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Inside this Issue

- ▶ CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEKEEPING
- ▶ UN STANDBY ARRANGEMENTS
- ▶ SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM
- ▶ NON-PROLIFERATION, DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL
- ▶ SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT
- ▶ HUMAN RIGHTS
- ▶ INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
- ▶ ELECTIONS
- ▶ ASPIRATION TO SECURITY COUNCIL NON-PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP

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LITHUANIA IN THE UNITED NATIONS

The Government of Lithuania accords high priority in its foreign policy to multilateral co-operation and implementation of the United Nations purposes and principles in maintenance of international peace and security and the betterment of humanity. Lithuania participates actively in various activities of the United Nations and our commitment to international peace, security and justice stand behind and gives credence to our decision to seek election to a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2004 - 2005 term.

Lithuania has established and fosters friendly and constructive relations with all of her neighbours and with UN Member States across the globe. She strives to become a provider of stability and contribute to the prospects of security, democracy, and development across the region and beyond.

CONTRIBUTION TO PEACEKEEPING

Since 1994 Lithuania has been a constant and fully-fledged troop-contributing country to complex UN peacekeeping operations in Croatia (UNPROFOR), Eastern Slavonia (UNTAES and UN police support group in the Danube region), Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and Kosovo (UNMIK). Since the deployment of the first Lithuanian platoon within the Danish Peacekeeping Battalion to the UNPROFOR mission in the former Yugoslavia, some 30 civilian policemen and as many as 100 troops have served in the cause of peace within the UN missions. Moreover, Lithuanian military platoons, which hitherto totaled to 480 troops, have served with the NATO-led missions IFOR/SFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina and lately with KFOR in Kosovo province. At the height of tensions in Balkans in summer of 1999 a Lithuanian military medical team joined the Czech Military hospital fielded in Albania during the NATO Allied Harbour humanitarian operation. Lithuanian police officers have significantly contributed to the authority and expertise of the OSCE monitoring group in Croatia and the Kosovo Verification Mission. Seeking to upgrade Lithuanian peacekeeping capabilities and readiness, two major projects were launched. Two peacekeeping battalions LITPOLBAT and BALTBAT were established with our Polish, Latvian, and Estonian neighbours. Now both battalions are fully operational and their further development is under way. Lithuania is also a member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

UN STANDBY ARRANGEMENTS

In January 1998, Lithuania joined the Standby Arrangements System for United Nations peacekeeping operations which was set up to accelerate the process of deployment of peacekeepers. Lithuania was one of the first countries to sign with the Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations, according to which 24 Lithuanian civilian police officers, military observers and staff officers were put on stand-by and could be made available for deployment to a new mission within 30 days upon a request by the UN.

SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

Since the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council started its deliberations, Lithuania is constructively participating in its work and consistently advocates the expansion of the membership of the Security Council as well as greater transparency and increased openness of its work.

NON-PROLIFERATION, DISARMAMENT AND ARMS CONTROL

In a present complex security environment where traditional security challenges are juxtaposed with new non-military threats to stability, Lithuania attaches special interest to a number of areas she can actively contribute to:

- 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT;
- promotion of the nuclear test ban through world wide ratification and effective adherence to the CTBT;
- commencement of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty;
- development and peaceful use of nuclear energy; activities of IAEA; prevention of proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and smuggling of nuclear materials;
- progress towards a global ban on anti-personnel landmines and effective implementation of relevant international treaties;

- support for the steps aimed at strengthening of control in the global trade of small arms and light weapons, promotion of transparency and accountability in transfers, curbing the flows of arms to forces engaged in conflict and repression, and combating destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons.

Non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control issues featured high on the agenda of Lithuania foreign policy. With ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1999 Lithuania has concluded accession to major non-proliferation and arms control treaties, namely the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention, the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, 1980 and its Protocols I, II (as amended on 3 May 1996), III and IV. Lithuania also signed the 1997 Convention of the Anti-personnel Landmines Ban and its ratification is our long-term goal. In 1996, Lithuania applied for the membership in the Conference on Disarmament.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND ENVIRONMENT

Lithuania is in preparation for the forthcoming five-year review of the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. National Social Committee headed by the Minister of Social Welfare and Labour Irena Degutiene has presented the National Report describing the national efforts being made to implement the outcomes of the Summit, particularly in the fields of poverty eradication, employment and social integration.

As a contribution to the International Year of Older Persons, Lithuania will share its experience of national and local initiatives promoting lifelong individual development and active aging that are currently under way.

Lithuania welcomes the efforts undertaken to strengthen the United Nations in the field of environment and human settlements and supports the proposal to institute an annual ministerial-level global environmental forum where emerging policy issues in the field of environment could be considered. Lithuania also supports the proposal to establish an environmental management group. Lithuania intends to actively participate in the work of the Preparatory Committee on follow-up to the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat). Lithuania will continue its voluntary reporting to the Commission on Sustainable Development on the progress achieved and constraints encountered in implementing Agenda 21.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Lithuania gives full consideration and support to efforts aimed at securing universal acceptance of and compliance with the standards set out in the relevant human rights treaties of the United Nations and, on the regional level, of the Council of Europe. Lithuania has completed accession to all major universal human rights instruments. In 1999, Lithuania acceded to the 6th Protocol of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, whereby confirming already existing ban on capital punishment by international commitments. One of Lithuania's priorities in 2000, is signing and ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Lithuania participates actively in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly to review and appraise implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and active participation at the Special Session "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-first Century" to agree upon further actions and initiatives to accelerate implementation of the twelve critical areas of concern. Lithuania intends to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women establishing both an individual communication and an inquiry procedure to reaffirm our commitment to the promotion and protection of the human rights of women.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

Lithuania will continue to review its domestic legislation so as to ensure an early ratification of the Rome Statute.

Lithuania will jointly work with other like-minded group countries in all forums to enhance the entry into force of the Rome Statute.

ELECTIONS

Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the United Nations, Ambassador Oskaras Jusys, was elected vice-chairman of the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Lithuania is an elected member of various organs in the UN system as diverse as UNESCO Executive Board, UN Commission on International Trade Law, Commission on Human Settlements (HABITAT), Commission on the Status of Women, ILO Governing Body, Executive Board of the World Health Organisation.

ASPIRATION TO SECURITY COUNCIL NON-PERMANENT MEMBERSHIP

While carrying out its short and mid-term goals, Lithuania has a strong claim for membership on the UN Security Council and is prepared to take on responsibilities this would entail. Lithuania has presented its candidature to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2004-2005 term at the elections to be held during the 58th session of the UN General Assembly in 2003.