



Statement by Audronius Ažubalis,
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania
10th anniversary meeting of the Community of Democracies
Krakow, 3 July, 2010

Dear colleagues, Minister, Madame Secretary of State, friends
of democracy,

Let me start by thanking Poland for organizing this important
event for world democratic community. Knowing what Poland
had to live through during these last months, including the
tragic crash of President Kaczyński's airplane as well as
devastating floods with losses of human lives, your efforts to
welcome us here merit a very special appreciation by all of
us. I would also like to thank the Government of the United
States and personally Hillary for the strong engagement to
the CoD which let us believe that the organization can be
revived and regain its initial vision launched by Secretary
Albright and late Geremek in Warsaw 10 years ago and here I
would like to thank Permanent Secretariat for its important
role making success possible.

Meeting today in Krakow is highly symbolic for any Lithuanian
and Pole. In Krakow every Lithuanian feels at home, it is the

capital of our common Jagielonian identity. And today, it's the town of solidarity of Community of Democracies. Krakow is full with good energy and we need to use it today.

I want to start by reminding that we should never ever take democracy and liberty for granted. Democracy requires serious, sustained, and concerted actions of the entire international democratic community. "Small D" should grow into "Big D" and Democracy should become a high policy agenda. Democratic values and not the short term *realpolitik* interests should become a driving force of the foreign policy. We should resist the temptation to choose between realism and idealism - in foreign policy it goes together, as Madame Albright was recently saying in Washington: "realism it means that we recognize the reality, but idealism means that we have a possibility to change it".

We are therefore pleased that Lithuania's efforts to reinvigorate CoD were met with a positive response by new and old democracies alike. We are most grateful to countries which have kindly agreed to chair a number of working groups initiated by Lithuania.

We appreciate Canada's commitment to developing recommendations for governments on how to enable and protect civil society, which we hope to adopt during the Vilnius Ministerial in July 2011.

Hungary is leading a working group on democracies in transition as well as tackling such current issues like internet freedom, which will be the focus of UN Global Internet Forum to be held in Vilnius on 15 September this year.

Italy and Chile have taken up the difficult task of looking into ways to counter the effects of global financial and economic crisis as co-chairs of the working group on poverty, development and democracy.

Romania and South Korea are tapping into their experience in regional cooperation as they seek to set up interregional platforms for the exchange of good practices and experience in the area of democracy.

Together with the United States, my country is co-chairing a working group on gender equality and women's rights. Madame Secretary of State, Ambassador Verveer I am really grateful for your leadership. We have big plans in this area together. Besides focusing on specific country projects promoting women's empowerment, we are planning to organize a high level meeting on women and democracy under the patronage of President Dalia Grybauskaite, to be held in the framework of Vilnius Ministerial in 2011.

Women and democracy will also be our central theme during a high level meeting of the UN Democracy Caucus in New

York on September 23 this year. I look forward to an active participation in this event by all delegations present here.

Last but not least, Sweden has taken up the challenging task of heading the Friends of Presidency group on CoD Reforms - thank you, Carl. We have one year to prepare a strong package of reforms to make our Community more inclusive, transparent, efficient, and relevant and we hope to approve it in Vilnius a year from now.

Besides the six active working groups, I would like to call for volunteers for the task of setting up a working group on education for democracy. In our view, education is the best long-term tool to consolidate democracy.

By creating a CoD parliamentary forum, the Lithuanian presidency has launched CoD's parliamentary dimension. I am happy that being a parliamentarian I was personally involved into creation of this Forum. I am thrilled to see that the activities of the Forum are picking up, with two meetings already behind us and two more planned before the end of this year, in US Congress and in Georgia. In this context I would like to draw your attention to the resolution of Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on situation in Georgia about the status of its occupied territories and refugees, endorsed on 1 of June this year, in very clear terms meaning who is occupant and who is occupied. I have been in politics for last

two decades and I know that sometimes it is not easy to speak truth in foreign policy, but I am convinced that we have to.

Furthermore, on June 21, 2010, in Vilnius a youth dimension of the Community was created. I find this step highly symbolic. Generations are changing, and a new generation is picking up our cause because we should never stop fighting for democracy and freedom.

CoD must be able to make an impact on the ground by helping countries to build, maintain and strengthen democracy. We have one year ahead of us from Krakow to Vilnius to work together in achieving this goal and prove that CoD is a truly unique and one of the best instruments to sustain democracy building until the right to live under democracy is accepted around the globe and autocracy becomes as outdated as imperialism and slavery.

Thank you.