

**Statement**  
**by**  
**H.E. Mr. Nickolay Mladenov,**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria**  
**At the 18<sup>th</sup> OSCE Ministerial Council**  
**6 – 7 December, Vilnius**

Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I first express my sincere gratitude to our host Minister Audronius AZUBALIS and to the Lithuanian Chairmanship for their vision, dedication and leadership of the OSCE in 2011.

Bulgaria fully aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union earlier today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are amidst turbulent economic, social and political developments which challenge the very foundations of our societies. In **times of turbulence** we need more than ever to reconfirm our common values and concepts of how to address in a cooperative way the challenges we face. This is what makes our meeting here in Vilnius so important.

Let me pay tribute to the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media as well as the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

ODIHR has set the global 'gold standard' for free and transparent elections. We have not just a legal but a moral obligation to uphold the standards that we aspire to. Just as we have a legal, we have a moral obligation to uphold democracy, protect human and minority rights, advance freedom of the media.

I agree with those who say that security is at the heart of the OSCE. But we cannot have security between states if we do not have human security, if we do not secure the democratic institutions we have, if we do not uphold those rights and obligations that we preach.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we sit today in the beautiful city of Vilnius, less than 200 km away there are people in prison for their political beliefs, there are human rights groups that are denied the opportunity to work freely. I use this opportunity to call on President Lukashenka to release all arrested after the December elections last year; to initiate open and transparent dialogue with the opposition and civil society in order to transition to a democratic and pluralistic future for his country. Belarus is a proud and independent nation whose people deserve a European future.

**The OSCE is about shared values** and hence its indispensable role in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian architecture. We need to continue discussions how we can strengthen the capacity of our Organisation to work for creating a common space of peace and democracy from Vancouver to Vladivostok without dividing lines and threat to use force.

**The OSCE is about security** -- cooperative, comprehensive and indivisible. A major task is to improve its potential and create an effective system to address transnational threats to security. Our vision for a security community should be supported by action. The OSCE has done much to prevent and resolve conflicts in the past, and should continue to do it effectively in the future.

The OSCE is also about conflict prevention. Bulgaria hopes we can strengthen the capacity of our organization to provide adequate response in the whole spectrum of conflict-related situations. I hope that we will adopt here a decision in this regard. It is equally important that we achieve consensus on the whole package of decisions that will strengthen the effectiveness of the OSCE executive structures in dealing with **transnational threats** while keeping up to its core values and comparative advantages.

Since its foundation at the height of the Cold War, **the OSCE has been about building bridges**. Bridges between nations, groups and individuals through mutual trust, common commitments and shared security goals. It still has the capacity of driving positive change and bridging diversity being the only pan-European platform for security dialogue.

Bulgaria welcomes the adoption of a substantially updated **Vienna Document**. Together with the **CFE Treaty** it has created an unprecedented environment of confidence and transparency on our continent. However, as the CFE Treaty regime is under severe threat, we should look into ways to restore its viability and overcome the present impasse. My country remains committed to conventional arms control in Europe and stands ready to work for finding a mutually acceptable solution regarding the implementation of the CFE Treaty. We are also prepared to further pursue dialogue on strengthening and modernizing arms control instruments in order to enhance security and stability in Europe

By developing closer cooperation and dialogue among states in addressing **economic and environmental challenges**, the OSCE promotes trust and builds on confidence. I would like to explicitly mention **energy security** which is a priority for Bulgaria. We believe that the OSCE has a specific role to play and should continue to strengthen its energy security dialogue through information sharing and the exchange of good practices among producer, transit and consumer countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Almost a year has passed since **the Arab Awakening** began a process of democratic transformation in the Middle East and North Africa. We need to show solidarity with Arab people, share the lessons that many of us have learned in our democratic transition and help build the new institutions that our friends need. In this process ODHIR can play a vital role particularly in supporting the election process.

Bulgaria has initiated the **Sofia Platform process**. In May we hosted the first meeting to study the lessons learned in Central and East Europe's transition with the Middle East and North Africa. The meeting brought together activists, NGOs, government officials from two regions with the UN, the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Two days ago we held the second meeting to discuss issues of justice in transition.

Having said that, it is my expectation that one of the most important deliverables of our meeting should be a strong message to enhance the level of interaction with the **OSCE Partners for Cooperation** and lay the foundation of support and more frequent joint activities with them.

The situation in **Afghanistan** remains of key importance for the peace and stability. A multidimensional approach is therefore indispensable, and effective actions should be undertaken to include all security domains. We support further strengthening of OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan through focused projects across all three dimensions.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like in conclusion to warmly thank the Lithuanian Chairmanship for its valuable work throughout the year and for its tireless efforts to achieve progress in all OSCE dimensions. Allow me to as well welcome and express my best wishes to the in-coming OSCE Chairmanship of Ireland and extend Bulgaria's full support and readiness to assist and contribute to all its future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention.