

OSCE Summit, Astana, 1-2 December 2010
Statement on behalf of Ireland by the
Ambassador to the OSCE, H.E. Eoin O'Leary

Mr. President

Ireland is happy to associate itself with the intervention made by President Van Rompuy, speaking on behalf of the European Union.

I would like to congratulate the Kazakh Chair for its excellent stewardship of the OSCE over the past twelve months. As the first Central Asian State to chair the organisation, Kazakhstan has approached the role with commendable dynamism and vigour. I would also like to thank our Kazakh hosts for the smooth organisation of this Summit and for their warm welcome to us in Astana.

The world has changed significantly in the eleven years since the last OSCE Summit in Istanbul in 1999. New challenges, more complex and transnational than before, have arisen and they require new solutions. The OSCE is well placed to confront these challenges as they exist but to do so the organisation must be reinvigorated and strengthened. Our gathering here in Astana provides us with the opportunity to do this.

This year we mark the 35th anniversary of the OSCE's foundation document, the Helsinki Final Act, the goal of which is to create an indivisible security space, rooted in shared commitments, where the use of force for the settlement of disputes is unthinkable. Much work remains to be done, however, to realise this ambitious vision. There continues to be a deficit of political trust and confidence among participating States which hampers the OSCE's capacity to act decisively in times of crisis and conflict.

Ireland, as Chair of the Forum for Security Cooperation over the last three months, has been working to forge a consensus among participating States on the updating and modernisation of the measures which build confidence and security within the OSCE

area. Real progress has been made and there is recognition now of the need to update and modernise the organisation's politico-military toolbox, in order to adapt it to 21st century realities. The proposed Action Plan for this Summit tasks the FSC with a number of concrete steps in this regard, including adopting an updated Vienna Document next year. We have, indeed, already begun this work. The Forum has already adopted 5 decisions to update elements of the Vienna Document.

Unfortunately, protracted conflicts remain a problem in our region and continue to pose a serious threat to our common security. We must intensify our efforts to peacefully resolve these conflicts, through giving a new impetus to existing negotiating mechanisms and working to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. As Chair-in-Office in 2012 and as a member of the Troika from January, Ireland, drawing on its experience of conflict resolution in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, will do whatever it can to facilitate engagement by all the parties.

From its inception, the OSCE has recognised that security goes beyond arms control and the absence of war. True security can only be achieved by recognising and protecting the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of the individual. It is for this reason that Human Dimension commitments lie at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security. We must therefore agree here in Astana to reaffirm categorically and irrevocably these commitments.

A long-standing focus of Irish foreign policy has been to promote peace and security through the respect for human rights and the rule of law. During our Chair-in-Office, Ireland will seek to have an ambitious Human Dimension agenda, with a focus on specific commitments, including freedom of the media.

A free, independent and courageous media is one of the guarantors both of a democratic society and of peace and stability in the world. Ireland has always been a champion of freedom of the media and we will continue to support the vital work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatovic.

Not only do existing commitments relating to a free media need to be fully implemented but they also require updating to reflect the rise of internet-based media. In 2012, Ireland will work with participating States and with representatives from civil society to facilitate a constructive engagement with the Representative on Freedom of the Media in the elaboration and implementation of new commitments that would ensure that the internet remains an open and public forum.

Ireland also wishes to pay tribute to the work of the other OSCE institutions, including the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the High Commissioner for National Minorities, which do so much to protect and promote human rights, democratic values and the rule of law throughout the OSCE area. Ireland supports wholeheartedly their activities.

Ireland hopes that over the next two days participating States will seize the opportunity to give our organisation a renewed direction and relevance. We must reach agreement on a document which sends out a clear message to our citizens and sets out a concrete and achievable work plan for the years ahead. Ireland, as a member of the Troika next year and as Chair in 2012, will have the honour to take this work forward and build on the impressive achievements of the OSCE.

Finally, I extend my best wishes and congratulations to the incoming Chair, Lithuania and to Ukraine who have been accepted as Chair in 2013. We look forward to working with Lithuania over the coming year in the Troika and with Ukraine when they join the Troika in 2012. We will support you both in every way we can in pursuing a balanced approach to the work of the Organisation across all three dimensions.

Thank you.