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## **STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ITALY AT THE 1324th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 July 2021

### **On co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners**

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

In addition to the statement made by the European Union, Italy would like to share some comments in a national capacity on this important issue.

First of all, we thank the Chairmanship for having once again included this item on the Permanent Council's agenda, following last year's positive example. In our view, the continuation of this practice is a fitting response to the repeated recognition on the part of our Ministers, ever since the founding acts of this Organization, of the indivisible link between Mediterranean security and the rest of the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian region. I also recall the repeated request, made by a group of participating States of which Italy is a member, for an annual meeting of the Permanent Council devoted to security in the Mediterranean with regard to topics relevant to the OSCE.

Madam Chairperson,

Environmental challenges, especially those related to climate change, affect everyone, but not everyone in the same way. Climatologists predict that the temperature in the Mediterranean will rise more sharply than the global average over the next few years, and are describing the Mediterranean Basin as a hotspot where all countries will experience accelerated and interlinked dynamics of change. Such a scenario heralds what is to come, including potentially destabilizing forces. Let me recall just one example, which has already been mentioned today: experts predict that the level of the Mediterranean Sea could rise by 20 centimetres by 2050. This apparently insignificant increase would salinize the Nile Delta, disrupting the livelihoods of millions of people.

The impact of these phenomena on our common security must be studied, understood and recognized. It is necessary to adopt, without delay, prevention and adaptation measures, which are indispensable for the security and stability of our region. This is why Italy wholeheartedly supports joint initiatives of the OSCE and the Union for the Mediterranean that, taking as their starting point the link between climate change, environmental degradation and security in the Mediterranean, encourage co-operation among the countries concerned.

We hope that this reality will be recognized in the negotiations on the deliverables for the Stockholm Ministerial Council, especially with regard to documents for the second dimension.

More generally, going beyond the topic discussed today, Italy firmly believes that the OSCE can and should play a more significant role in promoting co-operation among participating States and partners for security in the Mediterranean. As we have already said in the past, our call is not an “appeal” in the exclusive interest of the Mediterranean countries; instead, it concerns a security interest common to all participating States and Partners for Co-operation.

At the Milan Ministerial Council, our Ministers called for – and I quote – “Mediterranean-related issues to be clearly reflected throughout the relevant work of the OSCE across the three dimensions of comprehensive security”. In that regard, we appreciate the thematic focus of today’s discussion and reiterate our request to the Secretary General to report regularly to the Permanent Council, at least once a year, on how this commitment is being implemented by the relevant OSCE executive structures.

In that regard, we thank the Secretary General for having distributed, two days ago, a detailed report on the operation of the Partnership Fund in 2020. Reading the report provides a good overview of the practical initiatives and tools for enhancing the visibility and engagement of the OSCE in the Mediterranean region. Italy is pleased to have played its part and will continue to do so, contributing decisively to this effort in the years to come.

We take the liberty, however, of reminding all the participating States that the Partnership Fund, as it is currently regulated, has major shortcomings, especially because of the restrictions on its use on the territory of our Mediterranean Partners.

On Monday, at the OSCE Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group, we discussed how to support the positive role of young people in the stability and security of the region: with the rules that govern the Fund today, unless an ad hoc decision is taken, young people are not able to reach out to us, while we cannot reach young people in the partner countries. This topic deserves further consideration by the Permanent Council so as to broaden the spectrum and improve the effectiveness of the activities undertaken.

To return to the issues of the climate and the environment, allow me, Madam Chairperson, to conclude with a literary quotation, which is meant to be an omen for the future. Charles Dickens wrote in a letter to fellow writer John Forster in 1844: “at certain periods of the evening and the morning the blue of the Mediterranean surpasses all conception or description. It is the most intense and wonderful colour, I do believe, in all of nature.”

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of the meeting.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.