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**STATEMENT BY
MR. GUIDO WESTERWELLE, FEDERAL MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF GERMANY, AT THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Vilnius, 6 December 2011

Mr. Chairperson, Dear Audronius,
Secretary General,
Colleagues,

I thank our Lithuanian hosts for their invitation to Vilnius most warmly.

The OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world, extending from Vladivostok to Vancouver. We work for our shared values such as freedom, the rule of law and human rights, and our aim is prosperity as a cornerstone of stability and long-term security through the respect for fundamental freedoms.

But there are still conflicts that remain unresolved, and the OSCE must continue to engage actively in these areas.

Germany supports the efforts at mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict by the Minsk Group. At the same time we are concerned at the continued incidents and the lack of progress in the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

With regard to Georgia, the Geneva Discussions remain indispensable as the sole dialogue platform for all of the parties to the conflict. Germany continues to advocate the re-establishment of an OSCE presence throughout Georgia.

The resumption of the “5+2” negotiations on a solution to the Transdniestrian conflict is very welcome. The Federal Government is also engaged in this area, as demonstrated, for example, by the Meseberg initiative and the OSCE conference in Bad Reichenhall in early September.

Mr. Chairperson,

The challenges facing the OSCE have changed considerably since it was founded, and we have to deal today with multilayered risks to security.

As a response, it was decided at the OSCE Summit in Astana last year to work further towards the creation of a comprehensive security community. We need to put this task into practice here in Vilnius through substantive decisions.

I invite you to participate in an initiative by my colleagues Alain Juppé, Sergey Lavrov, Radoslaw Sikorski and myself. We have commissioned four scientific institutes in our countries to submit contributions to a vision of a Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic security community that we would then like to present at the 2012 Ministerial Council meeting in Dublin. I urge you to take part in it.

The OSCE must be in a position to manage conflicts more effectively. It is vital to improve the reaction time to crises and to strengthen our intervention capabilities.

We would like through our decisions in Vilnius to make the OSCE more powerful in combating transnational threats.

But we must not stop there. The Federal Government regards conventional arms control as an indispensable element of a European security architecture. Together we must revitalize the faltering process of conventional arms control in Europe.

There are still deficits or even regression in some OSCE participating States with regard to human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law. The decisions at this Ministerial Council emphasize, however, that for us there can be no dilution of the OSCE *acquis*.

We note with concern the reports by the OSCE election observers in Russia about the elections to the Russian Parliament. They show that the Russian Federation still has some way to go towards full achievement of all OSCE standards. We expect these observations to be followed up transparently and with determination. We urge the Russian Federation to embark on this path now, also in the light of the forthcoming elections in Russia. Germany is also conducting dialogue on a basis of trust with the Russian Government on questions of democratic development.

Mr. Chairperson,

It is important for the OSCE to take responsibility in central conflicts. Yesterday the International Conference on Afghanistan took place in Bonn. I thank you all for your constructive co-operation in making that conference a success. The international community and Afghanistan have agreed on a new partnership from now on and for the period after 2014. Here in the OSCE we should now work concretely on a second project package for Afghanistan.

We are also determined to send a clear signal to the people in North Africa who went onto the streets for freedom and democracy. The OSCE has offered to provide assistance, and Germany is willing to make a contribution in this regard.

I thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship for its vital work and wish Ireland all the best for its Chairmanship in 2012.