

OSCE Ministerial Council, Vilnius, 6-7 December 2011

Statement by H.E. Villy Søvndal

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me first to thank you and your team for your **dedicated efforts preparing for this meeting** and for showing **excellent leadership as OSCE Chairman-in-Office this year**. Next year we look forward to working with the **Irish Chairman-in-Office**, not least during the first half of 2012 when Denmark takes over the EU Presidency. Looking further ahead, we welcome and support the **Swiss candidature** for the **OSCE Chairmanship in 2014** and **Serbia's candidature for 2015**.

OSCE plays a crucial role in building a democratic and indivisible security community in our common area. **OSCE principles and commitments** are a **solid foundation for peace and stability** between states, as well as for the **security and fundamental rights of our citizens**. Strengthening OSCE capacities to act effectively in **preventing and handling conflicts** should be the ambition of all of us.

We should be ready to **expand the OSCE community**, if neighbouring states are willing and able to live up to OSCE commitments. Therefore, Denmark looks favourably at **Mongolia's** wish to fully join the ranks of OSCE participating states.

Denmark attaches particular importance to **OSCE's human dimension**. Real security is based on respect for **human rights, democracy, and rule of law**. That is why we have actively supported efforts to achieve **consensus on OSCE decisions on pluralism in new media** and on enhancing **safety of journalists** in the run-up to this meeting.

Active and inclusive democracies, with **vibrant civil societies**, are essential for the fulfilment of our OSCE commitments. The OSCE plays a key role also with regard to **election observation**, as

we have seen most recently at the Russian Duma elections. Good cooperation between **ODIHR** and the **Parliamentary Assembly** remains essential in the course of election observations, as well as close dialogue with ODIHR on the recommendations in the follow-up process.

The field missions are a particularly important asset of the OSCE, providing valuable assistance when it comes to **conflict resolution** and promotion of OSCE commitments. Denmark will continue to provide **voluntary contributions** to projects. **Independent reviews** of projects may further improve the important work done by the field missions.

The **OSCE Office in Zagreb** is a fine example of a field presence, which has **successfully fulfilled its mandate**. It is time to close the Zagreb office, while continuing our **support to local NGOs monitoring war crime trials**.

There is a **close link between security in the OSCE area and in our partner states**. We should explore further what OSCE institutions can offer in **North Africa**, for example in areas such as electoral legislation and respect for media freedom and minority rights. OSCE could and should also provide more support to **Afghanistan**, complementing the civilian capacity building by other international organisations.

Finally, allow me to once again **thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship**. I wish the incoming **Irish Chairmanship all the best in 2012**. Thank you for your attention.