



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement at the Reinforced Permanent Council Meeting Looking to Vilnius

As prepared for delivery by Brent Hartley
Director, Office of European Regional Security Affairs
Vienna, November 18, 2011

The United States commends the leadership of the Lithuanian Chairmanship in setting an ambitious agenda for our work over the past year. We would like to publicly thank Ambassador Paulauskas and Ambassador Norkus for their tireless efforts to find common ground, advance concrete solutions, and to pave the way for a successful Vilnius Ministerial.

The United States is deeply committed to the principles and commitments contained in the Helsinki Final Act and other jointly agreed documents. We value the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and believe that the Organization's multi-dimensional approach helps make the OSCE an essential element in our collective security architecture. Above all, we continue to advance the application of the precept enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act that security among states depends upon respect for human rights within states. We must not lose sight of this key precept in our work to prepare decisions and declarations for Vilnius.

Before addressing our priorities for decisions, we believe it is important to note that the Vilnius OSCE Ministerial offers a unique opportunity to showcase the role of the OSCE in supporting democratic institutions and promoting human rights and the role of civil society within the OSCE space and beyond.

On December 4 and 5, NGOs from across the OSCE region will hold an independent parallel event, entitled "Making Commitments Come True," to review developments in the region and to make recommendations to the Ministerial Council.

We also want to draw particular attention to the ODIHR-organized Mediterranean Partner Civil Society Conference, to be held in Vilnius December 4 and 5, pairing North African, Middle Eastern, and East European NGOs in workshops focused on political participation, elections, and justice and legal reform. This conference will build linkages between civil society groups, enable the practical exchange of best practices, and make recommendations to the Ministerial Council on the future role of the OSCE with partner states.

These two events highlight the vital role NGOs play in advancing the core OSCE values of human rights and democratic development, thereby strengthening our mutual security. We encourage delegations from all participating States to join us in having robust engagement with civil society representatives attending these and other events on the margins of the Ministerial meeting.

Turning to the Ministerial itself, the United States seeks the adoption of a balanced package of decisions/declarations across all of the OSCE's three dimensions. They should meaningfully advance the organization's capacity to foster comprehensive security in the 21st century, support the role of civil society in promoting human rights, democracy and rule of law, promote Internet freedom, promote tolerance and the increased participation of women in all aspects of society, and address challenges within the OSCE region and neighboring regions. Among these decisions, we welcome a forward looking and action-oriented decision on enhancing the OSCE's capacities in the conflict cycle, building on the work of the Corfu process and further developed in the V to V Dialogues this year. We also hope to make progress on the protracted conflicts.

The U.S. strongly supports a Ministerial Decision that will facilitate broader dialogue and engagement with partners. The OSCE can be a valuable resource for democratization efforts among Mediterranean Partner states. Its discrete areas of expertise in elections, setting up democratic institutions, countering corruption, combating intolerance, and bolstering civil society and women's participation in government and civic life can help complement the work of other international actors. Similarly, the U.S. strongly supports a decision aimed at strengthening the OSCE's engagement with Afghanistan across the three dimensions, anchoring them more deeply in the broader efforts of the international community.

In the human dimension, a top U.S. priority is a declaration recognizing that universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, including expression, peaceful assembly, association, and religion, do not change with new technologies and reaffirming that our commitments to respect the exercise of those rights and freedoms include their exercise via new technologies such as the Internet, mobile networks, and social media tools. This decision does not propose new commitments but reaffirms that existing ones, agreed to in previous OSCE documents, apply on line and off line in the Digital Age.

We strongly support a decision calling on OSCE participating States to enhance the safety of journalists by promoting safe conditions in which journalists may perform their professional duties, in all forms of journalism, including through new information and communication technologies. We also urge the adoption of a draft decision on fostering freedom of expression and pluralism in media. Both the decision on safety of journalists and the decision on freedom of expression and media pluralism are complementary to the U.S. proposal on fundamental freedoms in the digital age.

In the political-military dimension, we believe that a substantive update to the Vienna Document—not simply technical enhancements—should remain our goal at Vilnius. The French proposal, supported by some 40 participating States, deserves our support. Agreement on this proposal would demonstrate that a large majority of OSCE participating States are serious about modernizing military transparency and security in Europe. We also hope to reach agreement on a draft cybersecurity decision, which would result in an open-ended, informal OSCE Working Group in 2012 to begin compiling an initial, prioritized list of confidence-building measures to address cyber issues.

As a security institution based on shared values and principles, the OSCE has a role in fostering energy security within and between states. We strongly support a Ministerial decision on energy security which endorses the importance of transparency in extractive

industries. Also in the economic and environmental dimension, we welcome the broad support for a decision that promotes equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere.

We acknowledge calls by participating States for balance between decisions among the three dimensions, and we endorse that call. Together, we have made great strides on decisions in the political-military and economic and environmental dimensions that will help the OSCE address emerging transnational threats and challenges. But in ensuring balance, we cannot abandon the imperative to reaffirm and, where required, update our existing Helsinki commitments in the human dimension. Balance among the dimensions will require more concerted and constructive engagement by all participating States to achieve meaningful developments on draft decisions in the human dimension.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we thank you again for your diligent efforts to set forth this ambitious agenda for decisions and declarations. We look forward to working with you and other participating States to reach agreement on these decisions and to ensure a successful Ministerial Council in Vilnius that strengthens our common security and core OSCE values.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman