleman,

First of all I would like to say that we consider the Lithuanian chairmanship as a successful one. We thank our hosts for their tireless and tremendous effort during this year and for all the work done.

At the beginning I want to say that I associate fully with the statement of Helga Schmidt, the representative of the EU.

Last year before and during the summit in Astana the Czech Republic has been continuously warning the OSCE family that a summit without substantive results will not help the organisation. Astana Commemorative Declaration brought at the end only the reaffirmation of our commitments. We continue to believe that reconfirmation of commitments, a good thing in itself, may have impact only when accompanied by political will. After another year of difficult debates without any progress in solution of protracted conflicts, with continuous deterioration of arms control regimes and weakening compliance with commitments in the field of human dimension in several OSCE participating States, we may conclude that the political will is not there.

The Belarusian presidential elections that took place only few days after the Astana summit and developments since then including the way how OSCE mission in this country was terminated clearly proved that without serious dedication to what our Heads of State and Government approved in Astana, their declaration might be interpreted as only empty words.

Czech Republic together with other participating States, being inspired by the Astana reconfirmation that “that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned”, invoked in the first half of 2011 the Moscow Mechanism, one of a few effective tools the OSCE has. Report of the rapporteur professor Decaux as well as the ODIHR report on the monitoring of trials in Belarus deserve full attention and should not be forgotten.

In this context we would like to mention a shameful fact that in several OSCE participating states there are still persons unjustly imprisoned for political reasons and the Czech Republic demands their immediate release.

Having already mentioned the work of ODIHR I would like to stress that the Czech Republic highly value the important job this institution is doing. If we can be proud of something in 2011, it is the work done by ODIHR, by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the High Commissioner on National Minorities. We praise their impartial work and we strongly oppose any attempts by participating states to restrict their autonomy and their work. The recent attempts of some participating States to limit the sizes of the ODIHR election monitoring missions are worrisome. We cannot let the autonomy of ODIHR evaporate through more or less visible political pressure.

From the events organized by the Lithuanian Chairmanship in the area of human dimension, where civil society and NGOs were present, we can conclude that the needs of citizens in all our countries are the same. They want have free media, unregulated internet and e-mails that are not checked by their government. They want not to fear for the life of their favourite journalists. They want to be able to speak and assemble freely. The well prepared events on tolerance (including one on anti-Semitism in public discourse that took place in Prague) showed also the need to decriminalize libel, defamation and other forms of expression.

I would also like to emphasise that we support chairmanship efforts on trans-national threats, modernisation of Vienna Document, the energy security, enhanced co-operation with Partners in general and engagement with Afghanistan in particular. However, most of the outcomes in these priorities are, at the end, also below our expectations.

The Czech Republic as a country that in its history profited from existence of CSCE/OSCE very much will support it also in the future. We would like to see a political will for realizing OSCE potential in its entirety. We have full confidence that the Irish, as well as the Ukrainian chairmanship will do their best.