

Statement by H.E. Antanas Valionis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, at the Twelfth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Sofia 6-7 December 2004

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the Bulgarian Chairmanship for the cordial reception here in Sofia.

Lithuania would like to associate itself with the Statement made by Minister Bot on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

A comprehensive approach to security, involving all three dimensions, remains a clear advantage of the OSCE. It is our common interest to foster the role of OSCE by strengthening its operational and management capabilities.

We are convinced that our organization's role in human dimension strengthens the security in the OSCE area, and it must not be in any way diminished. This key role refers directly to the core of our commitments and reflects the monitoring of their implementation. Activities of the field missions and ODIHR in democratisation process and monitoring of elections are important and have to continue unhindered.

Recent developments in Ukraine prove once again that only full adherence to the values and norms, in defence of which our Organization stands, especially those relating to election practices, are important to political stability, social and economic prosperity. We welcome the decision of the Supreme Court of Ukraine and urge all parties and institutions in Ukraine to co-operate so that these decisions would be fully and swiftly implemented. We urge to increase of OSCE/ODIHR monitoring of these elections, to which we will contribute. A group of international mediators, which also includes Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, will continue to put its efforts in assisting Ukraine to build on its achievements as full fledged member of democratic community.

We remain seriously concerned about the situation in our neighbour Belarus. Recent parliamentary elections felt significantly short of the OSCE standards. International community needs to make

additional efforts assisting civic society, non-governmental organizations and independent media in Belarus.

Mr. Chairman,

Lack of progress on the so called “frozen conflicts” has become a major obstacle in the Georgia’s and Moldova’s social and economic development. While reaffirming our strong commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova, Lithuania commends their efforts in democratic reforms and peaceful settlement of the conflicts.

The international community needs to continue searching for a comprehensive political settlement of the decade-long crisis in Moldova. In order to resume the meaningful dialogue leading to an acceptable solution of the conflict, the so called “five-sided” format should be extended. We also regret that no progress was achieved in 2004 on the withdrawal of Russian military forces from the Republic of Moldova.

We urge a swift resolution of the outstanding issues between Georgia and Russia as set out in their Istanbul Joint Statement of 17 November 1999.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite all our efforts, today we still face the scourge of the terrorist attacks. We express our solidarity with the States, which suffered from terrorist aggression. We look forward to a package of practical decisions to be adopted today to help us to work in this area. Full respect to the norms and principles of the human rights should remain the fundamental imperative of all our actions.

The OSCE in recent years has launched the ambitious agenda for promoting tolerance and non-discrimination. We welcome the intention of the Chairman-in Office to appoint personal representatives on combating various forms of discrimination.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Bulgaria for efficient co-ordination of our work in 2004, and in wishing our Slovenian friends best success in their Chairmanship next year.

Thank you.