

**STATEMENT BY
MR. JEAN LEONETTI, MINISTER FOR EUROPEAN
AFFAIRS OF FRANCE, AT THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Vilnius, 6 December 2010

Mr. Chairperson,
Ministers,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Secretary General,

I should like first of all to thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship of the OSCE and particularly the Chairperson-in-Office Mr. Andronius Ažubalis, for his very warm welcome to Vilnius. This ministerial meeting will mark a new stage in the OSCE and will confirm the dynamic process initiated in 2008 under the pressure of history.

The situation in Georgia three years ago showed us that war between two OSCE participating States was possible. In the wake of the Georgian crisis in summer 2008 there was a need to express a renewed political will to implement our commitments and to pursue together the strategic goal of building a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community.

The initiative by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy calling for European security dialogue in the OSCE was given concrete form in the Corfu Process, resulting in several useful proposals from autumn 2009 onwards.

This project was enshrined at the Summit of Heads of State or Government in Astana in December 2010 in a declaration that reaffirmed the commitments and political principles underlying European security since the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the Charter of Paris in 1990.

The events in Kyrgyzstan last year showed again that inter-ethnic tensions in an OSCE participating State can result in massacres.

The political evolution of our Mediterranean Partners this year presents us with a new challenge and demands increased solidarity on our part with these countries.

France has given its full support to the draft decisions presented by the Lithuanian Chairmanship. Our priorities coincide fully with those of the European Union.

Thus, building a security community is contingent on agreeing on its fundamental values. For that reason, I should like to make a point in the first place of mentioning the human dimension, which will remain marked this year by the affirmation of democratic aspirations. It is important for the Ministerial Council in Vilnius to give concrete form to the commitments undertaken in this regard in Astana by adopting decisions that face up to the most urgent challenges in the human dimension, particularly with regard to the safety of journalists and freedom of expression and opinion in the age of digital media.

Building a security community is further contingent on our ability to effectively prevent conflicts and respond to crisis situations. France therefore supports the adoption of the draft decision presented by the Lithuanian Chairmanship on this subject, which takes balanced account of the ideas emerging from the Corfu Process.

France is also fully involved in the collective effort to settle protracted conflicts, particularly, in its role as co-chair with the United States of America and Russia of the Minsk Group, with regard to Nagorno-Karabakh. In spite of the efforts of the mediators and the expectations expressed by Presidents Sarkozy, Medvedev and Obama in their statement to the G8 in Deauville, the hoped-for progress has not been made in 2011. The results that have been achieved to date in the negotiations should nevertheless give renewed impetus to these negotiations in 2012. I am pleased to see this reflected in the joint statement by the three mediators adopted today in Vilnius.

The time has now come for decisions, and I urge the two parties to take the opportunity offered to them to confirm without delay the updated version of the Madrid principles as a basis for a permanent settlement of the conflict.

Building a security community is contingent as well on the assurance of a high level of military transparency among our States. France therefore supports the publication in Vilnius of the 2011 version of the updated Vienna Document, which genuinely responds to the mandate set forth in the Astana Declaration to modernize this instrument. It was with this in mind that France proposed adapting the prior notification thresholds for military activities, which has been supported to date by more than 40 participating States.

Building a security community is also contingent on our ability to concert our efforts to combat transnational threats together. Vilnius should be marked by an intention to give the OSCE appropriate instruments and structures that complement the activities carried out by other international organizations to confront emerging threats. France therefore supports the adoption of all of the draft decisions presented by the Chairmanship in this area.

The context of revolutions in the Arab world should incite us to reflect in Vilnius on ways of strengthening the OSCE's co-operation with its partner countries. We should make clearly known the willingness of the OSCE, in co-ordination with other international organizations, particularly the European Union, to make its experience available in the service of the democratic reforms being undertaken by our Mediterranean Partners.

In conclusion, I should like to pay sincere and warm tribute to our new Secretary General, Mr. Lamberto Zannier, and to all of the staff of the OSCE, in particular those working in the field missions, for the remarkable work they accomplish.

Thank you.