

Ireland

**Address by Ms. Lucinda Creighton TD, Minister of State for European Affairs
OSCE Ministerial Council, Vilnius, 6 December 2011**

Madame President, Chairperson, Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen

I warmly congratulate the Lithuanian Chairmanship for its excellent leadership of the OSCE over the past twelve months. I would also like to thank those involved in the organisation of this Ministerial meeting.

Ireland is happy to associate itself with the intervention made by the Head of the European Union delegation.

Our Ministerial meeting is taking place at a time of significant global and economic challenges. Rapidly changing developments in the past year have demonstrated the crucial importance of effective multilateralism. I sincerely hope that we are all ready to build on the achievements of the Astana Summit and to engage constructively on the various decisions tabled for the Ministerial. Ireland looks forward to positive discussions over the next two days and a willingness to advance negotiations on decisions across the three Dimensions. As Chair of the Mediterranean Partners, Ireland also strongly endorses the Ministerial Decision tabled on OSCE engagement and cooperation with partner countries.

Ireland is firmly committed to the OSCE's concept of a common, comprehensive and indivisible security, based on a cross-dimensional set of agreed principles and commitments. Since the adoption of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975, the OSCE has contributed immeasurably to the promotion of peace and security. Our organisation, which is the largest of its kind, encompassing three continents - North America, Europe and Asia - and more than one billion people, has a vital role to play in addressing current complex security challenges.

Mr. Chairman, as you are aware, Ireland has the honour of chairing the OSCE next year. We view this great responsibility as an opportunity to highlight our foreign policy values of multilateral cooperation, the promotion of peace and security and respect for human rights and rule of law.

As Chairman-in-Office, we will work to promote progress across all three Dimensions and stand ready to work with all partners to achieve this.

In terms of particular priorities, Ireland will aim to have an ambitious Human Dimension agenda. We intend to continue one of the areas of focus during the Lithuanian Chairmanship, by prioritising freedom of expression and freedom of the media, in particular as they apply to the internet and new media. As in other parts of the world, the threat to freedom of expression online is ever-present in the OSCE region, and appears to be growing. Ireland will work to highlight the simple fact that human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies, but extend into the digital age. We will work with participating States and OSCE institutions to ensure that existing OSCE commitments in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of the media apply to all forms and means of their exercise.

Ireland will, of course, also take forward work on a variety of other human dimension themes, and will spell out our proposals in greater detail next month. I would like to pay tribute at this time to the vital work undertaken in the past year by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, as well as by field missions. All of the institutions play a significant role in assisting participating states to implement and adhere to OSCE commitments.

In the Politico-Military Dimension, Ireland will hope to see continued progress on updating confidence and security building measures and enhancing the conflict prevention capacity of the organisation. Having recently chaired the Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), Ireland plans to support and encourage the 2012 FSC Chairmanships to continue the valuable work of the Forum in building confidence, security and transparency.

We hope that clear Decisions here in Vilnius will enable us to take forward important work across the entire range of the transnational threats that face all of our societies and particularly in the areas of policing, drugs and cyber-security. Ireland also proposes to focus on the enhancement of the OSCE's capacities with regard to the conflict cycle, and on further elaborating the OSCE's role in tackling violent extremism and radicalisation that leads to

terrorism (VERLT). Ireland will also continue the important work already underway on cyber crime, border security, terrorism; and trafficking in human beings.

Within the Economic and Environmental Dimension, Ireland's core theme for the Economic and Environmental Forum which will culminate in Prague next year will be the promotion of security and stability through good governance. There will be a particular focus on measures to counter corruption, money-laundering and terrorist financing. Ireland firmly believes that weak and ineffective governance undermines economic development and exposes states to greater security risks. In this regard, Ireland commends the good work currently being done by the Office of the Coordinator for Economic and Environmental Activities and the OSCE field missions in this regard.

As Chair-in-Office, we will work with others to promote lasting settlements to conflicts in the OSCE area. Ireland warmly welcomes the resumption of the formal 5+2 talks, the first round of which took place last week in Vilnius and looks forward to further progress over the coming year. We stand ready to build on this momentum and look forward to welcoming the parties to Ireland next year.

The situation in Georgia remains of concern. Ireland strongly supports the Geneva Discussions and regards it as a crucial instrument in facilitating a way forward for all of the parties. Ireland also commends the continuing work of the OSCE's Minsk Group in addressing the long-running dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh. We will maintain close contact with the Minsk Group next year.

In supporting these efforts, we will draw from our own experience of conflict resolution in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, to encourage progress and facilitate engagement by all of the parties.

Mr. Chairman, Ireland intends to continue the impressive work undertaken by the Lithuanian Chairmanship and, in particular, to make progress on the tasks mandated at the Astana Summit on the proposed Action Plan for the Organisation. Ireland also wishes to thank Kazakhstan for their help and advice as fellow members of the Troika. We will continue to pursue the goal of a free, democratic, common and indivisible security community which was reaffirmed at the Summit in Kazakhstan last year.

Ireland will also work to ensure that the Organisation operates at the highest level of efficiency. We are all keenly aware of the resource constraints that affect us all as a result of the global economic crisis. Crises can, however, present us with an opportunity to re-examine the way we operate and reinvigorate our commitment to core values. In this regard, Ireland would like to acknowledge the impressive first six months in office of Secretary General Zannier. We commend his efforts to strengthen the institutional core of the OSCE and look forward to working closely with him and his team in 2012. Ireland would also like to express its appreciation for the extremely important work carried out by the field operations.

As Chair-in-Office next year, Ireland will work hard to pursue the principles and aims of the Organisation and plans to maintain a balanced approach across all three dimensions. We look forward, of course, to continuing our close cooperation with Lithuania and to welcoming Ukraine within the Troika format next year.

It will be an honour for my country to make a tangible contribution to the promotion of European peace and security and we look forward to welcoming you all to Dublin this time next year, in December 2012.

Thank you.