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Lithuania and the OSCE

Lithuania sees its security as an integral and indivisible part of European and global security. Its participation in international organizations and integration into European and transatlantic security, economic and defence structures, including NATO and WEU, are intended to contribute to strengthening international confidence and stability. Vilnius' motivation for securing membership in the European Union and NATO is to extend the zone of security in Europe and provide incentive for more stable relations between states. Since the re-establishment of independence, the top foreign policy objectives of Lithuania have been European integration and good neighbourliness.

As one of the countries that had no say when the continent was politically divided 53 years ago in Yalta, Lithuania today assigns high priority to inclusiveness and participatory democracy. The fall of communism opened the door for small and medium-sized states to be actors in the international arena rather than to be subordinated to the interests of others. What better way to do away with the Yalta legacy than to ensure direct participation of the newly independent countries in the formation of a new Europe? The inclusive membership of the OSCE and its consensual decision-making process make it a logical vehicle for full and equal participation of states. Despite weaknesses in the consensus rule, it remains a good basis for developing a co-operative spirit among states.¹

This is not to say that opinion in Lithuania on the value of the OSCE is united. Some policy-makers believe that all efforts should be concentrated on joining NATO and that OSCE is a time-wasting distraction. Others see it as a useful instrument - not just a talking mill - for conflict prevention and crisis management activities.

In 1997, Foreign Minister Algirdas Saudargas summed up his views on what role the OSCE should play in the new Europe:

"Our concept for a European security architecture is an inclusive one, aimed at fostering a culture of co-operation among all OSCE States. In our view, the co-operative approach of OSCE can play an important role in strengthening confidence through dialogue, promoting openness and transparency, encouraging mutual support and assistance, and complementing other proc-

¹ Cf. Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE, Reinforced Permanent Council, Vienna, 5 November 1997. Lithuania stressed the importance of the consensus rule, which is "of particular importance to small states, such as ours, since it serves as a guarantee that all participating States will be treated like partners, that the national priorities of each will be taken into account. This, we believe, gives the OSCE its unique political power."

esses of adaptation and enlargement, to which we attach importance. The central elements of lasting peace and stability in the OSCE area must be:

- partnership based on equality, respect for the interests of states and their right to choose their own security arrangements;
- common values based on full respect for and implementation of the Helsinki principles and commitments which underlie the OSCE, particularly respect for an open society and the rule of law;
- universal application of tools and mechanisms;
- indivisible security and the integration of Europe into a series of mutually supporting institutions and relationships which ensure that there will be no return to division or confrontation (...) where all states, security-related organizations and regional arrangements work together in a constructive, non-hierarchical and mutually-reinforcing way. We do not believe that regionalization of security matters can serve our common interests."²

Culture of Co-operation

The CSCE/OSCE has not figured prominently in Lithuania's security policy, but understanding of the important work it does and can do is gaining recognition. Even though some policy-makers still perceive Russian interests as being the sole focus of attention in the OSCE, a new line of thinking has emerged. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs recognizes that OSCE has a comparative advantage in early warning, conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict rehabilitation. There is no doubt that more active participation by Lithuania, especially over the past two years, in short-term and long-term OSCE missions has contributed to this change of attitude. Lithuania has sent election observers, media specialists, junior and senior diplomats to stabilizing efforts in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Chechnya, Georgia and Ukraine. OSCE missions have provided an opportunity for concrete involvement by Lithuanian experts.

Lithuanian diplomacy has also promoted the view that security should be increasingly sought in co-operation, not confrontation. Maintaining good and friendly relations with the Russian Federation is one of Lithuania's principal interests. The question of how to constructively involve Russia, as well as other CIS states, in European co-operation on security matters is very much on the mind of Vilnius. Lithuanian interest is to draw Russia closer into the framework of European co-operation and strengthen its democratic development. Other basic concerns as seen from Vilnius include finding a place for

2 Statement by H.E. Mr. Algirdas Saudargas, Minister of Foreign Affairs, OSCE Ministerial Council, Copenhagen, 18 December 1997.

Ukraine in a new political order and preventing possible self-isolation of Belarus. The OSCE is useful in this regard since it provides a forum for dialogue on these matters and that in itself is an important contribution to openness and transparency. States can ask questions when concerns arise and communicate their positions and views. This process helps replace Cold War thinking and policies with co-operative efforts based on common values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. By encouraging a culture of co-operation and trust among OSCE participating States, OSCE is helping to change and remove old perceptions. It is creating a sense of shared responsibility by developing rules of conduct between states and towards their citizens. But the implementation of these standards represents the ultimate challenge for the Organization and its participating States.

Freedom of Choice

The inherent right of all states to determine and strengthen their own security arrangements is a fundamental principle laid down by the OSCE, to which Lithuania attaches great importance. Respect for this principle impacts the attitude of Lithuania towards the OSCE. Calls for more regional arrangements and a central OSCE role bring out feelings of apprehension that the OSCE might be viewed as a substitute structure for states who are not, or not yet, members of other security organizations. Lithuania does not believe that the OSCE can in any way serve as an effective security structure or offer hard security guarantees. Even though the OSCE has a special contribution to make to Europe's security, Lithuania does not see it as an alternative to NATO. The OSCE is an organization for soft security measures, which sets norms and standards for states to respect, both internationally and at home. It enhances transparency and helps to build confidence. But in the end, it is the democratic foundation of security and implementation of OSCE principles and commitments that defines the future of a stable and secure Europe. Therefore, the freedom of all states to choose or change their security arrangements, as laid down in the Charter of Paris and reiterated in the guidelines from Copenhagen for the development of a Document-Charter on European Security, should not be interpreted as merely an abstraction. It is a right that Lithuania insists upon and that states are entitled to exercise in practice.

Full Implementation and Universal Application

The principles and commitments agreed upon within the OSCE are the very foundation for creating a stable and secure Europe. The OSCE has reached a point in its evolution where its conceptual work is being overtaken by its action in the field. Subsequently, more emphasis needs to be placed on the practical application of the Organization's goals and mandates. For this reason, Lithuania favours improving implementation of existing OSCE principles and commitments over developing new documents or structures.³ Lithuania is of the opinion that the basic norms of European behaviour have been agreed.

Nevertheless, much conceptual work has been done within the OSCE, including on the Security Model. Lithuania views this work as a confidence-building measure in itself. Further work should reflect the basic functions of the OSCE and seek to complement ongoing enlargement processes and the work of existing institutions, especially those that enhance and strengthen European security and promote solidarity and co-operation among OSCE States.⁴

The aim of the work is to improve what the OSCE has, not to start over. The Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and the set of principles and commitments arising from them should remain the focus of the OSCE. Their implementation lies at the core of the relevance of the OSCE.⁵

As active as the OSCE has been, its instruments and mechanisms could be used more effectively to take action when OSCE principles and commitments are grossly violated. OSCE standards and values are a constant: they are the unchanging foundation of OSCE co-operation. There is always room for improvement in implementation, especially since principles and commitments are not yet a living reality in all OSCE States. One case in point is the lack of progress on Russian troop withdrawal from Moldova. Lithuania has repeatedly pressed for a durable solution of the Trans-Dniestrian problem and the withdrawal of foreign troops in accordance with OSCE commitments.⁶ Based on its own experience, this matter is of particular concern to Lithuania, which itself benefited from the OSCE's call for the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic states, a goal finally achieved in Lithuania in 1993.

As difficult and as uncomfortable as it may be to some, Lithuania has stated as a general rule that standards and norms of behaviour should be equally ap-

3 Cf. Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE, cited above (Note 1).

4 Cf. *ibid.*

5 Cf. speaking notes of Mr. Vygaudas Usackas, Political Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Reinforced Permanent Council, Vienna, 27 March 1998.

6 Cf. Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE, Permanent Council, Vienna, 17 June 1998.

plied to all participating States.⁷ In practice, that is not always the case. If the OSCE is to maintain credibility, the perception that it has a role to play only in a limited number of states must be avoided. More attention must be paid to non-discriminatory application of OSCE mechanisms and instruments.

Indivisible Security through Mutual Reinforcement

As Eastern Europe moves westward to rejoin the other half of the common culture from which it was separated in 1945, Lithuania, like the rest of Europe, is facing a world that is getting smaller. As a consequence, Lithuanian security, like that of its Baltic and Nordic neighbours, is linked to the security of the rest of Europe and North America. Lithuania believes that regionalization of security and the creation of any kind of special security zones in or around the Baltic Sea must be avoided. This is particularly true now when the free world is no longer confronted by a gigantic strategic adversary, but by many new transboundary risks and challenges, such as drug trafficking, organized crime, illegal migration and environmental threats. Today's European and regional agendas are dominated not by military threats, but by these *third pillar* risks and challenges.

In the case of the Baltic Sea region, many different forms of co-operation are being actively pursued. On 22-23 January 1998, the Second Conference of Heads of Government of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in Riga gave new impetus to regional economic, subregional and cross-border co-operation, particularly in the fields of civic security, domestic and justice affairs, of small and medium-size enterprises as well as implementation of transport and energy infrastructure projects. One of the priorities of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is constructive engagement of the Russian Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg regions in economic and social development programmes.⁸

The Baltic Sea countries are relatively well-equipped with institutional tools capable of addressing these new risks and challenges. Therefore, Lithuanian policy-makers place more emphasis on making full use of currently existing institutions rather than on creating new OSCE structures. Many tools which enhance confidence and transparency are available in the OSCE and outside of it. PfP, EAPC, WEU, subregional organizations, as well as existing OSCE mechanisms and processes can be used to good effect. The distinct competences of each organization should be put to best possible use. Lithuania values the role of the CBSS in particular and is a strong advocate of bilateral

7 Cf. Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE on the occasion of the visit of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Permanent Council, Vienna, 10 April 1997.

8 Lithuania assumed the one year CBSS Presidency on 1 July 1998.

mechanisms of co-operation.⁹ Good neighbours must face and solve problems on a bilateral basis. In this regard, President Valdas Adamkus has noted that the signing of a readmission treaty with Russia and Belarus would significantly contribute to a safer social environment in the region.¹⁰

The Lithuanian view is that the OSCE should do what it does best and not take over tasks successfully performed by others. The OSCE has clearly proven its comparative advantage in the field of preventive diplomacy. The institutional flexibility of the OSCE has also enabled it to react swiftly and pragmatically in crisis situations. To this end, Lithuania supports the concept of co-operative security, which draws on the experience gained from co-operation in the field between international organizations and from the efforts of sub-regional actors.¹¹ Exchange of information and experience between security organizations, raising the profile of sub-regional organizations and their activities, encouraging more supportive policies and action by European institutions towards other organizations which share their goals, would help put mutual reinforcement into practice. It is vital that each organization be allowed to evolve in the way best suited to its geographical area, its functional tasks and the freely expressed will of its members.

As for new challenges in the politico-military sphere, the countries of the Baltic Sea region agree that the situation there is stable and that the problems that do exist are essentially non-military in character. Lithuania recognizes that military CSBMs contribute to greater transparency and predictability. On its part, Lithuania has taken concrete steps to promote good neighbourly relations and practical co-operation with the Russian Federation on a bilateral basis and within existing institutions. For instance, Russian observers were invited to take part in the "Baltic Challenge '98" exercise in Lithuania in July 1998. Lithuania has also initiated interaction between local civil emergency agencies and proposed the establishment of a regional civil security co-ordination centre.¹²

In particular cases and on the basis of reciprocity, Lithuania has also offered to inform all interested OSCE States about troops on its territory far below the present thresholds in the Vienna Document '94. Lithuania believes that this, as well as the initiative to provide neighbouring countries with additional opportunities to inspect and verify military data, is a significant contri-

9 Cf. Usackas, cited above (Note 5).

10 Cf. Presidential policy statement "On the development of relations with Russia and security and confidence building measures", Vilnius, 26 March 1998.

11 Cf. Statement of the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE, cited above (Note 1). Lithuania has repeatedly expressed its support for a Platform for Co-operative Security, which would include recommendations for non-hierarchical co-operation between security institutions. "Such co-operation should be mutually reinforcing and based on practical co-operative efforts, but not on a hard division of labour nor on a division of the OSCE area into spheres of responsibility."

12 Cf. Statement by H.E. Mr. Algirdas Saudargas, Minister of Foreign Affairs, EAPC Ministerial meeting, Luxembourg, 29 May 1998.

bution towards greater transparency and confidence-building among countries of the region.¹³

These activities, including development of self-defence capabilities, have led to a more active interest by Lithuania in possible arms control contributions. Serious attention is being paid in Vilnius to tackling new security challenges in Europe. One such challenge is the CFE adaptation process, which will affect all OSCE States, whether States Parties to the Treaty or not.¹⁴ As a non-party, Lithuania has a strong interest in the transparency of the adaptation process and the benefits of the compliance regime. Of primary concern is the Treaty's continued viability, which will largely depend on preservation of the flank rule as well as the possibility and terms of accession by new members.¹⁵

Conclusion

Building European security requires a multi-dimensional approach by various institutions. Lithuania's contribution to stability and security lies in its strategy for European integration, which emphasizes practical steps that complement OSCE-wide, European and transatlantic processes and institutions. This strategy includes:

- EU and NATO membership;
- continued dialogue with Russia;
- more bilateral activities such as those in which the Baltic and Nordic countries jointly participate: in the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT), in NATO's Implementation and Stabilization Forces in Bosnia (IFOR and SFOR); more bilateral activities in peacekeeping with Poland;
- active participation in NATO's Partnership for Peace programme and events;
- intensified regional economic, social and environmental co-operation among all the Baltic Sea countries, particularly in managing new risks and challenges.

13 Cf. Presidential policy statement, cited above (Note 10).

14 See Arms Control Reporter 1996, citing Vilnius Radio on 9 June 1996. The Baltic states were upset by the Final Document of the 1996 CFE Review Conference, especially by the fact that Russian equipment in Pskov was no longer to be counted in the flank ceilings. The Baltic Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee criticized Russian violation of the CFE Treaty and US concessions to Moscow at the expense of Baltic interests.

15 Cf. Statement by the Delegation of Lithuania to the OSCE on co-operative measures enhancing stability in the Baltic Sea Region, Forum for Security Co-operation, Vienna, 1 July 1998.

Lithuanian interest in the OSCE is to fully benefit from the OSCE's comparative advantage in conflict prevention and crisis management and to use it as an instrument which strengthens respect for democracy and the sovereignty of states, protects the interests of small states, encourages multilateral dialogue and co-operation and enhances security through openness and transparency.

The strength of the OSCE ultimately lies in the political will of participating States to implement OSCE norms and standards and to live up to the decisions they have taken as members of a very useful body for raising pan-European issues and concerns.