

Statement by the President of the Republic of Belarus on the 10th anniversary of Belarus' membership in the OSCE

Ten years ago Belarus decided to enter into the activities of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. That decision has begun a new stage in the newest history of foreign policy of independent and sovereign Belarus.

Having made a conscious decision in favor of democratic development, the Republic of Belarus became party to the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a New Europe and other important CSCE documents and declared its adherence to the ideas and fundamental principles of the above documents.

Having become a full-fledged CSCE participant, our country entered into an active work aimed at strengthening peace and co-operation on the European continent. Belarus supported organizational and functional development of the CSCE, its transformation into a key regional organization with a full-scale system of institutions and mechanisms, whose area of responsibility stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok and encompasses all dimensions of security.

During all the decade the Republic of Belarus has been putting forward initiatives directed at higher prestige and role of the OSCE in crisis prevention, conflict settlement and post-conflict reestablishment of peace and confidence.

In 1992 on the initiative of the Republic of Belarus the OSCE Minsk Group on settlement of the conflict over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh was established. Belarus, being the first to unilaterally relinquish the deployment of nuclear weapons on its territory, actively suggested expanding the OSCE sphere of activities to include the creation of nuclear weapon free zones in Europe into the list of its priorities. Belarusian representatives made an important contribution to strengthening stability and security in the OSCE area through participation in the Organization's field missions activities.

Constructive and responsible approach of Belarus to the elaboration and adoption of recent major documents – the 1999 Istanbul Charter for European Security and the adapted Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, the Bucharest decisions on combating terrorism and on fostering the role of the OSCE as a forum for political dialogue — testifies that participation in this European organization and its transformation into a basis of the 21st century European security architecture is of great importance for Belarus.

Belarus welcomes the current intensive efforts of the Chairmanship-in-Office to correct certain flaws taking shape recently in the OSCE activities, to foster political dialogue and to account for opinions of all participating states, to put under consideration the whole complex of the European development most vital issues.

Today the OSCE participating states are facing numerous problems and challenges, with which none of us will be able to cope alone. We need to consolidate our co-operation in search for joint responses to the challenges of terrorism, organized crime, illegal migration and illegal trafficking in arms and weapons. We are especially interested in further consolidation of the Organization's economic and ecological potential.

The Republic of Belarus expects that concrete steps should also be taken this year under the active guidance of the Chairmanship-in-Office with a view to reforming the OSCE and fostering its effectiveness that will allow to complete the OSCE formation as a full-fledged international organization being a subject of international law.

Belarus will continue to consistently contribute to strengthening all components of comprehensive and indivisible security in the OSCE area in full compliance with the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act, other fundamental OSCE documents, remaining a reliable and responsible partner on pan-European dialogue, adhering to universal values.

Minsk, January 30, 2002