

Statement by
Mr Erkki Tuomioja
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland,
at the OSCE Minister Council
in Vilnius 6 December 2011

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me thank Lithuania for hosting this meeting, and for the outstanding work done as the Chairperson-in-Office.

The Astana Summit was an important step to re-energize the OSCE and to see how the OSCE can best serve security and stability in today's environment. A new goal was set – on building a security community. It was clear that further work would be needed. Declaratory statements alone would not bring us closer to a true security community.

The basis is clear: the Helsinki principles and subsequent commitments, the OSCE's broad concept of security, and all the tools and institutions that the OSCE states have established.

This is a good foundation for further work towards a security community. We need to find ways to support stronger implementation of commitments, to develop our tools further, and also to address the security challenges in our area, including the unresolved conflicts.

The OSCE is built on a comprehensive approach to security. That is what is needed today and what all actors strive for. The need for a more comprehensive approach has been a lesson learned time and again, in Afghanistan, in Kosovo, in Bosnia – where ever the international community is involved.

Building a security community is not just about hard security. There can be no lasting security without respect for human rights. This has been, once again, amply demonstrated this year in a number of countries in the OSCE region and around us. Also these events highlight the growing role of civil society in globalized world and digital age.

Human rights cannot and should not be a trade-off between countries or groups of countries among the 56 participating States. Rather, respect for human rights, including for instance safety of journalists which is up in our meeting today, is a commitment that each country has taken in the best interest of itself and its people.

I would particularly like to commend the work carried out by our common institutions: the Warsaw Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, and the Representative on Freedom of Media.

The OSCE should look for ways of involving the NGOs better to the work of the OSCE. Civil society helps governments to do better in their efforts to make human rights and fundamental freedoms a reality for all. We should be open also to differing views; this is part of democracy and the rule of law.

In my view, it is timely to consider how the OSCEs Human Dimension can be further strengthened, for instance, through a more result oriented dialogue, better follow-up, through improving tools for assessing the implementation of commitments, or through expanding the role of the civil society in this work.

It is also timely to consider how the OSCE could further improve its contribution in gender issues, promoting gender equality and the goals that were set out in the UNSCR 1325.

I would highlight the importance of improving the OSCEs tools throughout the conflict cycle. Finland welcomes efforts to build OSCE's capacity for mediation support. It is important to secure sufficient resources for this effort.

Finland also supports the continued efforts to move forward towards solving the so called protracted conflicts. We welcome the first round of 5+2 negotiations on Transnistria and hope that this will lead to genuine progress.

While the OSCE is a regional organization, it cannot be an isolated pocket in today's globalized world. We need to reach out to partners, and intensify co-operation. I hope that the events following the Arab spring open up new possibilities for co-operation. Finland also welcomes Mongolia's bid to join the process and to sign up to the shared principles and commitments.

The need to modernize the arms control regime set up in the OSCE framework was one of the conclusions by the Astana Summit. First steps can now be recorded and we welcome the updated Vienna Document 2011. However, this is only the beginning of modernization and more work is needed. Arms control is needed even in today's security environment.

The annual ministerial meetings are a good occasion to testify our support and commitment to the OSCE. I join others in welcoming progress achieved. However, looking ahead, I believe it is also good to reflect on the challenging circumstances in which the OSCE has been for some years now.

As can be recalled, such a reflection started already in the Helsinki Ministerial meeting in 2008. Taking stock of this process today, I would conclude that the dialogue in itself has been welcome and useful but the circumstances continue to be challenging for the OSCE. Perhaps the key question is to find the needed political will and to build common ground among the participating states.

I hope that this discussion would be continued and would lead to tangible results. We look forward to further work during the Irish chairmanship.

Thank you.