

Chairmanship: Sweden

1329th PLENARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

1. Date: Thursday, 12 August 2021 (in the Neuer Saal and via video teleconference)

Opened: 10 a.m.
Closed: 1.25 p.m.

2. Chairperson: Ambassador U. Funered

3. Subjects discussed – Statements – Decisions/documents adopted:

Agenda item 1: REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES

Chairperson

- (a) *Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine and illegal occupation of Crimea*: Ukraine (PC.DEL/1276/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1283/21), United Kingdom, United States of America (PC.DEL/1269/21), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1280/21 OSCE+), Turkey (PC.DEL/1279/21 OSCE+), Canada
- (b) *Deteriorating situation in Ukraine and continued non-implementation by the Ukrainian authorities of the Minsk agreements*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1272/21), Ukraine
- (c) *Thirteenth anniversary of the savage operation of the Georgian armed forces against the population of South Ossetia*: Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1274/21)
- (d) *Thirteen years since the full-scale military aggression against Georgia by the Russian Federation*: Georgia (PC.DEL/1282/21 OSCE+), United States of America (also on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia,

Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom) (PC.DEL/1270/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro and North Macedonia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1284/21), Ukraine (PC.DEL/1277/21), Turkey (PC.DEL/1287/21 OSCE+), Russian Federation

- (e) *The one-year anniversary of the fraudulent presidential election in Belarus:* United States of America (PC.DEL/1271/21), Slovenia-European Union (with the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Liechtenstein, members of the European Economic Area; as well as Georgia and Ukraine, in alignment) (PC.DEL/1285/21), United Kingdom, Norway (also on behalf of Canada and Iceland), Switzerland (PC.DEL/1281/21 OSCE+), Lithuania (Annex 1) (Annex 2), Russian Federation (PC.DEL/1275/21), Belarus (PC.DEL/1278/21 OSCE+)

Agenda item 2: REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
 CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE

Status of discussions on outstanding draft decisions related to the holding of the 2021 Annual Security Review Conference and the 2021 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and the approval of the 2021 Unified Budget: Chairperson

Agenda item 3: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL

- (a) *Update on the COVID-19 situation in the OSCE Secretariat:*
Secretary General
- (b) *International Youth Day, observed on 12 August 2021:* Secretary General, United States of America (also on behalf of Kyrgyzstan and Spain) (PC.DEL/1273/21)
- (c) *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report:* Secretary General

Agenda item 4: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (a) *Consultative Meeting of the Heads of States of Central Asia held in Turkmenistan on 6 August 2021:* Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan
- (b) *Local elections in North Macedonia to be held on 17 October 2021:*
North Macedonia

4. Next meeting:

To be confirmed



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Permanent Council**

PC.JOUR/1329
12 August 2021
Annex 1

Original: ENGLISH

1329th Plenary Meeting
PC Journal No. 1329, Agenda item 1(e)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LITHUANIA**

Madam Chairperson,

I took the floor to thank our American and transatlantic allies and European partners for their words of solidarity and support to Lithuania.

Because of our geographical location, we find ourselves at the forefront against the increasingly unpredictable neighbour, the *de facto* leadership of which seems to be ready for whatever means to stay in power.

But the good news is that we are not alone. And here I wish to also say a big “thank you” – on behalf of our government and on behalf of the Lithuanian people – to the incredibly big number of our international partners and allies – for their support and solidarity in the context of this hybrid attack against Lithuania. We will never forget this.

As it was emphasized by the distinguished ambassador of the United States, our strength is in our unity. Our unity against the blatant violations of OSCE and other international commitments, our unity against brutal crackdowns of human rights and fundamental freedoms, our unity in support of democratic values and principles, as well as in support of international law.

Lithuania will always stand by the people who fight for democracy, for their rights and freedoms, and by countries that face foreign aggression and violation of their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We admire the courage and the strength of the spirit of the Belarusian people, despite the unprecedented repressions they have faced throughout this year. Looking into these brave Belarusian women and men, we are confident that sooner than later instead of addressing anniversaries after the fraudulent presidential elections, we will be marking anniversaries of the victory of democracy in Belarus.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.

1329th Plenary Meeting

PC Journal No. 1329, Agenda item 1(e)

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF LITHUANIA**

Madam Chairperson,

Please allow me to take the floor again to reply to the delegation of Belarus.

This delegation again tried to tell us yet another scary story about Lithuania. However, if you [delegation of Belarus] tell a story, please – tell the full version of it. Tell it from the beginning. Any alphabet does not start with letter “L” (“Lithuania”); they all start with letters “A”, “B” and “C”.

“A” is about “actions” that have led to the situation like this. Deliberate actions taken by “B” – “Belarus” – in relation to another “B”, which is “borders”. And after “B” we have “C” – your own “commitments” to ensure security and good management of your borders; your commitments to fight, and not to facilitate organized crime, illegal trafficking of persons and drugs, your commitments to counter terrorism.

Belarus has never been and currently is under no objective migratory pressure. What we witness is a result of a deliberate and politically driven decision to instrumentalize illegal migration by the Lukashenko regime to revenge Lithuania and other European Union Member States for our principled stance with regard to all those unthinkable human right violations and suppressions of democracy in Belarus before, during and after the fraudulent presidential elections of 9 August 2020. Political activists rot in Belarusian prisons, Belarusian refugees fleeing the Lukashenko regime are being hanged on trees in neighbouring countries, free media and non-governmental organizations inside Belarus are virtually destroyed. Lithuania helps Belarusian people to escape these persecutions and because of that A. Lukashenko tries to revenge us.

In 2021, 4,115 irregular migrants have been apprehended by Lithuanian Border Guard Service officers after illegally crossing the Lithuanian border from Belarus. Let me remind that this happened immediately after A. Lukashenko openly threatened to “flood Lithuania and other neighbouring states with migrants and drugs” on 26 May in his televised address to members of the Belarusian Parliament, governors and members of the Constitutional Commission and on multiple other occasions. Let me also draw the attention of the OSCE participating States to the fact that this number constitutes a 55-fold increase compared with

the 74 illegal crossings recorded for the entire year of 2020. In 2019, the number of such crossings was even less (37).

This 55-fold increase in such illegal crossings – this is a clearly defined fact, and not a “fake” the delegation of Belarus was talking about in its intervention.

As we have already informed the Permanent Council, there are serious reasons to assess that third country nationals are illegally crossing the State border from Belarus into Lithuania with the direct involvement of the Belarusian State authorities and State-owned travel agencies.

These irregular migrants are charged a significant amount of money by Belarus State-owned tourist agencies for their so-called “international trips” to arrive in Minsk on regular flights from either Baghdad or Istanbul. Upon their arrival in Minsk, they are directed by the government-supervised agencies in an organized fashion (often in busloads) toward the Lithuanian border. Sometimes they also receive directions on how, when and where to best cross the border without being noticed or stopped. The video taken by Frontex officers on 31 July showing the Belarusian border guards facilitating illegal migrants to Lithuania is just another evidence of the participation of Belarusian authorities into these schemes of organized crime.

These people are your guests – they came to Belarus as tourists, they have your visas, hotel reservations – so please treat them as your guests. Do not bring them to our border. Do not exercise any psychological pressure to commit a crime by crossing this border illegally. If they want to come to Lithuania, there are many legal ways to do so.

Most recently, the Government of Iraq has stopped any new flights to Minsk and is now sending empty planes to bring their nationals back home. We therefore call on Belarus not to make any obstacles for this. People that are stuck on the Belarusian side of the border with Lithuania, must be allowed to step back, to board the planes and to fly home.

The Belarusian delegation talked about the co-operation of border guard services on the ground. Indeed, Lithuanian and Belarusian border guards used to have good operational co-operation at different levels. However, what we lately see, is that the Belarusian side has actually abandoned such co-operation. At our future meetings we will be able to provide detailed relevant statistics.

As to the information regarding deaths and injuries of irregular migrants at the border – these alleged incidents happened on the territory of Belarus and we have heard about them only from the Belarusian State media. And we know it well how good they are in manipulating the information (or rather disinformation) of this nature, which also includes playing with the viewers’ emotions.

Let me assure you that the Lithuanian State Border Guard Service acts in full respect of law and that there was not a single case of the Lithuanian State Border Guard officers exceeding their powers.

A Final note to the delegation of Belarus – if this hybrid attack against Lithuania and the European Union using irregular migrants is your tactic to get rid of the sanctions, then I

am very sorry to tell you that this is a very bad tactic that will not work. The only way for Minsk to escape existing and new sanctions is pretty clear:

1. To cease completely the political repressions against the Belarusian people, political opposition, civil society, independent media, human rights defenders, lawyers, even sportsmen;
2. To drop all unfounded cases and charges against these people – their demand for free and fair elections and for respect for their human rights and fundamental freedoms is not a crime; stealing these elections and violating rights and freedoms is a crime;
3. To release all political prisoners in Belarus – the total number of whom has exceeded 600;
4. To start genuine national dialogue with the people of Belarus, with the democratic forces of the country and especially so with the Co-ordination Council;
5. To conduct new presidential elections that must be free and fair, and under full and effective observation by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights;
6. To implement other recommendations from Mr. Benedek's report under the OSCE Moscow Mechanism.

In conclusion, we call on Belarus to stop this malicious behaviour and to respect and implement its international commitments and obligations, including those undertaken in the OSCE, in the areas of border management and security, combating organized crime, illegal trafficking of human beings, narcotics and other illicit goods, fighting terrorism, as well as many other related areas.

Also, we again call on the OSCE and in particular on the Transnational Threats Department, led by Mr. A. Kupchyna, to follow up on this issue and to provide necessary support to Belarus to meet its respective OSCE commitments in their letter and in spirit.

I thank you, Madam Chairperson.