

**UK statement by Ms Kirsty Hayes, Head, International Organisations Dept,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Reinforced PC, 18 November 2011**

The UK naturally endorses remarks made earlier on behalf of the EU and its Member States.

Last year in Astana we made progress on a framework for action on many key issues of concern within the OSCE space. We have strongly supported the sustained efforts by the Lithuanian Chairmanship to build on that progress.

We have particularly welcomed the Chairmanship's focus on conflict issues. The OSCE has done much to prevent and resolve conflict in the past. We should ensure it can continue to be effective in the future. We will work hard with other participating States to ensure that Ministers are able, in Vilnius, to take a decision that enhances the OSCE's capacity to act rapidly when the situation demands, based on strengthened analysis.

The Human Dimension also needs attention. There are many draft decisions on our table. Possibly too many. For the UK, a key priority is to update and strengthen commitments on freedom of expression to take account of technological developments in recent years. Safety for journalists in the pursuit of their work is another vital aspect of this fundamental freedom.

All this requires expert Institutions, able to exercise their mandates with professionalism, judgement and autonomy. The ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media achieve that with great success. It is a UK priority to ensure they remain fully able to do so.

At a time when the provisions of the CFE Treaty are under severe threat, Ministers should look for substantive progress elsewhere in the security field. We should, next week, adopt Vienna Document 2011, reflecting negotiations over the last two years. We see this as only the start of a wider strategic vision, and look forward to more substantive engagement from some delegations in the future.

In the time available today, I will not try to cover the entire agenda for Vilnius. Suffice to say that the UK will continue to work cooperatively with colleagues to achieve outcomes across all three dimensions that will enable the OSCE to make a real difference on the matters that concern – or should concern – us all. That applies equally to Partners for Cooperation: whether it be in Afghanistan or North Africa, the OSCE has much to offer.