

ENGLISH only

Statement by the Foreign Minister of Norway,
H.E. Espen Barth Eide,
at the 19th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council,
Dublin, 6 -7 December 2012

Thank you, Madame Chair,

Allow me first to commend you and your team for your efforts and achievements at the helm of the OSCE in 2012. The inclusion of our 57th participating State, Mongolia, is historic. I join others in warmly welcoming our Mongolian colleague and I look forward to working with him. The work that your country is doing on rule of law is good news in a difficult region.

Madame Chair,

Our organization is unfortunately moving forward at a very slow pace. Within the OSCE, there are differing views on fundamental questions concerning our security. Different views are legitimate, but some participating States seem to link most topics on our agenda to conflicts in their own area, believing that they serve their own national interests by blocking progress across the board at the OSCE. Norway deeply regrets the lack of progress due to such factors.

I believe we need to invest in the OSCE. We must make sure that the Secretariat, the institutions and the field missions have the resources necessary to fulfil their mandates. They give our organization its operational capacity. And the institutions can only serve their purpose when we respect their independence and professional integrity.

We share the regret of the Irish Chairmanship of the decision of the Parliamentary Assembly to terminate the co-operation agreement with ODIHR.

We are hopeful that the Helsinki +40 process will create political momentum in the OSCE and make the organization stronger. It should provide our organization direction and guide the efforts of the next Chairs over the coming three years.

As we move forward towards 2015, we must continue to develop our policies and commitments in all three dimensions, based on the full implementation of our existing commitments.

Madame Chair,

We are seeing a Europe that is far more democratic today than in 1975. However, there are still democratic shortcomings in several countries, both east and west of Vienna. We are witnessing unacceptable restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly and the right to freedom of expression. And we are observing attempts to restrict the use of new communication technologies. Freedom of expression must be respected across all platforms, including the Internet.

In Astana two years ago we shared a vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community. We reaffirmed our vision that human rights play an integral part in building security. Reviewing the implementation of human dimension commitments is an important part of our efforts to make the Astana vision a reality. Civil society is a key partner in this review process. We need to involve civil society more – not less. And we need to study carefully the recommendations put forward yesterday by the Civil Society Platform.

Many OSCE participating States have experienced the terrible consequences of intolerance, xenophobia and inter-ethnic friction. As our societies are becoming increasingly diverse, we need to redouble our efforts to promote tolerance. The various guidelines of our High Commissioner on National Minorities are useful tools in this regard.

During the past two decades we have agreed on measures and treaties that have increased transparency and trust and reduced military tension. Now the time has come to adapt our instruments to new realities. We should upgrade the Vienna Document further. More importantly, however, is to make progress in the area of conventional arms control in general. We must also look ahead and find a way to address new

political and military realities while ensuring that the basic goals of trust and predictability are achieved - through transparency, information exchange and verification.

Madame Chair,

We are optimistic that progress will be made in the efforts to resolve the Transnistria conflict, while we regret the lack of progress in other protracted conflicts. One lesson learned is the importance of preventing conflicts rather than simply trying to manage them. Hence, we must continue to develop the conflict cycle tools.

I would also like to underline the importance of implementing UNSCR 1325 in all of the OSCE's conflict-related work.

Finally, I should thank you for your generous hospitality here in Dublin.

Let me also extend my best wishes to our next Chair. Ukraine can rely on our full support in developing the OSCE into an even more useful tool for dialogue and cooperation.

Thank you, Madame Chair.