

International Afghanistan Conference

Statement by Ms Asta Skaisgirytė Liauškienė, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

Bonn, 5 December 2011

Dear Minister Westerwelle, dear Minister Rassoul, Excellencies, Esteemed Guests,

Let me express my sincere thanks to Germany for hosting the second Bonn conference. This event is an excellent opportunity to take stock of our achievements over the last ten years and, more important, to set out long-term commitments to support Afghanistan.

I would like to join others in commending the Government of Afghanistan for the remarkable achievements it has made so far. I can see impressive progress in this country. It is now of utmost importance that Afghanistan keeps up steady pace of reform.

We share the view that the international community's engagement in Afghanistan should be a long term commitment and we all should continue supporting the country up to 2014 and beyond.

I am proud that Lithuania is among those assisting Afghanistan. In the province of Ghor, where the bulk of bilateral cooperation takes place, we see that a lot has changed in recent years: hundreds of girls and boys started attending schools, the first paved road appeared in the capital city of Chaghcharan, more qualified doctors and nurses provide patient care, 240 civil servants receive training in management, computer skills and the English language every year. Let me stress that Lithuania will continue contributing to the stabilization and development of the province during the transition phase.

I would like to reaffirm our commitment to keep development aid to Afghanistan at current levels and to support civilian and military capacity-building efforts also when transition is completed. Here I would like to make a point. Smooth implementation of National Priority Programs and improving transparency and accountability are essential elements for effective international assistance.

Let me now say a few words about OSCE initiatives. Strengthening cooperation with Afghanistan has been one of the priorities of Lithuania's OSCE Chairmanship. We have suggested the adoption of a decision at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius to strengthen the OSCE interaction with Afghanistan aiming to further cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring OSCE participating States in various fields, including border management, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

Moreover, the new package of OSCE projects for Afghanistan that has been recently drafted facilitates better cooperation between Afghanistan and other states on border management, good governance, the rule of law and respect for human, including training for border guard and police officers, development of cross-border trade and support to the establishment of the Afghan legislature.

Thank you for your kind attention.