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STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF ITALY AT THE TWENTIETH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Kyiv, 5 December 2013

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like first of all to thank the Ukrainian Chairmanship and Minister Kozhara for their excellent work and kind hospitality and to extend my best wishes to our Swiss colleagues, who are getting ready to assume the OSCE Chairmanship in 2014. I also take this opportunity to address warm greetings to the Secretary General Ambassador Lamberto Zannier.

Italy would like to reaffirm the importance of the role of the OSCE, a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, based on the principle of the indivisibility of security and a holistic approach developed over the course of its history. The OSCE's capacity for adaptation and the added value provided by its network of missions make it a unique instrument for conflict prevention and also above all in the face of the variety of new threats, including those relating to information security and combating trafficking in human beings. The effectiveness of the OSCE's work is contingent on a full affirmation of the rule of law throughout its geographical area. Its role in this area has once again been significant in the course of the year that is coming to a close.

With regard to the first dimension of the OSCE, the politico-military dimension, we believe that the European system of conventional arms control should be relaunched. Our Organization remains a fundamental point of reference in this regard, starting with the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, long considered the cornerstone of this system. We also recall the continuing validity of the Treaty on Open Skies. We need an arms control regime based on the principles of transparency, responsibility and reciprocity that reflects the changes taking place in the equipment and the technology of conventional arms. Moreover, we should not forget the fundamental role played by the Forum for Security Co-operation in the discussion and improvement of the European system of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) and therefore believe it necessary to continue updating the Vienna Document to make it more adapted from an operational point of view to the new reality. In that context, we believe that the convening of the Security Days was a successful experiment that should be repeated in order to achieve greater involvement by the capitals in the work of the Forum.

Among the various "success stories" that have characterized our Organization, we should not forget the implementation of Article IV of the Dayton Agreement, to which Italy has traditionally made a widely appreciated contribution and which could also act as a model for CSBMs for other subregional arrangements.

The pioneering role played by the OSCE in the area of small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, which are an urgent issue in some regions, should be further enhanced and our best practices more widely diffused.

As regards cybersecurity, an area of increasing importance for international security, Italy believes that the role of the OSCE is of primary importance and therefore welcomes the adoption of an initial set of measures to strengthen mutual confidence in this sensitive area.

As far as political dialogue is concerned, we believe that it is vitally important for the OSCE to continue its collaboration with the Mediterranean Partners. Two and a half years after the Arab Spring, it is not yet possible to make a uniform summary of the events that have taken place in this area, which is of crucial importance for European security. The OSCE can provide the region with the necessary expertise to respond to the challenges common to the various countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. The ongoing political transitions should be accompanied by the development of economic systems that are more open and integrated in the European economic fabric, which go in parallel with human rights and strengthening the rule of law, in that way preventing a deterioration of the situation, which could have destabilizing repercussions for Europe as a whole. We believe that this dialogue should be extended to Libya, a key country on the southern shore, which should be accorded the status of the seventh OSCE Mediterranean Partner for Co-operation.

Italy is particularly interested in the development of dialogue between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners. In that context I should like to recall the seminar on trafficking in human beings in the Mediterranean region co-organized by the OSCE Special Representative Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, which took place in Rome on 8 February this year. This event reiterated that trafficking is a significant transnational threat to security calling for greater multilateral co-operation between the OSCE and the countries of the southern shore.

We also advocated and funded the creation this October of the position of OSCE-MED Focal Point within the Secretariat in Vienna, which will have the task of developing ideas to enable the Mediterranean dimension to move forward through the establishment of a network of think tanks, representatives of civil society and the academic world to supplement through their own activities the initiatives taken by the Secretariat and the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership group.

We therefore welcome the fact that the forthcoming Swiss Chairmanship will continue to include the development of Mediterranean dialogue in its priorities and are willing to organize joint initiatives, particularly during the Italian Presidency of the European Union.

Besides the Mediterranean, another theatre fundamental to the security of the OSCE area is Central Asia. Next year will see a key phase in the history of Afghanistan with the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force and the holding of presidential elections. The promotion of security, stability, prosperity and democracy in Afghanistan is of vital interest to the OSCE countries, as part of the continuation of regional co-operation relaunched by the Istanbul Process/Heart of Asia.

With regard to protracted conflicts, it is evident that our Organization has not yet succeeded in effectively carrying out its mission. There are grounds for concern but also

reflection, inasmuch as we cannot give up on the fundamental – I would even say primordial – task above all of bringing peace to all of the regions of the Euro-Atlantic space. In all of the unresolved situations there are envoys and special representatives, who have spared no efforts and whom Italy supports without reserve. The fact remains that it is time to harvest the fruits of these efforts and to restore hope to the people involved in these conflicts for a future in peace and prosperity.

We also believe that it is important to relaunch the second dimension, which includes matters of great relevance to economic and environmental security, such as energy and the prevention of both natural and man-made disasters.

As emphasized at the outset, Italy reaffirms the importance of promoting and defending the fundamental rights of the individual. In that context we welcome the adoption of two important decisions regarding Roma and Sinti and freedom of religion and faith. The latter in particular will strengthen our ability to combat religious intolerance, in particular with regard to the Jewish, Muslim and also Christian communities. I should also like to draw attention to the persistence of worrying manifestations of racist and xenophobic intolerance and to the excessive incidence of violence against women and certain sectors of society, starting with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Dealing with the challenge posed by migratory phenomena and full implementation of the rule of law throughout the OSCE area are other highly topical issues. In the light of the recent tragedy in Lampedusa, the tenth anniversary of the Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings is of particular significance as a key moment for fostering joint responsibility by the countries of origin, transit and destination of migratory flows. Co-operation between the OSCE and the European Union is vital to guarantee protection of fundamental human rights, in particular of vulnerable members of society like migrants. As the OSCE Special Representative for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Ms. Maria Grazia Giammarinero, whose highly successful mandate is coming to an end, stated recently in Monaco, trafficking in human beings is a “modern form of slavery” affecting more than 20 million people in the world today.

Mr. Chairperson,

We should like in conclusion to express the hope that the Helsinki+40 project inaugurated in Astana of an indivisible, free and democratic Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community on the basis of a more homogeneous single political, economic and cultural space will proceed and arrive at its conclusion so as to give renewed vigour to our Organization and enable it to face the new challenges. We are confident that the future Chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia will lend continuity to the Organization’s activity as it approaches the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015.