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Foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office

The main challenge for Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship was to take forward the vision elaborated by the 56 OSCE Heads of State or Government in the Astana Commemorative Declaration, which set forth a vision of a free, democratic, common, and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok, rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments, and common goals. Under Lithuania's Chairmanship, the OSCE has taken meaningful steps towards the realization of this vision.

This is a major and ambitious task, which cannot, of course, be achieved in a single year. In my first address to the OSCE Permanent Council in January, I set out five main priorities:

- To register tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts;
- To significantly improve our record of implementation of media freedom commitments;
- To enhance the OSCE's profile with regard to transnational threats, including those emanating from the territory of Afghanistan;
- To define the OSCE's role in the energy security dialogue; and
- To promote tolerance education throughout the OSCE area in order to combat hate crimes and discrimination.

I believe that we have made progress in all of these areas. I am especially proud of the work that the Chairmanship team, the OSCE executive structures, and the 2011 Chairmanships of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) have done in getting the Transdnestrian settlement process back on track, updating the Vienna Document 1999 on confidence- and security-building measures, creating the Vilnius Guidelines on the protection of journalists, enhancing the OSCE's capacity to combat transnational threats, strengthening co-operation with our Partners for Co-operation, and successfully concluding the mandate of the OSCE Office in Zagreb.

The culmination of our Chairmanship was the Vilnius Ministerial Council, at which the OSCE foreign ministers took decisions on enhancing OSCE capabilities in early warning, early action, dialogue facilitation and mediation support, and post-conflict rehabilitation. Decisions were also taken on addressing transnational threats, promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere, strengthening the transport dialogue, the role of the OSCE in facilitating UN Security Council Resolution 1540, dealing with small arms and light weapons and conventional ammunition, and on issues relevant to the FSC. A declaration on combating all forms of human trafficking was agreed. Ministers also decided to enhance engagement with OSCE Partners for Co-operation, and Afghanistan, in particular. This is especially critical as we near the drawdown of international forces from the country.

As the holders of the Chairmanship of a regional security organization, in addition to our planned priorities and work, we also had to quickly and effectively respond to political and security events in our region.

The year started with the news that the Belarusian authorities had not agreed to extend the mandate of the OSCE Office in Minsk. The OSCE nevertheless continued its work in Belarus, for example through the activities of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the monitoring by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the trials of those arrested following the 19 December 2010 presidential elections (report published on 10 November 2011). On 6 April, fourteen OSCE participating States invoked the 1991 Moscow Mechanism, which led to a report and recommendations on the human rights situation in Belarus. Throughout the year, I tried to maintain a dialogue with our Belarusian counterparts, presenting a package of possible OSCE activities, while often speaking out against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Chairmanship was concerned about repeated flare-ups of violence in northern Kosovo, particularly in the latter part of the year. I frequently appealed for calm and co-operation, reinforcing the message during my visit to South-eastern Europe on 4-8 July. I also emphasized the urgency of regional co-operation in finding a humane solution for the refugees and internally displaced persons who were driven from their homes during the upheavals in the Balkans during the 1990s.

In January, my deputy Evaldas Ignatavičius visited Albania in order to prevent escalation of the confrontation between pro-government and opposition sides in Tirana. The Chairmanship also accompanied the OSCE Secretary General when he visited Albania in March to further counsel calm in the pre-election period.

Throughout the year, we actively promoted implementation of the Community Security Initiative (CSI) in Kyrgyzstan, which is designed to restore confidence between the communities and in the law-enforcement agencies and to deal with security challenges in the country following the violent inter-ethnic conflicts of 2010. The Chairmanship continued to monitor the situation in the country, together with representatives of the EU and the UN.

The most important and dramatic events in our neighbourhood, the so called "Arab Spring", involved a number of OSCE Partners for Co-operation. We immediately offered the expertise that the Organization has accumulated over the past two decades in assisting with democratic transition processes, and our colleagues from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly monitored the elections in Tunisia. An important development in our relations with OSCE partners is the decision by Mongolia to apply to become our 57th participating State. I hope that we can welcome Mongolia early in 2012.

Our first priority – achieving tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts – proved to be the most challenging. The resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations on the Transdniestrian settlement was a success that re-

quired a concerted diplomatic effort led by my Special Representative for Protracted Conflicts, Ambassador Giedrius Čekuolis. Both of us were in regular contact with the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the EU, and the US.

At the beginning of February, I visited Moldova and met with officials and civil society activists from both banks of the Dniestr/Nistru River. Informal meetings in the 5+2 format were held in Vienna in February and April, and in Moscow in June. The OSCE organized three informal meetings between Prime Minister Vlad Filat of Moldova and Transdniestrian leader Igor Smirnov. On 9 September, in Bad Reichenhall, Germany, we had a small breakthrough with the adoption of a set of regulations governing the operations of the Expert Working Groups on Confidence-Building Measures. This was followed up on 22 September in Moscow, where the participants in the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement agreed to resume their formal negotiations in the 5+2 framework. The first meeting took place in Vilnius on 30 November and 1 December.

Unfortunately, despite the tangible progress achieved throughout 2011 in the negotiation process, a separate Ministerial Statement on the resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations on the Transdniestrian settlement could not be adopted.

One of the highest priorities for Lithuania's Chairmanship of the OSCE has been to enhance the Organization's capabilities to address all phases of the conflict cycle, and to promote settlement of protracted conflicts.

At the beginning of the year, we initiated the V to V Dialogues (Vancouver to Vladivostok via Vienna and Vilnius), involving informal ambassadorial discussions in the style and spirit of the Corfu Process, focusing on the conflict cycle. The dialogue was further extended to include experts from academia, think tanks, and NGOs.

During the V to V Dialogues as well as workshops, seminars, and discussions in the Security Committee and other negotiating forums, OSCE participating States exchanged many ideas on how the OSCE might strengthen its capacity in this core function. This resulted in a Ministerial Council (MC) decision on *Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE's Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*. This should enhance the Organization's ability to prevent and respond to conflicts and crises in the OSCE area.

Freedom of the media was a high priority for the Lithuanian Chairmanship. In all my visits to OSCE States, I stressed the need for full implementation of OSCE commitments related to freedom of the media. A Conference on *Safety of Journalists in the OSCE Region* was held in Vilnius on 7-8 June. On the eve of the Vilnius Ministerial, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media I launched a manual of good practices that promotes the safety of journalists, building on the recommendations of the Vil-

nius conference. It offers concrete guidelines to protect journalists and to ensure that those who use force or violence against journalists are brought to justice. Unfortunately, no consensus was reached on an MC decision on enhancing safety of journalists, despite the fact that many journalists in the OSCE area continue to face violence, harassment, and even death merely by exercising their professional responsibilities. I am pleased that the incoming Irish Chairmanship has expressed its intention to continue work in this area.

We also made progress in the FSC. The Vienna Document (VD) 1999 on confidence- and security-building measures was updated and reissued at the Vilnius Ministerial Council as the VD 2011. It incorporates nine so-called "VD Plus" decisions that have been developed over the past two years. In order to simplify the process of updating the VD in the future and to ensure that the Document remains relevant in an evolving security environment, a procedure has been agreed to update the VD every five years.

Transnational threats continue to be one of OSCE's priorities, and we brought to the Ministerial Council a package of decisions on issues including terrorism, drugs, cyber-crime, and police-related activities. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach consensus on several elements of that package. Nevertheless, a decision was adopted on *Strengthening Co-ordination and Coherence in the OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats*, which refers, among other things, to the Secretary General's proposal to create a new department in the Secretariat to address transnational threats. The Secretary General's well-crafted proposal, which builds upon ideas debated by the participating States since 2009, constitutes a meaningful step towards strengthened OSCE efforts to address transnational threats.

In 2011, the OSCE and its participating States were also affected by the ongoing global financial crisis, which has had political and social, as well as economic consequences. It has put the Organization under particular pressure to deliver the best value for the contributions provided by the participating States; it has diminished the ability of some participating States to support the Organization's activities by providing seconded personnel and extra-budgetary contributions; it has consumed the time and attention of political leaders across the OSCE area; and it has underscored the importance of effective co-ordination of the OSCE's activities with those of other international and regional organizations, in the interest of avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort.

On the whole, this has been a challenging year for the OSCE region and therefore for Lithuania and the Chairmanship. I am convinced that together we were able to take meaningful steps that can enable progress across all areas of the OSCE's activity. The common vision of a security community remains the right one. In the coming years, it is up to all participating States of the OSCE to make that vision a reality.