

Statement by H.E. Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Foreign Minister of Latvia

OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting on 6 – 7 December in Vilnius

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the beginning join those who already expressed their praise to the Chairmanship in Office for their outstanding work throughout the year and for hosting this Ministerial Council. I look forward to a successful work of this ministerial meeting.

Our presence here today is a very clear evidence of the changes that have taken place in the OSCE area. Twenty years ago the Baltic States regained their independence after the Soviet occupation; today for the first time OSCE Minister Council is held in one of the Baltic States - Lithuania – a fact of symbolic significance, reflecting the changes in the geopolitical landscape of Europe over the last couple of decades.

Discussions on the conflict cycle are an indispensable part of the security dialogue among our states. OSCE is an intergovernmental security organization and, naturally, early warning, conflict prevention and conflict resolution are its principle tasks. At the same time we need to recognize that such instruments and other mechanisms will not be effective without sincere political will to solve the conflicts.

We still face a number of protracted conflicts in the OSCE area, however there are some positive signs. I would like to thank Lithuania for its efforts as the Chairmanship to resume official negotiations in the 5+2 format. The first official 5+2 meeting which was held here in Vilnius a few days ago signaled some good progress in the long way to conflict resolution. We encourage all parties to use the momentum and positive dynamic of the negotiations.

Latvia's position regarding the situation in Georgia is clear and unchanged – we fully support the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia, therefore we join the call for restoration of a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia. The necessity of the OSCE field presence in Georgia is crucial.

In Nagorno – Karabakh, the OSCE has to look on how to boost the negotiations and cooperation in the region in order to make progress.

The OSCE continues to play an important and valuable role not only in the OSCE area but also in the neighboring countries. In this regard we support improvement of cooperation with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation on areas of common concern. We are convinced that it is vital to continue the OSCE engagement in Afghanistan since it can strengthen not only the security situation in Central Asia but in the OSCE region as a whole.

We compliment the productive work done in the first dimension where the process of updating and modernizing confidence and security building measures was successfully commenced. Next year Latvia as one of the chairs of the OSCE Forum for Security and Co-operation will focus its work on aspects pertinent to protracted conflicts and address political-military issues that strengthen and enhance stability, predictability and transparency in the OSCE area.

Latvia appreciates the cross-dimensional work of the OSCE and attaches great importance to the human dimension. Participating States may have different views on some aspects, but we have the same rights and duties, based on the same set of values. The promotion of human rights, rule of law, good governance and fundamental freedoms is at the heart of the OSCE. We need to show our determination to stand together in defense of these principles and to demonstrate a consistent, value-based approach, if or when challenged.

Dear colleagues, I wish the future Chairmanship, Ireland, every success in tackling the tasks ahead.
Thank you!