



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Vygaudas Ušackas

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Casey Christensen
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
October 22, 2009

We warmly welcome you to the Permanent Council, Mr. Minister.

As Chairman of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, you have seen firsthand how effective cross-border cooperation can help states advance their mutual interests. In an even broader sense, the OSCE is a uniquely comprehensive platform for regional cooperation.

Our shared concept of security as comprehensive and cross-dimensional is the foundation of the OSCE, and makes this organization our best platform for political dialogue on a range of issues, including both current and newly emerging security-related concerns in Europe. As you note, Mr. Minister, the OSCE faces numerous challenges, and we all must work to develop joint responses.

The August 2008 war in Georgia highlighted continuing threats to security and stability in the OSCE region, and demonstrated that the OSCE's capacity for early action must be strengthened. In our Corfu Process discussions, we and other participating States have stressed this point, and urged that the OSCE's ability to prevent and respond to conflict must be improved. My delegation shared a concept for a new conflict prevention and crisis response mechanism earlier this week, and is eager to discuss this concept and to explore ways of strengthening the OSCE's ability to proactively address acute and immediate threats to security.

Like you, Mr. Minister, we believe the protracted conflicts in Georgia, Moldova, and Nagorno-Karabakh are among the most pressing challenges the OSCE faces today. Collective action and political will are key to resolving these conflicts; we urge all parties to work toward peaceful, long-term, comprehensive settlements. In this context, we reiterate our firm belief that an OSCE presence in Georgia can play a key role in conflict resolution, and should be re-established. We appreciate the concerted efforts of the Greek Chairmanship in this regard, and remain committed to the OSCE's continued involvement in Georgia.

Turning to other matters, Mr. Minister, we believe that the OSCE can play a critical role in enhancing energy security and in combating trafficking in human beings, weapons and drug smuggling, organized crime, and terrorism. These are complex threats that ignore borders, and make joint action and regional cooperation absolutely essential. The OSCE is already active in these areas, but we can and should do more, particularly in Afghanistan. We echo your call, Mr. Minister, to expand existing border security projects in Central Asia, and to work regionally and with other international partners to build law enforcement capacity and tackle critical security threats.

Finally, Mr. Minister, we wish to stress the continuing importance we place on the OSCE's human dimension. Our core objective remains the same: to promote human rights, democracy, minority rights, and the rule of law, and to combat intolerance and discrimination. We must continue to advance these values and ensure the full implementation of our common

commitments. We must address negative developments, such as growing restrictions on freedom of the media, freedom of assembly, or freedom of religion, as well as growing anti-Semitism, and strive to protect fundamental rights and freedoms across the OSCE region.

We look forward to working with you, Mr. Minister, as Lithuania prepares to assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2011, and begins to work more closely with Kazakhstan as part of the OSCE Troika next year. We have been impressed with your early preparations, and appreciate your clear commitment to the OSCE's human dimension activities, its conflict prevention and resolution efforts, and its comprehensive and cross-dimensional approach to security.

Mr. Minister, the United States looks forward to continued close cooperation with Lithuania, both within the OSCE and bilaterally, and trusts that you will provide strong and effective leadership in 2011. You can count on our full support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.