



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia
OSCE

**H.E. Mr. Benedetto Della Vedova,
Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs**

**ITALY'S STATEMENT
AT THE 2021 OSCE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR COOPERATION CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 12 October 2021

Minister Rau,
Mediterranean partners,
Colleagues, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I wish to warmly thank the Polish Chair of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group for your leadership over the year and for your efforts in convening this meeting.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant and multidimensional impact on states and societies within the Mediterranean region, including on existing social and economic vulnerabilities.

Particularly worrying is the fact that women and youth have been disproportionately affected by the economic hardship and the social repercussions of the pandemic, which further aggravates pre-existing grievances and weakens already feeble social contracts.

It is not hard to foresee that the economic and social instability will generate new migration and refugee flows, forcing ourselves, on all shores of the Mediterranean, to deal with relevant dilemmas and the risk of further fragmentation and division across our societies.

Such scenario further highlights our inter-dependence, and the urgent need for cooperative and multilateral solutions to fight the pandemic and to mitigate its effects on our economies and societies.

Indeed, the COVID-19 crisis has made even more apparent what was stated already in the 1975 Helsinki Act, that is (and I quote) “the relationship which exists in the broader context of world security, between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean area”.

Moving from the principle of indivisibility of European and Mediterranean security, OSCE Participating States and Partners are called to pursue a common approach to addressing regional security concerns, across all three OSCE dimensions.

The OSCE Mediterranean partnership provides for a sound platform through which this common approach can be upheld and brought forward.

The OSCE Mediterranean dialogue – certainly not a “private affair” of the littoral States - needs the full engagement and leadership by all concerned Participating States in order to fully tap into its potential.

This is the only forum that allows for sixty three Governments to discuss and work together on a shared Mediterranean security agenda.

Leadership and engagement by all Participating States and Partners are also strongly needed, as we are all trying to design and implement a sustainable path to post-COVID recovery.

The Milan Declaration on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean stresses – and I quote - the “crucial role that sustainable development, economic growth and connectivity play in fostering common security”.

Many are the challenges to be addressed on the way to post COVID sustainable recovery, from targeting gender, health and education inequalities, to scaling up the efforts to mitigate the long-term effects of climate on the security of the region, to tackling transnational threats such as organized crime, terrorism, trafficking in human beings. All this bearing in mind the need to strengthen democracy and the rule of law, and to safeguard human rights.

These are issues and objectives that drive the agenda of both OSCE Participating States and Mediterranean Partners. We need to work together on them, leveraging on the progress that has been achieved in implementing the Milan Declaration's call for mainstreaming Mediterranean-related issues into the relevant work of the OSCE across its three dimensions.

Italy – a strong advocate of effective multilateralism – remains strongly committed to strengthening cooperation with our Mediterranean Partners within the OSCE, through dialogue within established fora and by funding extra budgetary initiatives, as well as supporting valuable platforms as the New Med Network.

A cooperative and comprehensive approach to security in the Mediterranean, as promoted by the OSCE, should allow us to go beyond the common “representation” of the Two Shores, favouring instead a vision whereby the Shore is one and one only. In this way OSCE participating States and Partners can really benefit from each other, in true spirit of partnership, cooperation and ownership.

Thank you.