

**Statement by H. E. Mr. Petras Vaitiekūnas
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, at the Fourteenth Meeting
of the OSCE Ministerial Council, Brussels 4-5 December 2006**

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank my colleague Karel De Gucht and his dedicated team for their efficient and tireless work in guiding our organization this year. Under their able chairmanship the OSCE has clearly demonstrated its high relevance and continuing capability to promote our shared values, to stand by our commitments and to respond swiftly and flexibly to security challenges, both old and new.

This year the OSCE underwent a useful exercise of internal strengthening that would make our organization better fit for its job. However, at some point, it would be necessary to leave all discussions on structural reforms behind us and to concentrate our efforts in a substantive work. Let me mention just three major challenges - protracted conflicts, terrorism and insufficient implementation of human dimension commitments – that, in our opinion, require increased attention and involvement on the part of the OSCE.

We regret that ‘frozen’ conflicts still exist in the OSCE area, thus hampering sustainable development of Moldova and the states of South Caucasus and depriving their populations from full use of benefits of regional cooperation. I would like to take this opportunity and express my gratitude to our Chairman-in-Office for his personal engagement and dedication to the cause of solving of these conflicts. I believe that your work needs to be continued. In this regard, OSCE has an important practical role to play, not least through its field missions, although it is obvious that the final settlement mainly depends on the political will of the parties having a direct influence over the process. Conflict resolution should remain a core business of the OSCE also for the next year. OSCE-led rehabilitation projects in South Ossetia, Georgia, to which Lithuania pledged 100 thousand Euros, should contribute to the settlement.

We welcome the agreement of March 2006 on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgia, and the progress made since then. However, we regret the persistent lack of progress in Moldova. Early fulfillment by Russia of all its 1999 Istanbul Summit commitments with regard to Georgia and Moldova would positively contribute to building confidence and to the settlement of the long-lasting conflicts.

The OSCE has a significant role to play in preventing and combating terrorism, in cooperation with other relevant international organizations. Over this year Lithuania made its active contribution to this work in the framework of the OSCE Working Group on Non-Military Aspects of Security. We appreciate the high attention of the incoming Spanish chairmanship to the issue of counter-terrorism, and we pledge our full and active support in implementing the OSCE work programme for 2007. In particular, we see an added value of the political conference on public-private partnership in countering terrorism, to be convened at the initiative of Russia and the United States in Vienna next spring.

We are particularly concerned about the lack of implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments in OSCE's participating States, as was also clearly indicated in the recent report by the ODIHR. Lithuania expresses its full support to the ODIHR's crucial work in promoting democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Wishing to strengthen OSCE's elections observation activities we made a financial contribution to the elections observation diversification fund this year, and we consider a follow-up as well.

Mr. Chairman,

The challenges we face are multidimensional. Therefore they require comprehensive responses that would rely on firm political will of the participating States as well as on the full use of professionalism and flexibility of the OSCE structures, institutions and field missions. Due to its comprehensive and multidimensional approach to security, the OSCE could add value in such fields as police cooperation, border management, energy security and security sector governance.

Time and again we would like to remind of OSCE's potential in promoting regional cooperation, in particular serving as a catalyst for interactions among relevant sub-regional organizations and frameworks. In this regard, increased involvement of OSCE's partners for cooperation could be welcome.

Mr. Chairman,

Lithuania presented its candidacy to chair the OSCE in 2010. Availing myself of this opportunity I would like to ask for your support for our candidacy. At the same time we strongly support the offer of Greece to assume chairmanship of the OSCE, and we highly value its flexibility in this regard.

And finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to wish Spain, our incoming chairmanship, the very best success in 2007, and to assure our Spanish friends of our close cooperation and strong support in further promoting values and principles of the OSCE.

Thank you.