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**STATEMENT BY
MR. GIORGIO SILLI, UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE AT THE MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION OF ITALY,
AT THE THIRTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Malta, 5 December 2024

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,
Esteemed colleagues,

While aligning myself with the statement by the European Union, I should like first of all to express Italy's considerable gratitude to the Maltese Chairmanship for the sense of responsibility that it demonstrated in accepting this onerous task at the last minute and for having guided our Organization in a balanced way during a year that is still characterized by profound insecurity for our continent and by continuing conflicts in Europe and in the Mediterranean.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has passed the 1,000-day milestone, with a tragic trail of death and destruction. We reiterate our condemnation, in the strongest terms, of this illegitimate, unjustifiable and unprovoked war, and our continued support for Ukraine. In order to achieve a "just peace", Russia must put an immediate end to its aggression and pay for the damage it has caused.

As the holder of the G7 Presidency, Italy has placed support for Ukraine at the top of the agenda in response to Russia's aggression. In line with this priority, Italy will host the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC2025) in Rome next July, with the aim of achieving concrete results with new projects, initiatives and funding.

The Helsinki Final Act clearly recognized the close link between security in Europe and security in the Mediterranean area as a whole. The brutal terrorist attacks by Hamas and other terrorist groups against Israel on 7 October 2023 – which we strongly condemn – and the grave crisis in the Middle East serve as a tragic confirmation of this link to which we would do well to pay attention.

Our Organization's decision-making processes continue to be severely tested by Russian obstructionism and by divisive bilateral issues that have a negative impact on our work. The consensus rule has been abused to prevent the adoption of decisions that are fundamental to the smooth functioning of the Organization, first and foremost the adoption of the Unified Budget. Such vetoes, in the interests of everyone, must cease. The OSCE, in its various forms, makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the security of our nations. The Organization must be able to count on adequate resources to ensure its orderly functioning in accordance with the principles of efficiency and economy. There is an urgent need for the adoption of the Unified Budget, also for the current year. We call upon all the participating States to make a sincere commitment to finding a solution to the financial difficulties that the Organization is facing, a

solution that cannot be postponed any longer. Italy will continue to play its part. We also call for the immediate and unconditional release of the three OSCE employees – Vadym Golda, Maxim Petrov and Dmytro Shabanov – who have been unjustly deprived of their freedom since April 2022.

I should like to express my satisfaction with the appointments to the top positions in our Organization and my heartfelt gratitude to the Maltese Chairmanship, which was able to bring the selection process to a successful conclusion. I wish the new Secretary General and the heads of the autonomous institutions all the best in their work. They know that they can always count on Italy's support.

I also strongly urge everyone to work towards deciding on the Chairmanship for 2026 as soon as possible, so that the Troika can be formed and the necessary predictability and planning can be ensured within the Organization's leadership.

Italy firmly believes in safeguarding the OSCE as one of the pillars of the European security order. We must preserve its underlying principles, its extensive catalogue of shared commitments, its autonomous institutions and the field operations that assist the host participating States with important project activities in the three security dimensions. The fact that Italy believes in the OSCE is also demonstrated by our significant financial contribution to the Unified Budget, by our voluntary extrabudgetary contributions and by the number of positions that we fund within the Organization.

Next year, under the Finnish Chairmanship – whom we wish all the best and assure of our full support as from now – we will mark 50 years since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act. It will be an opportunity to reaffirm support, in the strongest terms, for the principles enshrined in this founding document and for the vision of co-operative security that it outlines, which cannot be ignored when rebuilding our common security architecture. They are non-negotiable principles that cannot be revised or reinterpreted. It will be an opportunity to renew our shared commitment to observe these principles as the best guarantee of stability and peace in the OSCE area.

Thank you for your attention.