



Address to
the Eighteenth Ministerial Council Meeting of
the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

by H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić
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Vilnius, 6 December 2011

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to begin by thanking Foreign Minister Ažubalis for his generous hospitality and excellent organization of this event. Congratulations on Lithuania's dynamic chairmanship-in-office.

The Republic of Serbia remains firmly committed to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community—rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments, and common goals.

Sustaining the momentum created by the Corfu process, which was reaffirmed in Astana, is at the top of our agenda. In this regard, we highly appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Lithuanian chairmanship through the V to V dialogue.

As a result, our Organization should be better equipped to act in all phases of a conflict-cycle, in a comprehensive and cross-dimensional way. Continued success in this core domain of the OSCE would help in resolving protracted conflicts within existing negotiating frameworks. It would also strengthen the robust and active network of field missions and supervisory mechanisms—so that remaining post-conflict rehabilitation issues, such as minority rights and refugees, are managed in a consistent way.

Excellencies,

In order to properly address threats and challenges to security in the OSCE space, we believe that a greater unity of purpose will be needed in the years ahead. We hope that the participating States will take a number of additional steps to that end.

As we debate how to go about this as effectively as possible, we should be acutely aware of developments that are making our task more difficult.

The international environment is becoming more tumultuous and complicated. We are witnessing more than just another generational reshuffling of the deck. The number of both cards *and* players is increasing, as the level of geopolitical uncertainty continues to rise in many corners of the world.

While we consider how to move forward under such circumstances, we are fortunate to be able to draw strength from the fact that there are parts of the globe where stability is apt to remain a long-term condition. Strengthening these regions—making sure they remain sturdy bastions of peace and security—is a priority of the highest order.

We believe the OSCE space constitutes one such area. The growing list of our common achievements towers over the fact that consensus about specific items on our shared agenda occasionally eludes us.

Excellencies,

Managing differences peacefully, and overcoming disagreements through diplomacy, has been Serbia's consistent approach—not only in the context of the OSCE, but in sub-regional cooperation, as well.

We have placed special emphasis on consolidating peace, democracy, reconciliation, and security in the Western Balkans, and beyond.

Our successful chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2007 set the stage for presiding over the Central European Initiative, the South East European Cooperation Process, and the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative—all of which have taken place this year. In a few weeks, Serbia will also begin chairing the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

We have steadfastly demonstrated our commitment to enhance sub-regional cooperation in a fair and transparent way, without aggravating disagreements over unresolved issues. This includes Kosovo, where Serbia's position is well-known and unequivocal. We have, however, found ways around impasses and sticking points—and we shall continue to do so in the future.

Excellencies,

On the basis of our regional cooperation record, and after extensive consultations with participating States, we reached out to Switzerland to put forward a package application for our two countries to chair the OSCE in consecutive years—2014 and 2015.

It was formalized in last week's Swiss-Serbian candidature letter and accompanying Joint Statement.

An innovative feature of our proposal is the commitment to consult and cooperate closely in preparing and conducting the consecutive chairmanships. This will include

agreeing on a biennial work plan; coordinating our respective priorities, agendas and modalities; and assisting each other in the accomplishment of given tasks. It will assure both programmatic continuity and coherence, strengthening the OSCE as a whole.

Our respective chairmanships would aspire to do more than just balance various points of view. We would seek to synergize them, so as to make the result greater than the sum of its fifty-six parts. This would also help establish the Western Balkans as a dynamic area of convergence, while restoring its traditional standing as a great European crossroads of cultures, traditions, ethnicities, and religions.

We respectfully ask the participating States to support our proposal.

Excellencies,

As we thank Lithuania for all its efforts to implement the Astana mandate, and express how much we look forward to working with our Irish friends as they take over the chairmanship for 2012, let us recall that the OSCE was established as a mechanism to overcome Cold War tensions in Europe. More than thirty years later, our record of achievement in each of the Organization's three dimensions of comprehensive security is a telling proof of how far we have come.

Strengthening our collective hand, and making sure no part is left behind in the 21st century, still requires everyone to be respectful of everyone else's legitimate concerns. In our view, it means that the pursuit of zero-sum outcomes must be eliminated from our agenda.

This will be a great challenge. Serbia is ready to play its part in the common effort to overcome it, enabling the entire OSCE space—the vast area stretching from Vladivostok to Vancouver—to serve as a modern paradigm of regional harmony and unbreakable peace.

Thank you very much for your attention.