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**STATEMENT BY  
MR. ANGELINO ALFANO, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF  
ITALY, AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE  
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Vienna, 7 December 2017

Dear colleagues,

It has been an intense and complicated year, in which we have been able to rely on the careful and responsible guidance of the Austrian Chairmanship, which I congratulate for the commitment and capabilities it has demonstrated in these difficult and tricky months.

It is a pleasure to return to the OSCE, which is one of the great “homes” of global multilateralism.

Today more than ever, it is vital to continue along the path of constructive dialogue on the basis of multilateralism.

I am thinking of Ukraine, where a war has been going on for four years, which can only be resolved through the full application of the Minsk agreements. In spite of the commitments undertaken by the parties, the ceasefire is being violated and the number of civilian victims rising, be it through the use of heavy weapons or on account of the scourge of mines.

The Special Monitoring Mission is carrying out exceptional work in difficult conditions to prevent an escalation of hostilities. This year a monitor paid with his life for his commitment to peace. This is an unacceptable tragedy. The Mission must be able to carry out all of its functions in safety with the genuine support of all.

Apart from Ukraine, we must continue our engagement in Georgia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transdniestria to find a peaceful and sustainable settlement of the conflicts there in accordance with international law. It is thus essential for the OSCE to continue to support the existing negotiating formats.

In the politico-military dimension there is an urgent need for greater transparency and predictability. More dialogue and trust are the means that will enable us to share more information and avoid dangerous misunderstandings.

Courage is needed to look beyond the issues of the day and explore new ideas and more ambitious pathways, such as the Structured Dialogue, which I hope will provide the basis for the relaunching of conventional arms control.

The co-operative security on which the OSCE is based is a “common good” that must be defended in many ways, including through the adoption of the budget. As you know, Italy chairs the budget negotiations, which we aim to conclude as soon as possible.

The same applies to the human dimension, which is all too frequently attacked. Respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law has a bearing on our security. There is no place in this Organization for discrimination and intolerance or for an arbitrary and selective interpretation of universal principles. I would recall that one of the first events during the Italian OSCE Chairmanship in 2018 will be an international conference on combating anti-Semitism. And we are helped in facing up to the challenge of defending the human rights of all by the outstanding work of the Organization’s autonomous institutions and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

At the same time, the economic and environmental dimension has untapped potential that could be developed to provide new opportunities for co-operation.

We have already seen good examples of the way our actions have been developed for the “common good” of all, such as our response to transnational threats, which demonstrates our commitment to combating terrorism and to addressing the new threat to cybersecurity. We have introduced the issue of migration, which is even more relevant from the point of view of security. I am thinking of the risk of returning foreign fighters, who after their defeat in Iraq and Syria are attempting to gain a foothold in North Africa and Europe.

The challenges we face today have no borders and it is therefore essential to look beyond our national frontiers and seek new forms of co-operation with Asian and Mediterranean Partners. This was the “spirit” of the Mediterranean Conference in Palermo, where we proposed the “Mediterranean dimension” as a complement rather than an alternative to the Eurasian dimension.

I should like to conclude by expressing my profound appreciation for the work of the Secretariat, which I regard as the driving force behind the OSCE, and thank it once again for its support. I should also like to thank the field missions, which are the Organization’s operational arm, putting our dialogue into action and ensuring the implementation of our commitments.

Italy hopes to be able to contribute to the success of this Organization when it assumes the Chairmanship in 2018. Our Chairmanship will be based on dialogue, on listening respectfully to the point of view of others, and on the idea of sharing, responsibility and deep commitment. I am certain that Italy will be able to count on your valuable support, starting with something as fundamental as the timely adoption of the budget. The challenges at this moment in history call for and justify responses that are appropriate to such a critical time. It is for that reason that I believe, once again, that this Organization can play a leading role in facing up to these challenges.

Thank you.