

Statement by H.E. Mr. Vygaudas Ušackas
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania

OSCE Ministerial Council
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Mr. Chairman,

May I convey my sincere appreciation to H.E. Prime Minister George Papandreou, Alternate Foreign Minister Dimitris Droutsas and former Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis and the Greek Chairmanship team for the excellent navigation skills, dedication and leadership of the OSCE.

I fully subscribe to the EU statement delivered by Minister Bildt of Sweden.

The struggle of people to realize the vision of democracy, the rule of law and individual rights and freedoms some 20 years ago tore down the Berlin Wall. It led to tectonic changes in the OSCE area. How much has the CSCE changed since then in the eyes of the people? Then, along the fundamental principles enshrined in the Helsinki Decalogue, the CSCE came to mean the right to defend one's human rights, the freedom for open-minded debate without fear, access to independent news, right to cast a vote and be counted in a fair way. Today the OSCE continues to embody a firm set of principles and values that make a difference in people's lives. The ultimate purpose for us gathered in Athens is to strengthen such OSCE and to continue building a Europe that is whole, free and at peace for everyone.

This is a monumental task and responsibility. The events in Georgia last year have underlined the fragility of the political will to uphold our OSCE principles, commitments and decisions. Continuing crisis of a major arms control Treaty is an additional source of anxiety and our concern. Many other challenges and new threats need to be addressed by common efforts.

The dialogue on the European security launched by the Greek Chairmanship in Corfu is designed to restore trust and confidence through a frank, critical and clear-minded assessment.

The first stage of the Corfu process is behind us. We already have some results. The dialogue evidenced the need of the political will to implement commitments. It helped us to identify the key areas of concern to our common security. A number of proposals on improvement of effectiveness and flexibility of our Organization's toolbox, have been suggested.

We should bring the Corfu process to the next – higher – stage. A strategic approach for 2010 and beyond is an ambition we cannot shy away. The process requires a clear structure. We need to lead it by defining concrete tasks.

Early warning and conflict prevention remain a core business of the OSCE. The Corfu process proved that this requires the strengthening of the independent character of the OSCE institutions like ODIHR, Representative on Freedom of the Media, and High

Commissioner on National Minorities. Additional authority to the Chairperson-in-Office to deploy a mission to an area of potential conflict would be very positive indeed. The potential of the OSCE field operations has not been utilized to the fullest, in particular in Central Asia. The contribution of sub-regional organizations to the overall security and co-operative approaches in the OSCE area remains to be explored. Early next year Lithuania shall contribute ideas to a wider discussion on the place and role of sub-regionalism in the European security.

The OSCE continues to provide a unique framework for conflict resolution. The existing formats of the Minsk Group and 5+2 carry the weight in the settlement of the conflicts in Nagorno Karabach and Moldova. The OSCE should explore activities and programs in support of these efforts and improving a general political atmosphere through confidence building, by promoting people-to-people contacts, outreach towards political actors. Re-establishment of the OSCE presence in Georgia will testify to a positive tone created by the launch of the European security dialogue.

Indeed positive developments in resolution of protracted conflicts, review of implementation of commitments and our ability to further develop a comprehensive co-operative security model and strengthen along the way the OSCE in all three dimensions could well merit a meeting of Heads of State or Government of OSCE participating States. We are open to ideas and support all decisions that lead to the achievement of our above-mentioned objectives.

Many new threats regard no borders. I welcome an increasing focus by the OSCE participating states on Afghanistan. Without an effective strategy of engagement with Afghanistan the OSCE potential will remain marginalized. Addressing border management, drug trafficking, cyber-security in a holistic manner is vital.

As an incoming OSCE troika member Lithuania is ready to work towards an effective OSCE with a balanced, comprehensive and cross-dimensional agenda. We will be transparent and open. We are supportive of the Kazakh Chairmanship.

I wish H.E. Kanat Saudabayev, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, the incoming Chairman-in-Office and a good friend indeed, the best of success in 2010, and to assure the Minister of our close co-operation in the Troika and strong support in promoting values and principles of the OSCE.