



Ministero degli Affari Esteri

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER
OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
(Vilnius, 6 December 2011)

I wish to thank the Lithuanian Presidency and **Minister Azubalis** for the excellent work they have done. I would like in particular to say how much I appreciate the effective mediation conducted by the Presidency, which has paved the way for the success of today's ministerial. And I would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to the new Secretary General, **Ambassador Zannier**.

Through its work and its vision, the OSCE testifies to the fact that security and the fundamental freedoms are by no means incompatible. On the contrary, as the Arab Spring has reminded us, the principles of stability and democratic growth are mutually supportive. Democratic freedoms without stability run the risk of being mere empty expressions. And stability without rights often takes the form of odious oppression. The OSCE provides us with instruments and values that enable us to advance the principles of security and democracy together, without relinquishing either. Without any unequal trade-off, but in the protection of the greater interest of the human beings who live and work in the indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian community.

One year on from the **Astana Summit**, we do not intend to withdraw from the bedrocks of security and freedom on which we have undertaken to erect together our common future of peace, stability and rights.

Italy has long been engaged in implementing this ambitious agenda. We have contributed to the efforts to reinvigorate the OSCE through the **Corfu Process**. Some of the themes we have promoted in that Process have come to assume a crucial value in the work of the organisation. I refer, for example, to the strengthening of the conflict-management mechanisms and the revitalisation of the politico-military sector. Further advancing these issues continues to be a priority for Italy. In the conflict-prevention framework, we look favourably on greater operational capability for the OSCE, thanks not least to the higher profile of the Secretary General and the Conflict Prevention Center.

On the politico-military front, with our recent Presidency of the Forum for Security Cooperation, we played a part in up-dating the Vienna 1999 Document. We are convinced that the OSCE must continue to occupy a front-line position on the fundamental security questions that are closely connected to its very identity.

At the same time, the rebellions calling for dignity and democracy in North Africa and the Middle East are opening up new scenarios for OSCE to collaborate with its Mediterranean partners. The Arab Spring has confirmed the indissoluble link between Euro-Atlantic and Mediterranean security, a link already acknowledged in the Helsinki Final Act. By playing on the concept of comprehensive and indivisible security, the OSCE can help make the Mediterranean dimension a focus of our policies by supporting the democratic development of our Mediterranean partners. These partners can certainly view the organisation as a key interlocutor in light of the experience it has acquired in assisting the transition processes in the countries to the east.

This expertise could be put to most fruitful effect in a number of sectors. I refer, for example, to the electoral cycle, to the democratic control of the police and armed forces, to the principles of legality, tolerance and non-discrimination, to the

development of civil society. We hope, therefore, that our Mediterranean partners will take full advantage of this opportunity for collaboration.

Moreover, other useful insights can be drawn from the OSCE legacy. I think in particular about the experience of dialogue on an equal footing among countries with different historical experiences and social models. In the Seventies and Eighties, dialogue was structured in a series of conferences that allowed East and West to “come closer” and to agree on principles for the development not only of peaceful coexistence, but especially of a fruitful political, economic and social cooperation. It would be worthwhile, I think, to explore whether this model can usefully inspire also the development of relations between the two shores of the Mediterranean.

Thanks to its increasingly active role in Central Asia, the OSCE can, moreover, contribute to the stabilisation of Afghanistan, not least in light of the new impetus the Bonn Conference has given to regional cooperation. We are also counting heavily on the Organisation’s commitment to combating the most serious trans-national threats. Most notably, we deem the consolidation of the Organisation’s mandate in the policing sector and in combating drug trafficking to be of strategic importance. We believe that greater collaboration is possible in combating the trafficking of human beings: heinous phenomenon that violates the fundamental human rights and threatens the security of our states.

The successes achieved thus far and the ambitious goals we intent to pursue must not, however, allow us to forget that the principles of the Helsinki final Act have not yet been implemented in full. Recourse to the use of force is still widespread and several “frozen” conflicts have long awaited a solution. We therefore view the resumption of the formal 5+2 negotiations on the Transdniestrian question as an encouraging signal.

The promotion and defence of the fundamental human rights are distinguishing features of our active participation in the international organisations. In this context, we have noted with some concern the backward steps in the protection of certain rights, rights which OSCE countries have undertaken to respect. We were sorry indeed to hear of the death sentences recently handed down by the judicial authorities in Belarus. We call for them to be revoked at the earliest possible date, in compliance with the moratorium on the death penalty promoted by Italy with the Resolutions approved by the United Nations General Assembly.

The campaign against intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds is another front requiring strong commitment and keen attention. We cannot allow extremist fringe movements to prevail. For this reason, we have greatly appreciated the OSCE’s growing activity on this issue, which Italy views as a priority.

In Astana, we launched the project for a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community based on a more uniform political, economic and cultural space. A space that is able to look to the future and turn its back on the approach based on divisions into blocs and spheres of influence.

Here in Vilnius, we have to take a new step towards the implementation of this shared vision. We have done so in the knowledge that improving our citizens’ levels of security and freedom is a goal that all the countries of the Organisation, including those that are most democratically advanced, must pursue with great determination.