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**STATEMENT BY
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AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OF ITALY, AT THE TWENTY-NINTH
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Łódź, 1 December 2022

Minister Rau,
Esteemed colleagues,

First of all, I should like to congratulate the Polish Chairmanship for its continued commitment to steering our Organization in an extremely difficult year.

A year marked by Russia's unjustified and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, which shook the foundations of the rules-based international order and put European and global peace and security at risk.

Italy condemns this war in the strongest terms and once again calls on Russia to end it immediately and withdraw all its forces and military equipment. Italy also reiterates its call on the Belarusian authorities to stop supporting Russia's war of aggression.

Italy has supported and will continue to support the brave people of Ukraine who are resisting Russia's invasion. We cannot accept this war of aggression and the violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation.

The war crimes committed against the Ukrainian population and the destruction of civilian infrastructure are a flagrant breach of international law. The OSCE has been able to use the tools at its disposal through the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the invocation of the Moscow Mechanism to contribute significantly to the international community's efforts to ensure accountability for crimes committed.

The war has violated the most fundamental principles on which our Organization is founded, the principles of the Helsinki Final Act: the inviolability of frontiers, the territorial integrity of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Adherence to these principles must be restored without exception and without hesitation.

The same applies to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Astana Final Document 2010 categorically and irrevocably reaffirms that the commitments undertaken in the field of the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to all participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of States. There is an intrinsic link between respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and common security. We express great appreciation for the ODIHR and all the work it does to promote human rights and the rule of law.

It is undeniable that the war has also had an impact on our Organization, both at the political level and at the operational level. The OSCE operates on the basis of the consensus rule, which safeguards the legitimate interests of each participating State. However, consensus should not be abused, particularly when decisions of an institutional nature have to be taken that affect the Organization's functioning. Mutual vetoes and maximalist positions have so far prevented the adoption of the budget for 2022, which has created considerable operational difficulties. Such approaches are not acceptable. The Unified Budget for 2023 must be approved as soon as possible and a common agreement must be reached on the Chairmanship for 2024.

The OSCE is the only regional organization that unites North America, Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia – it is therefore crucial to preserve it in these difficult times. We need the OSCE for the principles it embodies, adherence to which is the only guarantee of stability and security for our citizens. We need it for the activities of the autonomous institutions that help participating States implement their commitments. We need it for the field operations, which do work that is particularly appreciated by host countries. Italy firmly believes in these principles, supports the work of the autonomous institutions and the field operations and intends to continue its efforts to safeguard the Organization's rich *acquis*.

Finally, I should like to wish North Macedonia's incoming Chairmanship every success in 2023 and assure it of Italy's full co-operation going forward. Thank you for your attention.