



**PERMANENT DELEGATION
OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE**

**RESPONSE TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF
LITHUANIA, H.E. MR. VYGAUDAS UŠACKAS**

As delivered by Ambassador Guttorm Vik
to the Permanent Council,
Vienna, 22 October 2009

Madam Chairperson,

Let me first join you in your words of welcome to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, H.E. Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas, to the Permanent Council. Let me also thank him for his thoughtful and informative presentation of Lithuania's views and priorities on a number of topical issues, which we largely share.

I would like to offer a couple of comments prompted by his status report on the cooperation in the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), which currently benefits from strong Lithuanian leadership.

We fully share his assessments of the achievements of the CBSS over its 17 years of existence, and also the main priorities for the future. We also share the concept of the CBSS as a sub-regional institution that in many areas can supplement and reinforce the cooperation we have in the OSCE, in the same way as the OSCE as a regional organisation can contribute to achieving the goals and priorities of the UN. Sub-regional cooperation can address common issues that are specific to the region and obtain better and faster results than what would be possible in a larger context. Cooperation to face up to common environmental threats and challenges is a case in point, and this has always been a high priority in the Baltic Sea cooperation. Another contribution to increased common security in the broad sense is the impressive growth in people-to-

people contacts, which have made a huge contribution to building confidence and improving the general climate in the region.

We applaud the intention to develop relations with Belarus in the framework of CBSS cooperation, for mutual benefit.

Sub-regional cooperation has been something of a success story in the North of the OSCE area, as demonstrated by the large number of organisations with partly overlapping memberships and agendas: the Nordic Council and Council of Ministers, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, and the Arctic Council, in addition to the CBSS and the Northern Dimension. All these fora and institutions have important contributions to make, but in order to achieve maximum synergy, it is increasingly important that they closely coordinate their activities. We welcome the initiatives taken in this regard and look forward to further efforts to obtain maximum value for the time and money spent in these institutions.

We also welcome the intention of the Lithuanian CBSS chair to explore how the OSCE might strengthen cooperation with sub-regional organisations. Let me in this context recall the suggestion made by my Minister of Foreign Affairs at Corfu to consider using the OSCE as a clearing house for comparing experiences in sub-regional cooperation, notably for the purpose of confidence-building and increased security for both individuals and states. If we compare the vastly different levels of sub-regional cooperation that have been achieved in the various regions of the OSCE, it stands to reason that there could be something to gain from comparing experiences and being inspired by models that have worked well in other regions. We should learn also from success stories, not only from failures.

Finally, I would like to extend our best wishes for the further activities of the Minister, notably in his capacity as current Chair of the CBSS, until he can hand over to his Norwegian colleague next summer, and in the preparations of Lithuania to take over the OSCE Chair in 2011, which seem to be very well under way already.