

The Lithuanian OSCE chairmanship 2011: Ambitions and results

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Introduction

The Lithuanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Audronius Ažubalis, used to emphasize that Lithuania's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2011 was one of the biggest challenges facing Lithuanian foreign policy.² The word 'challenge' probably best generalises the approach of Lithuanian diplomats and political leaders to the responsibilities in chairing the OSCE assumed by Lithuania in 2011. Nevertheless, even before the start of the Chairmanship, Lithuanian foreign policy leaders emphasized that the right to chair the OSCE granted to Lithuania is a success for the foreign policy of the small state and a kind of recognition. Also this achievement could be assessed as a reward for the Lithuania's diplomacy efforts to integrate into the international community and to engage in international problem-solving processes with a certain degree of responsibility.

In targeting the chair of the OSCE Lithuania has had to rely on more specific motives as to why it has sought this position. One of the subjective motives was related to Lithuania's reputation and strengthening its international assessments. Lithuania is a small country, so politicians and diplomats are regularly subjected to public as well as inner tacit pressure to be visible and significant in the field of global politics. It is therefore not surprising why, in chairing an international organization which brings together 56 countries and which is considered to be an important political forum not only in Europe but also in some Asian countries, Lithuania has sought to emphasize that this task opens up new possibilities. More specifically, the potential 'to strengthen the country's international and regional role, to prepare for the Presidency of the European Union in 2013 and for the possible membership in the UN Security

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² For example: Audronius Ažubalis, 'Išmokime puoselėti vizijas' [Let us learn to foster visions] . *IO.lt*, 2011 02 23, <<http://iq.lt/komentarai/a-azubalis-ismokime-puoseleti-vizijas/> > [2011 08 07]; Audronius Ažubalis, 'Lithuania assumes OSCE Chairmanship', *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2010-24, pp.127-131. <<http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2010-24/Azubalis.pdf>> [2011 08 07].

Council in 2014-2015',³ was mentioned by official representatives of Lithuanian before the start of the OSCE Chairmanship.

This article attempts to assess what motivation lay behind Lithuania's goal to secure the chairmanship of the OSCE, how the initial goals and objectives for the chairmanship have shifted, and what results have been achieved in the implementation of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship agenda. Chairmanship of the international organization, as a research object, is just an instrumental aspect of foreign policy and this article is not intended to explain or justify any theories of foreign policy making. This particular case study can provide some new or additional arguments and facts for a more specific analysis of what are Lithuania's (or any other small state's) abilities to engage in international policy-making agendas and to increase its significance on the international arena.

1. Rules and Motives for the Chairmanship of the OSCE: What is needed?

The role of some first chairing states of the CSCE was mostly related to the proper functioning of the Council and preparation for meetings of the Council of Ministers. While the institutionalisation of the CSCE became more intense and the functions became wider, the tasks of a chairing member state also expanded. In the Helsinki Document from 1992 onwards it was indicated that a Chairman of the CSCE will be requested to communicate Council and CSO decisions to the CSCE institutions and 'to give them such advice regarding those decisions as may be required'.⁴ However, some obscurity remained as to how far a chairing state may engage in efforts to form agendas for the Council and the Council of Ministers of the CSCE/OSCE and the priorities of the entire organisation. This practice began to evolve by unwritten traditions and each country, to some extent, has had its own interpretation of the importance, tasks and priorities of the chairmanship of the OSCE.

In 2002 the Ministerial Council agreed at its Porto (Portugal) meeting on the 'Decision on the role of the OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office',⁵ which specified the functions and responsibilities of the OSCE Chairman in Office. This decision clarified the rotation of the chairmanship on an annual basis and that a chairing member state is designated as such by a decision of the Summit Meeting or the Ministerial Council, 'as a rule two years before the Chairmanship's term of office starts'.⁶ It was stressed that a chairing country has to take 'the whole spectrum of opinions of participating States' into account and to avoid protecting some

³ Permanent Representation of the Republic of Lithuania to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. 'Lithuania gets OSCE Chairmanship advice from Finland and Greece', 23/04/2010. <<http://mission-vienna-io.mfa.lt/index.php?-1362301962>> .

⁴ CSCE Helsinki Dokument 1992, The Challenges of Change, July 9-10, 1992. p. 7. <http://www.osce.org/mc/39530>.

⁵ Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2002, Porto. <http://www.osce.org/mc/40521>.

⁶ Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council, 6 and 7 December 2002, Porto. <http://www.osce.org/mc/40521>.

specific national interests. As Walter Kemp, the Editor of 'Security and Human Rights', emphasizes, this decision points out that the OSCE Chairman is 'merely the first among equals for a year' and must ensure that its actions are not inconsistent with the positions agreed upon by all the participating States.⁷

The role of the OSCE Chairmanship may formally seem more like a set of various obligations and retentions; however, a political role for the Chairmanship is still mostly the main motive for Participating States applying for the OSCE Chairmanship. Perhaps the greatest value of the Chairmanship, as may be seen, is associated with public and diplomatic attention to the chairing country which for a year speaks on behalf of the organization and is at the forefront of OSCE activities.

Lithuania's efforts and motives in securing the OSCE Chairmanship can be considered typical for a small or medium-sized country which seeks to enhance its international status and to highlight its skills in acting at the highest level of international policy. From the outset, this motive may be seen as quite an abstract one but actually it could be the first reason to apply for the Chairmanship.

The initial political decision by the Lithuania's diplomatic institutions to pursue the OSCE Chairmanship was taken as early as April 2003, and a year later, on 7 July 2004, Lithuania's intention to seek the OSCE Chairmanship was formally declared.⁸

In the period 2003-2004 Lithuania faced a major turning point in formulating new diplomatic tasks. The achieved membership of the EU and NATO encouraged politicians and diplomats to think about new possible Lithuanian foreign policy goals and more specific tasks, amounting to what can be called new 'checkpoints'. On May 24, 2004, the Acting President of Lithuania, Artūras Paulauskas, in his speech entitled 'Lithuania's New Foreign Policy', mentioned one of the, later often repeated, mottos of Lithuanian diplomatic activities: 'Lithuania should be a prominent, active and influential member of the European Union and NATO'.⁹ Paulauskas intended to highlight the active behaviour of Lithuania's diplomacy in order to become 'a centre of the region' by continuing to promote democracy, human rights and European values in the region where Lithuania's interests persist. Paulauskas also indicated in his speech that 'it is our moral duty to develop and promote together with partner nations such forms of international engagement, which we ourselves could take pride in and use. We should strengthen international institutions and take an active part in their work.'¹⁰ Among the specific directions for Lithuania's foreign policy the OSCE was also mentioned — 'setting and pursuing ambitious goals in the United

⁷ Kemp, Walter. 'The OSCE Chairmanship: Captain or Figurehead?' *Security and Human Rights*, 2009 No. 1, pp. 9-12.

⁸ An interview with Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas, August 24, 2011, Vilnius.

⁹ Acting President of Lithuania Artūras Paulauskas, 'Lithuania's New Foreign Policy', *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 2004, No. 13-14. P.8. <<http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2004-13%2014/Paulauskas.pdf>>

¹⁰ Ibid.

Nations, the OSCE and other multilateral forums'¹¹ were formulated as being among the most important future tasks for Lithuania's foreign policy.

A large part of the work carried out by Lithuanian diplomacy during 2004-2008 was and still continues to follow the specific goal, enunciated in 2004, of being 'active, visible, and influential'. As Rytis Paulauskas, Director of the Department for OSCE Chairmanship, stated, on the road towards OSCE Chairmanship the reasoning, motives and goals were shifting: in 2004 they looked quite different to when the Chairmanship was approaching.

Giving Lithuania the right to chair the OSCE was decided upon at the 2007 Ministerial Council. This decision became an examination of Lithuania's significance in international structures. In 2007 a number of future OSCE Chairmanships were negotiated all at once. At that time, the biggest question concerned Kazakhstan's application for the OSCE Chairmanship. Representatives from Western Europe, and especially the United States, had some concerns about the risks associated with a possible Kazakh chairmanship. Various NGOs working in the field of human rights and co-operating closely with the OSCE opposed the candidature of Kazakhstan because of the poor progress in democracy in this country. It was also feared that Kazakhstan would try to constrain the autonomy and mandate of the ODIHR, one of the most important OSCE institutions, considering Kazakhstan's support for the initiatives by Russia and some other CIS countries to change the status of the ODIHR.¹² Russia and other CIS countries actively supported the candidacy of Kazakhstan. After informal talks among the major OSCE Participating States a compromise on the three eventual OSCE Chairmanships 'in one package' was eventually reached: this right was to be granted to Greece (in 2009), Kazakhstan (in 2010) and Lithuania (in 2011). In this sense, Lithuania was seen as a sort of 'counter-balance' to Kazakhstan's Chairmanship because, at that time, it was quite clearly viewed as a close ally of the US in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2008 preparations for the OSCE Chairmanship began to be seen as one of the greatest priorities for Lithuanian foreign policy. It was declared as such in the agreement among the Lithuanian political parties, signed on October 28, 2008, entitled 'Agreement on the foreign policy principles, strategic guidelines, and goals of Lithuania for 2008-2012'¹³ and in the Programme of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania for 2008-2012.¹⁴ In this official document the most important goal of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship was

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Bugajski Janusz, Assenova Margarita, Weitz Richard. *Kazakhstan's OSCE Chairmanship 2010, Final Report*. A Report of the US. – Kazakhstan OSCE Task Force, 2011 January. P. v. <http://csis.org/files/publication/110125_Bugajski_KazakhstanOSCE_Web.pdf> .

¹³ 'Agreement of the political parties of Lithuania on the foreign policy principles, strategic guidelines, and goals of Lithuania for 2008-2012', October 28, 2008, Vilnius, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=6654&p_d=85275&p_k=2.

¹⁴ Action Programme of the Fifteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania, approved by Seimas on December 9, 2008, http://www.lrv.lt/bylos/vyriausybes/en_15_programa.pdf.

already proclaimed: ‘During the presidency we shall seek as much progress as possible in the field of democracy development and human rights in the OSCE area as well as issues related to the regulation of conflicts and their outcome in the Southern Caucasus and Moldova that have not been settled for many years.’¹⁵ Further details of the Lithuanian motives and tasks for the OSCE Chairmanship can be found in the Resolution on Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in 2011, June 10, 2010, adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament. It emphasises that it ‘considers the future Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship a national priority and a tool in attaining the goals and objectives of Lithuania’s foreign policy shared by other Participating States of the OSCE and aimed at reinforcing security, confidence and democracy within the entire OSCE, and in implementing and developing the commonly recognized values’.¹⁶

In summarizing the preparation for the Chairmanship, a specific evolution in Lithuania's aspirations and motives can be identified.

- The international visibility and a demonstration of a regional leadership. 2004-2007. The first motives for assuming responsibility for the OSCE Chairmanship were largely related to the onset of ‘a syndrome of emptiness’ in the priorities of Lithuanian foreign policy starting in 2004. The Chairmanship of the OSCE and the possible rotating position in the UN Security Council were very specific ambitious aspirations, but rather important per se. The main motive of these goals was simply to become more visible on the ‘podium’ of the main international organizations. In what way these positions would serve the long-term national interests and priorities of Lithuania’s foreign policy was perceived, at best, in only abstract and intuitive thoughts.
- Chairmanship of the OSCE — as an active instrument of the ‘Eastern Policy’ of Lithuania. 2007-2009. After 2007, when the OSCE Chairmanship had already been secured, there still remained an inert notion that the OSCE Chairmanship would strengthen Lithuania's efforts to actively participate in the processes of democratization and integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures of post-Soviet states. It was also conceived that Lithuania could facilitate a resolution of the frozen conflicts in Moldova and the South Caucasus (this is what the Government suggested in the Action Programme in 2008).
- The inclusion of some specific Lithuanian aspects, rather than ambitious political goals. 2009-2011. While the OSCE Chairmanship was approaching (2009-2011), Lithuanian foreign policy-makers made a more rational and less ambitious assessment of Lithuania’s capacity to chair the OSCE. A more sober assessment of the ambition to finally ‘solve’ the frozen conflicts in the OSCE area was made — it was understood to be a highly complicated process and

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁶ Resolution on Lithuania's Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe in 2011, June 10, 2010. http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_1?p_id=375059.

interfering too excessively by the OSCE Chairman could even worsen the situation. It was chosen to transfer some ‘softer’ Lithuanian interests to the OSCE agenda — for example, to include the energy security dimension. Also ‘freedom and security for the media’ was formulated as a priority and a specific focus of Lithuania’s chairmanship. These provisions ultimately became important specific points in Lithuania’s OSCE Chairmanship Programme.

2. The Agenda of the OSCE Chairmanship and Lithuania’s priorities

When assessing Lithuania’s ambitions, one can quite clearly see the evolution of Lithuania’s approach towards the OSCE Chairmanship — from a focus on political dimensions towards a more functional agenda. Lithuania’s OSCE Chairmanship agenda set by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed this functional approach: concentrating on current OSCE activities and ensuring the proper performance of the functions of the Chairman were emphasised. The objectives of Lithuania’s Chairmanship could be defined as moderate or even minimalist. While stressing that Lithuania’s priorities would be to make progress in resolving frozen conflicts, retaining the obligations for ensuring the freedom of the press, promoting tolerance, increasing the OSCE’s role in transnational conflict resolution and solving energy security problems, Lithuania still argued that during its Chairmanship nobody should expect any major breakthroughs in or a final resolution of the frozen conflicts. As Ambassador Giedrius Čekuolis, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts, said on the presentation of Lithuania’s OSCE Chairmanship agenda in Vienna on 12 January 2011, ‘the OSCE is an organization where progress is measured in millimetres, but they are worth gold’.¹⁷

It was stated in the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme, which was officially presented by the Foreign Minister of Lithuania, Ažubalis, on January 13, 2011, at the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna: ‘The strengthening and full implementation of the participating States’ commitments across all dimensions of security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian area will be a strategic objective of the Lithuanian Chairmanship. Particular attention will be given to the promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, which are at the core of the OSCE’s comprehensive concept of security. Protracted conflicts as well as existing and emerging transnational threats to security and stability will be among key priorities in 2011.’¹⁸ These formulations reflected a desire to implement the continuing OSCE commitments recorded at the Astana Summit on 3 December

¹⁷ Gabrielė Pečkaitytė, ‘Vilnius sėkmę matuos milimetrais’, (Vilnius will measure success by millimeters) *Lietuvos rytas*, p. 7., 2011-01-14.

¹⁸ The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, ‘2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme’, http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciogal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf.

2010, and the earlier decisions of the OSCE. Among the priorities of the Work Programme, however, some cautious attempts to 'move forward' by reducing tension and searching for possibilities to potentially enhance better understanding between the parties to frozen conflicts can be found. The Lithuanian Chairmanship Programme provided separate tasks for enhancing mutual confidence and security between parties to frozen conflicts in Transnistria, Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia), and Nagorno-Karabakh. Some of Lithuania's efforts, as recorded in the Chairmanship Programme, and the criteria for eventual 'achievements' are identified in Table 1.

On the Politico-Military Dimension and Non-Military Security, the first of three main OSCE dimensions, one of the most important tasks for Lithuania was a substantial update of the Vienna Document 1999 and the adoption of a programme for action. This objective, although it sounds quite ambitious, had been discussed for several years and Lithuanian diplomats had hoped that it would be possible for the Council of Ministers to generalize all the results at the Vilnius meeting in 2011.

As for the Economic and Environmental Dimension Lithuania made it clear that it would focus on the transport and energy sectors. The programme included a statement that 'enhancement of the energy security dialogue will be high on the Chairmanship's agenda'. However, the Programme was not very specific concerning the tasks or decisions to be agreed upon during the Chairmanship. Some time later an official Lithuanian proposal was made for the OSCE Ministerial Council session to establish a permanent Task Force on Energy Security. This proposal was based on the idea that after the end of the Lithuanian Chairmanship discussions on closer cooperation between the OSCE countries on energy security would continue. Lithuania, as the OSCE Chairman, focused on energy security, transport and economic activity during the second preparatory Economic and Environmental Forum meeting on April 4-5, 2011, in Druskininkai and the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum (for Sustainable Energy Development) on 14 September 2011, in Prague.¹⁹

Concerning the Human Security Dimension Lithuania intended to 'call for a new look at our media freedom commitments. Hence, the Chairmanship's intention to focus on the theme of pluralism in new media.'²⁰ To discuss this issue a Chairmanship conference devoted to the safety of journalists was convened in Vilnius in June. So, media freedom and journalists' security problems became a 'specific' distinctive aspect of the Lithuanian Chairmanship in 2011.

¹⁹ Arūnas Molis. 'ESBO vaidmens stiprinimo energetinio saugumo srityje perspektyvos' ('OSCE role in strengthening the energy security perspective'), *Energetinio saugumo akcentai*, No. 8, 2011, Energy Security Centre, Vilnius. P. 8.

²⁰ The Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania, '2011 Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship Work Programme', http://www.delegfrance-osce.org/IMG/pdf/ciogal0004r1_cio_work_programme_2011.pdf.

3. The Achievements, Disappointments and Surprises of the Chairmanship

The main results of the OSCE activities over a past year, along with some outcomes of the efforts by the Chairmanship, can be best captured at the Ministerial Council meetings. The annual MC meeting is the most important reference point for the OSCE and the place for major decision-making. Therefore, to prepare it for the MC and to achieve decisions on a variety of initiatives are key challenges for the Chairmanship. All the work during the year in seeking compromises between the OSCE Participating States is summarised and the overall progress since the last MC is evaluated.

The Vilnius' intentions to confront the MC meeting with a pretty ambitious agenda were reflected in the document drafted on 23-24 June 2011 and entitled the 'Chairmanship's Discussion Paper for the OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat in Baden'.²¹ This document mentioned the intention to prepare for the MC meeting a number of decisions and declarations strengthening cooperation when addressing transnational threats, adopting strategic guidelines on policing principles, adopting the concept of counter-terrorism, a cyber-security strategy, promoting the OSCE energy and transport profile and some other documents. One of the key proposals on the first dimension was an intention to review the Vienna document 'On confidence- and security-building' agreed upon in 1999.²² In total, Lithuania proposed 30 draft decisions to be adopted at the OSCE Ministerial Council in December 2011.

However, the 18th session of the Ministerial Council which took place on December 6-7, 2011 in Vilnius and its outcome were somewhat disappointing. Of the 30 proposed projects only eleven²³ were adopted, and a declaration (Ministerial Declaration on Combating All Forms of Human Trafficking) was approved. Bearing in mind that some of the decisions dealt with relatively minor, technical issues (for example, Decision No. 13/11, Time and Place of the Next Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council, or Decision No. 12/11, Application of Mongolia to Become a Participating State that stated a need for further consideration), it can be said that the adoption of only one third of the projected decision was not a very satisfactory result. For comparison, five declarations or statements and 16 decisions were adopted at the 17th session of the 2009 Ministerial Council in Athens. In 2008, at the 16th Session of the Ministerial Council in Helsinki, a general statement, two declarations and 10 decisions were

²¹ Permanent Mission of the Republic of Lithuania to the OSCE, Possible Deliverables for OSCE MC in Vilnius, December 2011. Chairmanship's Discussion Paper for the OSCE Ambassadorial Retreat in Baden, 23–24 June 2011, CIO.GAL/115/11, 14 June 2011.

²² Frank Evers. 'The OSCE Summit in Astana. Expectations and Results'. *CORE Working Paper* 23, October 2011, P. 26.

²³ Two more decisions by the MC were *de facto* accepted at an earlier date – Decision No. 1/11, Reappointment of Amb. Janez Lenarcic as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, on 30 May, and Decision No. 2/11, Appointment of the OSCE Secretary General, on 30 June.

adopted (four more decisions on appointments were taken by the ‘non-objection procedure’ before the Ministerial Council meeting).

The 18th Ministerial Council in Vilnius was held immediately after the 4th of December when Parliamentary elections took place in Russia, where a number of violations were recorded. Hillary Clinton, the head of the US State Department, attended the Ministerial Council in Vilnius, and she mentioned in her public statement that ‘the Russia’s elections were neither free nor fair.’²⁴ Clinton also quoted the report by the OSCE election observers in Russia, stressing that human rights and fundamental freedoms had still not been fully secured. This gave rise to complaints from the Russian delegation and probably further strengthened their opposition to the OSCE decisions in support of media freedom in cyberspace, the safety of journalists and other documents related to the development of human rights.

Nevertheless, in the report on the progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, presented at the closing session of the Ministerial Council, it was stated that ‘significant efforts’ have been made on five main priorities:²⁵

1. registering tangible progress in addressing protracted conflicts;
2. significantly improving our record of the implementation of media freedom commitments;
3. enhancing the OSCE profile with regard to transnational threats, including those emanating from the territory of Afghanistan;
4. defining the OSCE’s role in our energy security dialogue,
5. promoting tolerance education throughout the OSCE area in order to combat hate crimes and discrimination.

Lithuania also drew attention to the fact that it had to respond to unforeseen events: ‘the aftermath of the December 2010 presidential elections in Belarus; a political crisis in Albania; outbreaks of violence in northern Kosovo; and the dramatic events of the Arab Spring’.²⁶ Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for the OSCE was the already mentioned Russian Duma elections, which were monitored by OSCE representatives. But commenting on the Duma elections the OSCE and the Chairman avoided any ‘sharp corners’, which could have led to a

²⁴ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Statement by H.E. Ms. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State. MC.DEL/31/11, 6 December 2011, <http://www.osce.org/mc/85930>.

²⁵ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Report on progress made during Lithuania’s Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2011, Vilnius, 7 December 2011. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86008>.

²⁶ Ibid.

nervous reaction from Russia. It was confined to the OSCE election observation report, which seemed to be pretty low-key.

3.1. Protracted conflicts

Searching for solutions in protracted conflicts, Lithuania emphasized the progress in the Transdnestrian settlement process. Shortly before the OSCE MC the formal negotiations in the 5+2 framework were held in Vilnius, which had been suspended since 2006. Lithuania had been striving for the resumption of the negotiations throughout the year. On February 8-10, 2011, the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Ažubalis, visited Moldova where he met with representatives of Moldova and Transnistria. Ambassador Čekuolis, the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office for Protracted Conflicts, constantly maintained contacts with the representatives of Russia, the US, Ukraine and the EU — this was of assistance in holding several informal 5+2 format meetings in 2011, and on September 22 in Moscow it was agreed to resume the formal negotiations on Transnistria in the 5+2 format. However, despite the progress made throughout 2011 in the negotiation process, a separate Ministerial Statement on the resumption of the official 5+2 negotiations on the Transdnestrian settlement could not be adopted in the Ministerial Council which would have been a sign of a more solid advance in finding a settlement to the conflict.

Also, the OSCE Ministerial Council failed to adopt any statement on the conflict in Georgia. This conflict has not actually moved on from the point of death since the autumn of 2008. Despite the efforts made by Lithuania, the inclusion of OSCE representatives so as to settle the conflict and the potential establishment of an OSCE mission have remained without a brighter outlook. In the final report on the progress made during Lithuania's Chairmanship it was only stated that the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms within the Geneva Framework have been used very actively in maintaining dialogue.

In the case of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict some formal agreement was reached, showing that the conflicting parties want to maintain dialogue. The efforts by the representatives of the Minsk Group led to the Joint Statement by the Heads of Delegation of the Minsk Group Co-Chair Countries and the Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the margins of the Vilnius Ministerial Council on 6 December. It was stated that there is 'a need to continue the negotiating process in the format of the OSCE Minsk Group and to improve the climate for making progress towards a peaceful settlement'.²⁷ Lithuania also stressed that Armenia and Azerbaijan have confirmed that their Presidents are ready to meet again jointly in the near future under the auspices of the Co-Chair countries to continue their direct dialogue.

²⁷ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Report on progress made during Lithuania's Chairmanship of the OSCE, 2011, Vilnius, 7 December 2011. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86008>.

The summarizing document on how to improve the effectiveness of the OSCE in resolving the protracted conflicts was entitled *Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE's Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*.²⁸ This document highlighted the importance of an early warning concerning the imminent escalation of conflict and the information exchange between members of the OSCE. It was stated that the OSCE Secretary General should report until 16 July 2012 about the progress of the enforcement recommendations.

3.2. Politico-Military Dimension

As was planned, the updating of the Vienna Document 1999 'On the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures', that has been sought in recent years through the Security and Cooperation Forum format, was completed in Vilnius. This document included nine so-called Vienna Document Plus recommendations; it was also decided that this agreement should be renewed every five years. It was also a decision on 'Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition', that has already become traditional, and this was adopted as well as the OSCE commitment to strengthen its activities addressing non-proliferation and the proper role of the OSCE in facilitating United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.²⁹

To sum up, in the OSCE's efforts to encourage cooperation addressing transnational threats the Ministerial Council has adopted the document³⁰ that welcomed the intention to establish a separate department of the OSCE to address transnational threats and the OSCE Secretary General was called upon to report regularly on the progress and performance in this area. As planned by Lithuanian diplomats, the OSCE decision addressing the problems of Afghanistan was adopted. The Decision on 'Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan'³¹ (greatly welcomed by the US delegation) recommended the continuation and strengthening of the OSCE projects that could contribute to the development of stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, neither the updating of the Vienna document, nor other decisions taken by the Ministerial Council were 'revolutionary' — the abstract tone of the decisions can change little concerning existing performance and the importance of the OSCE by addressing security challenges in Europe and around

²⁸ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Decision No. 3/11. *Elements of the Conflict Cycle, Related to Enhancing the OSCE's Capabilities in Early Warning, Early Action, Dialogue Facilitation and Mediation Support, and Post-Conflict Rehabilitation*. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86079>.

²⁹ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Decision No. 8/11, The Proper Role of the OSCE in Facilitation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

³⁰ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Decision No. 9/11, Strengthening Co-ordination and Coherence in the OSCE's Efforts to Address Transnational Threats. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86089>.

³¹ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6–7 December 2011. Decision No. 4/11, Strengthening OSCE Engagement with Afghanistan, <http://www.osce.org/mc/86080>.

the world. As the German delegation (representing the other 38 OSCE Participating states) expressed in the interpretative statement, the ‘technical and procedural nature’ of Vienna document updates were clearly less ambitious than expected. As was stated in this interpretative statement, the Forum for Security Co-operation ‘should aim for concrete results in areas such as lowering the thresholds at which we are obliged to inform other participating States of our military exercises, increasing opportunities for verification activity, expanding the range of military activities on which we notify our partners, modernising and updating our exchange of military information, informing our partners of at least one below threshold military exercise every year, strengthening our risk reduction mechanisms as well as exploring ways in which we can enlarge the scope of CSBMs’.³²

3.3. Economic Dimension

As was already mentioned, one of the top priorities of the Lithuanian Chairmanship was to strengthen the activities of the OSCE on transport and energy dimensions. In all international forums and institutions Lithuania emphasizes the importance of energy policy and the need for coordination. It was expected that the OSCE Ministerial Council would adopt a decision to set up a working group to deal with the energy dimension and that the OSCE would declare its intention to strengthen cooperation in this field.

Unfortunately, as was the case with the economic dimension, the OSCE Ministerial Council only managed to take a decision addressing the importance of the transport sector.³³ The Ministerial Council in Vilnius failed to adopt any specific decision on cooperation in energy security, although this topic has been circulating for a long time on the agendas of the OSCE institutions and events.

3.4. Human Dimension

Lithuania and Western countries were the most disappointment with the proposals, rejected by some OSCE members, to strengthen the third pillar of the OSCE, the human dimension. Lithuania had made considerable efforts to adopt decisions at the Ministerial Council on the promotion of pluralism in the digital media and to address the need for greater security for journalists. The US Ambassador to Lithuania, Anne E. Derse, stated that these efforts by Lithuania were actively supported by the US and the EU countries. However, consensus thereon could not be found — again, mainly because Russia and some other non-democratic countries objected.

³² OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6-7 December 2011. Decision No. 7/11, Issues Relevant to the Forum for Security Co-operation, MC.DEC/7/11, Interpretative statement under Paragraph IV.1(A)b of the OSCE Rules of Procedure, 7 December 2011 <http://www.osce.org/mc/88839?download=true>.

³³ OSCE 18th Ministerial Council. Vilnius, 6-7 December 2011. Decision No. 11/11, Strengthening Transport Dialogue in the OSCE. <http://www.osce.org/mc/86084>.

Although the Lithuanian Foreign Minister and other diplomats directly responsible for the Chairmanship as well as the US diplomats said that the Lithuanian Chairmanship priorities would be transferred to the agenda of the Irish Chairmanship for 2012, it can be stated that the OSCE did not achieve any real progress on human rights in 2011.

The outcomes of the OSCE Ministerial Council confirmed that a very different approach to human rights and freedoms persist between the West and Russia (and other non-democratic Eastern European and Central Asian countries) but the organization did not actually succeed in reducing the gap. Lithuania's active efforts to include these topics on the co-operation agenda did not help in any way to find a compromise. To some extent that only further highlighted the existing differences between the OSCE Participating States and the limited ability of the OSCE to contribute to this area of development in non-democratic countries.

Conclusions

Lithuania tried to be an active Chairman of the OSCE and very carefully prepared for the Ministerial Council. An unusually large number of draft decisions were prepared which were in line with Lithuania's Chairmanship priorities. However, the final decisions only partially met the expectations of Lithuania — only some of the proposed projects were adopted. Most of the proposals related to human rights and freedoms, and ensuring the safety of journalists and the media was objected to by some of the Participating States, so the OSCE did not reach a consensus. This confirmed an assumption that had existed for a long time that within the OSCE there remains a significant gap between Western democracies and some non-democratic post-Soviet states, and that Russia plays a crucial role among them. The Lithuanian activity when offering the OSCE draft decisions on the human dimension did not reduce the existing different approaches to democratic values. On the contrary, the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting was a platform for the exchange of critical voices from the US and the Russian delegation on the Russian parliamentary elections, and the existing differences in the various approaches. In this sense, the Lithuanian Chairmanship did not contribute in any way to reducing the differences of opinion among the members of the OSCE. Various formal and informal statements and evaluations by the Participating States which appeared after the Ministerial Council suggest that the OSCE remains a highly fragmented organization that is unable to reach common solutions that would significantly enhance the effectiveness of the OSCE concerning security issues and cooperation in economic and human rights.

Table 1. Progress in frozen conflicts during the Lithuanian OSCE Chairmanship 2011.

Conflict	Statements in the Lithuanian Working Programme	Possible criteria for 'success'	Result
Transnistria	The Lithuanian Chairmanship will continue to pursue active OSCE participation in the political process aimed at settling the Transnistrian conflict on the basis of full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova. The Chairmanship will seek, as a matter of priority, the unconditional resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations and the development of concrete confidence and security-building measures, as well as the facilitation of people-to-people contacts.	The unconditional resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations; Agreements, facilitating people-to-people contacts; Agreements, increasing confidence and security-building measures.	The resumption of formal 5+2 negotiations.
Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia)	The facilitation of initiatives aiming at extending OSCE activities in Georgia, including through a meaningful OSCE presence, will also be of key importance to the Lithuanian Chairmanship. The Chairmanship stresses in this regard the importance of the full implementation of the 12 August and 8 September 2008 agreements. Engagement of the OSCE in implementing concrete projects with a confidence-building character with the aim of rebuilding trust and confidence will be one of the main tasks for the Chairmanship.	Engagement of representatives of the OSCE in projects with a confidence-building character. The expansion of the OSCE activities in Georgia. The improvement of the Dvani/Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism.	During the Chairmanship regular meetings on the format of the Dvani/Ergneti Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism were organised.
Nagorno Karabakh	The OSCE role in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement process through the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs will be maintained. The Chairmanship will invite the parties to the conflict, as well as other OSCE participating States, to consider options of confidence-building measures and strengthening the OSCE monitoring activities on the ground.	Strengthening the role of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs. Strengthening the abilities of the OSCE Mission in Nagorno Karabakh. Agreements and measures strengthening mutual confidence-building and security.	A common statement by the Minsk Group and Armenian and Azerbaijani Foreign Ministers was issued on December 6, 2011.