



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

VIENNA

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**Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the
Ministerial Council
7 and 8 December 2017**

Statements and declarations by the Ministerial Council

Decisions of the Ministerial Council

Statements by the Chairperson and delegations

Reports to the Ministerial Council

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS BY THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL	
Ministerial Statement on the Negotiations on the Transdniestrian Settlement Process in the “5+2” Format	3
II. DECISIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL	
Decision No. 1/17 on the appointment of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities	7
Decision No. 2/17 on the appointment of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media	11
Decision No. 3/17 on the appointment of the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights	15
Decision No. 4/17 on the appointment of the OSCE Secretary General	20
Decision No. 5/17 on enhancing OSCE efforts to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.....	25
Decision No. 6/17 on strengthening efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings	27
Decision No. 7/17 on strengthening efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children.....	32
Decision No. 8/17 on promoting economic participation in the OSCE area.....	37
Decision No. 9/17 on the time and place of the next meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council	40
Decision No. 10/17 on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.....	41
III. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRPERSON AND DELEGATIONS	
Opening statement by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, at the opening session of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council.....	49
Closing statement by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, at the closing session of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council.....	52
Statement by the delegation of the United Kingdom (also on behalf of Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United States of America).....	55
Statement by the delegation of Denmark (also on behalf of Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus,	

the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United States of America).....	57
Statement by the delegation of Spain (also on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland)	59
Statement by the Chairperson (also on behalf of Germany, Italy and Slovakia).....	61
Statement by the Chairperson (also on behalf of Germany and Italy).....	63
Statement by the Chairperson	65
Statement by the Chairperson (also on behalf of Kazakhstan)	70
Statement by the Representative of the European Union	73
Statement by the delegation of Ukraine.....	77
Statement by the delegation of Canada.....	79
Statement by the delegation of Sweden (also on behalf of Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the United Kingdom and the United States of America).....	81
Statement by the delegation of the United States of America	83
Statement by the delegation of the Russian Federation.....	86
IV. REPORTS TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL	
Report by the Secretary General to the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council	91
Letter from the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation to the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, Chairperson of the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council.....	94
Report by the Chairperson of the Contact Group with the Asian Partners for Co-operation to the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council	97
Report on the OSCE Ministerial Troika Meeting with the Asian Partners for Co-operation	101
Report by the Chairperson of the Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation to the Twenty-Fourth Meeting of the Ministerial Council.....	105
Report on the OSCE Ministerial Troika Meeting with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.....	109
Report to the Ministerial Council on strengthening the legal framework of the OSCE in 2017	113

**I. STATEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS BY THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON THE
NEGOTIATIONS ON THE TRANSNISTRIAN SETTLEMENT
PROCESS IN THE “5+2” FORMAT**

(MC.DOC/1/17 of 8 December 2017)

1. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe:
2. Recall the past Ministerial Statements on the work of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format;
3. Reiterate their strong resolve to attain a comprehensive, peaceful and sustainable settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict based on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova within its internationally recognized borders with a special status for Transdniestria that fully guarantees the human, political, economic and social rights of its population;
4. Recall the output-oriented approach reaffirmed by the Hamburg Ministerial Statement of 9 December 2016 and in this context commend the sides for reaching agreements on five of the priority issues: on apostilization of educational documents issued in Transdniestria, interaction in the field of telecommunications, functioning of the Latin Script Schools, use of farmlands in Dubasari region, as well as the opening of the bridge across the Dniester/Nistru River between villages Gura Bicului and Bychok; thus achieving substantial progress in the negotiation process;
5. Welcome the commitment and timelines stipulated by the sides in the Protocol of the “5+2” round of talks held in Vienna on 27 and 28 November 2017 to draw on the positive achievements of 2017 in order to resolve other priority issues in the coming year, in particular the remaining provisions from the Berlin Protocol;
6. Call upon the sides to continue to work at all levels to achieve tangible progress on all three baskets of the agreed agenda for the negotiation process: socio-economic issues, general legal and humanitarian issues and human rights, and a comprehensive settlement, including institutional, political and security issues;
7. Underline the importance of the Permanent Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdniestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format as the only mechanism to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable resolution of the conflict in accordance with the internationally agreed parameters as referred to in paragraph 3, and the important role the OSCE plays in supporting this process;
8. Call upon the sides to continue to engage, under the Italian OSCE Chairmanship, in the negotiation process within the existing negotiating formats and in accordance with the internationally agreed parameters as referred to in paragraph 3;
9. Applaud the political will of the sides to continue to resolve long-standing issues, as well as the unified and active approach by the mediators and observers in the Permanent

Conference on Political Issues in the Framework of the Negotiation Process for the Transdnestrian Settlement in the “5+2” format in the course of their activities in 2017;

10. Encourage the mediators and observers of the OSCE, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, the European Union and the United States of America to continue to co-ordinate their efforts and to make full use of their collective potential to promote progress in achieving a comprehensive resolution of the Transdnestrian conflict.

II. DECISIONS OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

DECISION No. 1/17
APPOINTMENT OF THE OSCE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON
NATIONAL MINORITIES

(MC.DEC/1/17 of 18 July 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling the decision of the CSCE Helsinki Summit 1992 to establish a High Commissioner on National Minorities,

Reaffirming the necessity that the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities carries out his functions in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with the mandate of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities,

Considering that the term of office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Ms. Astrid Thors, came to an end on 19 August 2016,

Taking into consideration the recommendation of the Permanent Council,

Decides to appoint Mr. Lamberto Zannier as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities for a period of three years with effect from 19 July 2017.

Attachment 1 to MC.DEC/1/17

INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

By the delegation of Kazakhstan:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure in connection with the adoption of Ministerial Council decisions on the appointments of a new OSCE Secretary General and new heads of institutions.

We welcome the fact that eventually we reached consensus on this matter and appreciate all efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship regarding these appointments. Although, the decisions were not adopted in due time.

Let me warmly welcome Mr. Thomas Greminger (Switzerland) as OSCE Secretary General; Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir (Iceland) as Director of OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Mr. Lamberto Zannier (Italy) as OSCE High

Commissioner on National Minorities; and Mr. Harlem Désir (France) as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council meeting and congratulate them on respective appointments. I would like to wish all the success to all of you in your new capacities.

At the same time, we regretfully note the absence of fair geographical balance among leading representatives of the OSCE, not only among newly appointed heads of institutions, but also historically among previous incumbents since the very establishment of the OSCE. We hope that this practice will be halted in the future.

For this, we encourage to use a GRIP approach, where G stands for Gender Balance, R stands for Regional Balance, I stands for Interfaith Balance and P stands for Professional Balance.

From the procedural prospective, we note the ‘broad interpretation’ of existing established practice of candidates’ nomination, although we understand that the Chairmanship has done that for the sake of consensus.

We call on all participating States to ensure further institutionalization of our Organization through the adoption of the OSCE Charter which will contain, *inter alia*, a clear set of rules and procedures related to the processes of nomination, selection and appointment to the OSCE leading posts. We are confident that it will help us to avoid the burdens of last selection process in the year 2016–2017.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this interpretative statement be attached to all four decisions and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 2 to MC.DEC/1/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation (also on behalf of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan):

“Our countries joined the consensus on the decisions by the OSCE Ministers for Foreign Affairs on the appointment of the new OSCE Secretary General, the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and the new Representative on Freedom of the Media, the silence procedure for which expired on 18 July. Thus, from 19 July, Mr. Thomas Greminger assumed responsibilities as the new Secretary General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir as the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Lamberto Zannier as the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and Mr. Harlem Désir as the new Representative on Freedom of the Media. We congratulate them on their lofty appointments. We wish them every success in their responsible positions.

At the same time, we should like to point out the unacceptability of the situation in which throughout all the years of the OSCE's existence there has never been a single representative of our countries in the leadership of its executive structures. Steps need to be taken to rectify such a bias, which contravenes the fundamental principles of the OSCE's work and its procedural norms establishing the equality of all participating States and their equal opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the Secretariat, its departments and the institutions of the Organization.

We trust that in future appointments to leading positions in the OSCE executive structures our concerns will be fully taken into account.

We hope that the aforementioned executive structures will work effectively in strict accordance with their mandates and taking into account the opinions of all participating States and also on the basis of a constructive approach on the part of the newly appointed heads.

I request that this statement be appended to all the decisions adopted, and included in the journal of the day."

Attachment 3 to MC.DEC/1/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the United States of America:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision for the appointment of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM), the United States would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Lamberto Zannier. We fully respect the autonomy and support the work of the HCNM.

Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been pressure from some participating States to weaken the OSCE's autonomous institutions and cut resources for them. Nothing in this decision should be interpreted to diminish the autonomy of or restrict the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities in the exercise of his or her mandate.

Finally, the United States underscores that it is the OSCE participating States which have adopted our principles, commitments and decisions and it is first and foremost the responsibility of participating States to implement them.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and that it be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

Attachment 4 to MC.DEC/1/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Azerbaijan:

“While joining the consensus on the Ministerial Council decision on the appointment of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to make an interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to be of the strong view that the OSCE executive structures and field missions are the common assets of all 57 OSCE participating States, providing that they act in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with their respective mandates and by no means harm the legitimate interests of participating States. Principles of accountability, transparency and efficiency, as well as scrupulous implementation of their respective mandates by heads of the institutions and field missions are the prerequisites for extending collective support of participating States to activities of OSCE institutions and field missions.

Furthermore, selection of the candidates for leadership positions within the Organization revealed once again already intolerable geographic imbalance in OSCE recruitment process. It underscored the urgent need to improve fair geographic representation within the Organization’s executive structures from unrepresented participating States.

The decision in no way sets a precedent and we strongly encourage the current Austrian and incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanships to submit promptly a proposal on establishing a mechanism that would ensure stronger application in practice of the principle of fair geographic distribution of posts in OSCE. This will help ensuring a sense of ownership of the Organization and rebuilding trust and confidence in the OSCE. Such a mechanism will assist participating States in proper planning and nominating candidates for vacancies, including for the next selection process of heads of OSCE executive structures.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan requests that this statement be attached to the adopted decision and be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

DECISION No. 2/17
APPOINTMENT OF THE OSCE REPRESENTATIVE ON
FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA
(MC.DEC/2/17 of 18 July 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling Permanent Council Decision No. 193 of 5 November 1997 on establishing an OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media,

Reaffirming the necessity that the Representative on Freedom of the Media carries out his functions in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with the mandate of the Representative on Freedom of the Media,

Considering that, according to Ministerial Council Decision No. 1/16, the term of office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Ms. Dunja Mijatović, expired on 10 March 2017,

Taking into account the recommendation of the Permanent Council,

Decides to appoint Mr. Harlem Désir as Representative on Freedom of the Media for a period of three years with effect from 19 July 2017.

Attachment 1 to MC.DEC/2/17

INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

By the delegation of Kazakhstan:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure in connection with the adoption of Ministerial Council decisions on the appointments of a new OSCE Secretary General and new heads of institutions.

We welcome the fact that eventually we reached consensus on this matter and appreciate all efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship regarding these appointments. Although, the decisions were not adopted in due time.

Let me warmly welcome Mr. Thomas Greminger (Switzerland) as OSCE Secretary General; Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir (Iceland) as Director of OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Mr. Lamberto Zannier (Italy) as OSCE High

Commissioner on National Minorities; and Mr. Harlem Désir (France) as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council meeting and congratulate them on respective appointments. I would like to wish all the success to all of you in your new capacities.

At the same time, we regretfully note the absence of fair geographical balance among leading representatives of the OSCE, not only among newly appointed heads of institutions, but also historically among previous incumbents since the very establishment of the OSCE. We hope that this practice will be halted in the future.

For this, we encourage to use a GRIP approach, where G stands for Gender Balance, R stands for Regional Balance, I stands for Interfaith Balance and P stands for Professional Balance.

From the procedural prospective, we note the ‘broad interpretation’ of existing established practice of candidates’ nomination, although we understand that the Chairmanship has done that for the sake of consensus.

We call on all participating States to ensure further institutionalization of our Organization through the adoption of the OSCE Charter which will contain, *inter alia*, a clear set of rules and procedures related to the processes of nomination, selection and appointment to the OSCE leading posts. We are confident that it will help us to avoid the burdens of last selection process in the year 2016–2017.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this interpretative statement be attached to all four decisions and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 2 to MC.DEC/2/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation (also on behalf of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan):

“Our countries joined the consensus on the decisions by the OSCE Ministers for Foreign Affairs on the appointment of the new OSCE Secretary General, the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and the new Representative on Freedom of the Media, the silence procedure for which expired on 18 July. Thus, from 19 July, Mr. Thomas Greminger assumed responsibilities as the new Secretary General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir as the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Lamberto Zannier as the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and Mr. Harlem Désir as the new Representative on Freedom of the Media. We congratulate them on their lofty appointments. We wish them every success in their responsible positions.

At the same time, we should like to point out the unacceptability of the situation in which throughout all the years of the OSCE's existence there has never been a single representative of our countries in the leadership of its executive structures. Steps need to be taken to rectify such a bias, which contravenes the fundamental principles of the OSCE's work and its procedural norms establishing the equality of all participating States and their equal opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the Secretariat, its departments and the institutions of the Organization.

We trust that in future appointments to leading positions in the OSCE executive structures our concerns will be fully taken into account.

We hope that the aforementioned executive structures will work effectively in strict accordance with their mandates and taking into account the opinions of all participating States and also on the basis of a constructive approach on the part of the newly appointed heads.

I request that this statement be appended to all the decisions adopted, and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 3 to MC.DEC/2/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Azerbaijan:

“While joining the consensus on the Ministerial Council decision on the appointment of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to make an interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to be of the strong view that the OSCE executive structures and field missions are the common assets of all 57 OSCE participating States, providing that they act in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with their respective mandates and by no means harm the legitimate interests of participating States. Principles of accountability, transparency and efficiency, as well as scrupulous implementation of their respective mandates by heads of the institutions and field missions are the prerequisites for extending collective support of participating States to activities of OSCE institutions and field missions.

Furthermore, selection of the candidates for leadership positions within the Organization revealed once again already intolerable geographic imbalance in OSCE recruitment process. It underscored the urgent need to improve fair geographic representation within the Organization's executive structures from unrepresented participating States.

The decision in no way sets a precedent and we strongly encourage the current Austrian and incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanships to submit promptly a proposal on establishing a mechanism that would ensure stronger application in practice of the principle of fair geographic distribution of posts in OSCE. This will help ensuring a sense of ownership of the Organization and rebuilding trust and confidence in the OSCE. Such a mechanism will assist participating States in proper planning and nominating candidates for vacancies, including for the next selection process of heads of OSCE executive structures.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan requests that this statement be attached to the adopted decision and be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

Attachment 4 to MC.DEC/2/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the United States of America:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision for the appointment of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM), the United States would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Harlem Désir. We fully respect the autonomy and support the work of the RFOM.

Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been pressure from some participating States to weaken the OSCE’s autonomous institutions and cut resources for them. Nothing in this decision should be interpreted to diminish the autonomy of or restrict the work of the Representative on Freedom of the Media in the exercise of his or her mandate.

Finally, the United States underscores that it is the OSCE participating States which have adopted our principles, commitments and decisions and it is first and foremost the responsibility of the participating States to implement them.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and that it be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

DECISION No. 3/17
APPOINTMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE FOR
DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
(MC.DEC/3/17 of 18 July 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling the decision of the Ministerial Council taken at its second meeting in Prague in 1992 concerning the development of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR),

Reaffirming the necessity that the Director of the ODIHR carries out her functions in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with the mandate of the ODIHR,

Considering that, according to Ministerial Council Decision No. 1/14, the term of office of the current Director of the ODIHR, Mr. Michael Georg Link, expired on 30 June 2017,

Taking into account the recommendation of the Permanent Council,

Decides to appoint Ms. Ingibjörg Solrun Gísladóttir as Director of the ODIHR for a period of three years with effect from 19 July 2017.

Attachment 1 to MC.DEC/3/17

INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE

By the delegation of Kazakhstan:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure in connection with the adoption of Ministerial Council decisions on the appointments of a new OSCE Secretary General and new heads of institutions.

We welcome the fact that eventually we reached consensus on this matter and appreciate all efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship regarding these appointments. Although, the decisions were not adopted in due time.

Let me warmly welcome Mr. Thomas Greminger (Switzerland) as OSCE Secretary General; Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir (Iceland) as Director of OSCE Office for

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Mr. Lamberto Zannier (Italy) as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; and Mr. Harlem Désir (France) as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council meeting and congratulate them on respective appointments. I would like to wish all the success to all of you in your new capacities.

At the same time, we regretfully note the absence of fair geographical balance among leading representatives of the OSCE, not only among newly appointed heads of institutions, but also historically among previous incumbents since the very establishment of the OSCE. We hope that this practice will be halted in the future.

For this, we encourage to use a GRIP approach, where G stands for Gender Balance, R stands for Regional Balance, I stands for Interfaith Balance and P stands for Professional Balance.

From the procedural prospective, we note the ‘broad interpretation’ of existing established practice of candidates’ nomination, although we understand that the Chairmanship has done that for the sake of consensus.

We call on all participating States to ensure further institutionalization of our Organization through the adoption of the OSCE Charter which will contain, *inter alia*, a clear set of rules and procedures related to the processes of nomination, selection and appointment to the OSCE leading posts. We are confident that it will help us to avoid the burdens of last selection process in the year 2016–2017.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this interpretative statement be attached to all four decisions and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 2 to MC.DEC/3/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation (also on behalf of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan):

“Our countries joined the consensus on the decisions by the OSCE Ministers for Foreign Affairs on the appointment of the new OSCE Secretary General, the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and the new Representative on Freedom of the Media, the silence procedure for which expired on 18 July. Thus, from 19 July, Mr. Thomas Greminger assumed responsibilities as the new Secretary General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir as the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Lamberto Zannier as the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and Mr. Harlem Désir as the new Representative on Freedom of the Media. We congratulate them on their lofty appointments. We wish them every success in their responsible positions.

At the same time, we should like to point out the unacceptability of the situation in which throughout all the years of the OSCE's existence there has never been a single representative of our countries in the leadership of its executive structures. Steps need to be taken to rectify such a bias, which contravenes the fundamental principles of the OSCE's work and its procedural norms establishing the equality of all participating States and their equal opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the Secretariat, its departments and the institutions of the Organization.

We trust that in future appointments to leading positions in the OSCE executive structures our concerns will be fully taken into account.

We hope that the aforementioned executive structures will work effectively in strict accordance with their mandates and taking into account the opinions of all participating States and also on the basis of a constructive approach on the part of the newly appointed heads.

I request that this statement be appended to all the decisions adopted, and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 3 to MC.DEC/3/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Azerbaijan:

“While joining the consensus on the Ministerial Council decision on the appointment of the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to make an interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to be of the strong view that the OSCE executive structures and field missions are the common assets of all 57 OSCE participating States, providing that they act in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with their respective mandates and by no means harm the legitimate interests of participating States. Principles of accountability, transparency and efficiency, as well as scrupulous implementation of their respective mandates by heads of the institutions and field missions are the prerequisites for extending collective support of participating States to activities of OSCE institutions and field missions.

Furthermore, selection of the candidates for leadership positions within the Organization revealed once again already intolerable geographic imbalance in OSCE recruitment process. It underscored the urgent need to improve fair geographic representation within the Organization's executive structures from unrepresented participating States.

The decision in no way sets a precedent and we strongly encourage the current Austrian and incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanships to submit promptly a proposal on establishing a mechanism that would ensure stronger application in practice of the principle of fair geographic distribution of posts in OSCE. This will help ensuring a sense of ownership of the Organization and rebuilding trust and confidence in the OSCE. Such a mechanism will assist participating States in proper planning and nominating candidates for vacancies, including for the next selection process of heads of OSCE executive structures.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan requests that this statement be attached to the adopted decision and be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

Attachment 4 to MC.DEC/3/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the United States of America:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision for the appointment of the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the United States would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. We fully respect the autonomy and support the work of ODIHR.

Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been pressure from some participating States to weaken the OSCE’s autonomous institutions and cut resources for them. Nothing in this decision should be interpreted to diminish the autonomy of or restrict the work of the Director of ODIHR in the exercise of his or her mandate.

Finally, the United States underscores that it is the OSCE participating States which have adopted our principles, commitments and decisions and it is first and foremost the responsibility of the participating States to implement them.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and that it be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Austria:

“In line with paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure, we would like to make the following interpretative statement:

The appointments of the new heads of institutions and the new OSCE Secretary General are a crucial step towards ensuring the functionality and effectiveness of our Organization. They are a very important testimony to the interest of participating States in this Organization, its goals and values, and their ability to come to agreements on such important and political questions.

Therefore, we very much welcome the consensus reached on the appointments and we thank participating States for their support and spirit of compromise in this respect.

As expressed by the Chairperson-in-Office Minister Sebastian Kurz at the informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers in Mauerbach, we will continue to pay great attention to issues such as competence, gender, and the need for all parts of our area, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, to be represented throughout our Organization.

The appointment of all four senior staff at the same time represents a unique situation and also an opportunity for a fresh start in the Organization in general and in the interaction between institutions and participating States in particular. In addition, it is an opportunity to further develop our culture of communication.

The Chairmanship acknowledges the need for the continuous improvement and further strengthening of the quality of dialogue between institutions and participating States. As a concrete measure, we will foster closer co-operation and regular contact with the newly appointed mandate holders. In this context, we deem the continuation of a process of reflection to be useful.

We would like to recall the priorities and principles of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, in particular rebuilding trust in our Organization and in our institutions. Based on these principles, we see the need to address any friction through dialogue. The Chairmanship is ready to facilitate this dialogue whenever necessary.

We call on the mandate holders to carry out their functions in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as in line with their respective mandates.

This interpretative statement will be attached to the Ministerial Council decision on the appointment of the Director of the ODIHR.”

DECISION No. 4/17
APPOINTMENT OF THE OSCE SECRETARY GENERAL
(MC.DEC/4/17 of 18 July 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling the decision of the Third Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm in 1992 to establish the post of Secretary General, Ministerial Council Decision No. 15/04 of 7 December 2004 on the role of the OSCE Secretary General, Ministerial Council Decision No. 18/06 on further strengthening the effectiveness of OSCE executive structures and Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/08 of 22 October 2008 on the periods of service of the OSCE Secretary General,

Reaffirming the necessity that the OSCE Secretary General carries out his functions in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with the mandate of the OSCE Secretary General,

Taking into account the recommendation of the Permanent Council,

Decides:

To appoint Mr. Thomas Greminger as Secretary General of the OSCE for a period of three years with effect from 19 July 2017.

Attachment 1 to MC.DEC/4/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Kazakhstan:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

The delegation of Kazakhstan would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure in connection with the adoption of Ministerial Council decisions on the appointments of a new OSCE Secretary General and new heads of institutions.

We welcome the fact that eventually we reached consensus on this matter and appreciate all efforts of the Austrian Chairmanship regarding these appointments. Although, the decisions were not adopted in due time.

Let me warmly welcome Mr. Thomas Greminger (Switzerland) as OSCE Secretary General; Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir (Iceland) as Director of OSCE Office for

Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; Mr. Lamberto Zannier (Italy) as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; and Mr. Harlem Désir (France) as OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to the Permanent Council meeting and congratulate them on respective appointments. I would like to wish all the success to all of you in your new capacities.

At the same time, we regretfully note the absence of fair geographical balance among leading representatives of the OSCE, not only among newly appointed heads of institutions, but also historically among previous incumbents since the very establishment of the OSCE. We hope that this practice will be halted in the future.

For this, we encourage to use a GRIP approach, where G stands for Gender Balance, R stands for Regional Balance, I stands for Interfaith Balance and P stands for Professional Balance.

From the procedural prospective, we note the ‘broad interpretation’ of existing established practice of candidates’ nomination, although we understand that the Chairmanship has done that for the sake of consensus.

We call on all participating States to ensure further institutionalization of our Organization through the adoption of the OSCE Charter which will contain, *inter alia*, a clear set of rules and procedures related to the processes of nomination, selection and appointment to the OSCE leading posts. We are confident that it will help us to avoid the burdens of last selection process in the year 2016–2017.

Mr. Chairperson, I request that this interpretative statement be attached to all four decisions and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 2 to MC.DEC/4/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation (also on behalf of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan):

“Our countries joined the consensus on the decisions by the OSCE Ministers for Foreign Affairs on the appointment of the new OSCE Secretary General, the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and the new Representative on Freedom of the Media, the silence procedure for which expired on 18 July. Thus, from 19 July, Mr. Thomas Greminger assumed responsibilities as the new Secretary General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir as the new Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Mr. Lamberto Zannier as the new High Commissioner on National Minorities and Mr. Harlem Désir as the new

Representative on Freedom of the Media. We congratulate them on their lofty appointments. We wish them every success in their responsible positions.

At the same time, we should like to point out the unacceptability of the situation in which throughout all the years of the OSCE's existence there has never been a single representative of our countries in the leadership of its executive structures. Steps need to be taken to rectify such a bias, which contravenes the fundamental principles of the OSCE's work and its procedural norms establishing the equality of all participating States and their equal opportunity to be involved in the leadership of the Secretariat, its departments and the institutions of the Organization.

We trust that in future appointments to leading positions in the OSCE executive structures our concerns will be fully taken into account.

We hope that the aforementioned executive structures will work effectively in strict accordance with their mandates and taking into account the opinions of all participating States and also on the basis of a constructive approach on the part of the newly appointed heads.

I request that this statement be appended to all the decisions adopted, and included in the journal of the day.”

Attachment 3 to MC.DEC/4/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Azerbaijan:

“While joining the consensus on the Ministerial Council decision on the appointment of the OSCE Secretary General, the delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan would like to make an interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the Rules of Procedure of the OSCE.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan continues to be of the strong view that the OSCE executive structures and field missions are the common assets of all 57 OSCE participating States, providing that they act in full compliance with the OSCE principles, commitments and decisions as well as with their respective mandates and by no means harm the legitimate interests of participating States. Principles of accountability, transparency and efficiency, as well as scrupulous implementation of their respective mandates by heads of the institutions and field missions are the prerequisites for extending collective support of participating States to activities of OSCE institutions and field missions.

Furthermore, selection of the candidates for leadership positions within the Organization revealed once again already intolerable geographic imbalance in OSCE

recruitment process. It underscored the urgent need to improve fair geographic representation within the Organization's executive structures from unrepresented participating States.

The decision in no way sets a precedent and we strongly encourage the current Austrian and incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanships to submit promptly a proposal on establishing a mechanism that would ensure stronger application in practice of the principle of fair geographic distribution of posts in OSCE. This will help ensuring a sense of ownership of the Organization and rebuilding trust and confidence in the OSCE. Such a mechanism will assist participating States in proper planning and nominating candidates for vacancies, including for the next selection process of heads of OSCE executive structures.

The delegation of the Republic of Azerbaijan requests that this statement be attached to the adopted decision and be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson."

Attachment 4 to MC.DEC/4/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the United States of America:

"Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision for the appointment of the OSCE Secretary General, the United States would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

The United States welcomes the appointment of Ambassador Thomas Greminger. We support the work of the Secretary General and the OSCE Secretariat.

We recall that the Secretary General derives his/her authority from the collective decisions of the participating States and acts under the guidance of the Chairman-in-Office. He or she is the Chief Administrative Officer of the OSCE, and is tasked, among other things, to act as the representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and support him or her in all activities aimed at fulfilling the goals of the OSCE. Nothing in this decision should be interpreted to alter the mandate of the Secretary General or restrict the work of the Secretary General in the exercise of his or her mandate.

Finally, the United States underscores that it is the OSCE participating States which have adopted our principles, commitments and decisions and it is first and foremost the responsibility of the participating States to implement them.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and that it be included in the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

DECISION No. 5/17
ENHANCING OSCE EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE RISKS OF
CONFLICT STEMMING FROM THE USE OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

(MC.DEC/5/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe,

Noting the immense opportunities that information and communication technologies provide for social and economic development, and that they continue to grow in importance for the international community,

Recognizing that OSCE participating States benefit from an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communication technologies environment,

Reaffirming that efforts by OSCE participating States to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies will be consistent with: international law, including, *inter alia*, the UN Charter and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Helsinki Final Act; and their responsibilities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Expressing concern about the increase in significant incidents involving the malicious use of information and communication technologies, and stressing that these negative trends hold security risks for all OSCE participating States and their citizens, as well as public and private sectors,

Reaffirming Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/16 as well as Permanent Council Decisions No. 1106 and No. 1202 on measures to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies, and acknowledging the need for intensifying efforts to implement them,

Recognizing the work of the cross-dimensional Informal Working Group established pursuant to Permanent Council Decision No. 1039 under the auspices of the Security Committee,

Recalling the importance of communication at all levels of authority to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies, noting steps taken and encouraging further progress to this end,

Reiterating in the context of security of and in the use of information and communication technologies the central role of the United Nations, and taking note of the continued relevance of the 2010, 2013 and 2015 reports of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security,

Welcoming the cross-dimensional work undertaken in 2017 by the OSCE Austrian Chairmanship, including the two high-level Chairmanship Conferences on “Cyber Security for Critical Infrastructure: Strengthening Confidence-Building in the OSCE” on

15 February 2017 as well as the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship Conference on Cyber Security on 3 November 2017,

Recognizing the need to further enhance OSCE efforts to continue building trust and to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies,

Decides to:

1. Continue to implement all decisions on confidence-building measures adopted by the OSCE to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies to contribute to an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful information and communication technologies environment in line with OSCE commitments;
2. Identify ways of strengthening and optimizing the work of the OSCE as a practical platform for reducing risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies, and at the same time continuing the work of the cross-dimensional Informal Working Group established pursuant to Permanent Council Decision No. 1039;
3. Encourage executive OSCE structures, within their mandates and available resources, to assist participating States, upon their request, in the implementation of the OSCE confidence-building measures to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies, and to enhance pertinent national capabilities and processes;
4. Invite the OSCE Partners for Co-operation to enhance dialogue on efforts to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies.

DECISION No. 6/17
STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO PREVENT
TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

(MC.DEC/6/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Reaffirming that trafficking in human beings is a grave and heinous crime that violates human dignity and that all aspects of combating human trafficking should be firmly based on the rule of law and respect for human rights,

Reaffirming our strongest condemnation of all forms of trafficking in human beings, including for the purpose of labour and sexual exploitation, child trafficking, forced criminality, as well as for the purpose of organ removal, and recognizing that the prevention of this crime is a priority,

Reaffirming also our commitment to addressing factors that make persons more vulnerable to trafficking and emphasizing the importance of a cross-dimensional and comprehensive approach to combating trafficking in human beings, which requires a focus on carrying out effective prevention measures,

Recalling the 2003 OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings and its Addenda, which stress the importance of comprehensive prevention measures, including measures to address demand, and reaffirming all OSCE commitments in the field of combating human trafficking,

Reiterating our support for the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, as the international legal framework for combating trafficking in persons, and the importance of the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons,

Recalling the relevance for the prevention of and fight against trafficking in human beings of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) if they are a party,

Noting that enhanced judicial and law enforcement co-operation and co-ordination among participating States and Partners for Co-operation, including effective border security and management may contribute to preventing human trafficking, *inter alia*, by disrupting and dismantling related transnational criminal organizations and by prosecuting the perpetrators,

Stressing the importance of the implementation of international labour standards as applicable within efforts to prevent human trafficking and taking note of international labour instruments, such as the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), the 2014 Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendations (No. 203) and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) and its Recommendation (No. 201) which also contain good practices on prevention of human trafficking for labour exploitation,

Commending participating States that require contractors supplying goods and services to the government to take effective and appropriate steps to address the risks of human trafficking in their supply chains, including steps that aim to prevent subcontractors and employees from participating in activities known to lead to human trafficking. Also commending those States that encourage the private sector to consider the risks of human trafficking in their own operations and in those of their subcontractors and suppliers, aiming to ensure that they address risks proactively,

Recognizing the contribution of civil society, including religious organizations, in preventing trafficking in human beings, and in assisting its victims,

Calls on participating States to:

1. Develop targeted prevention policies based on, as appropriate, enhanced research and systematically gathered reliable information, including with the support of national mechanisms, such as national rapporteurs where they exist, in order to maximize the effect and impact of anti-trafficking efforts at the national and international level;
2. Promote dialogue and co-operation among governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector, including businesses, and trade unions and employers organizations as social partners, with a view to enhance efforts to prevent human trafficking, *inter alia* through increasing awareness of each actor's role and through facilitating the exchange of information on human trafficking among countries of origin, transit and destination, including the Partners for Co-operation, and recognizing the importance of the voice of victims of human trafficking in elaborating effective anti-trafficking strategies;
3. Continue to use the OSCE as a platform for dialogue on judicial and law enforcement co-operation, border security and management as an important element to prevent trafficking in human beings;
4. Promote multi-agency, cross-sectorial and multinational capacity-building programmes that foster measures to prevent human trafficking in all of its forms, with a particular focus on factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking;
5. Take appropriate measures for effectively combating human trafficking, by developing harmonized procedures and training courses, *inter alia* on identification and protection of trafficking victims, including for relevant authorities, civil society organizations, health care and social workers as well as others that may have first contact with victims;
6. Strengthen education and awareness-raising efforts, including human rights education, and develop and implement empowerment programmes which take into account the particular needs of women, men, girls and boys, in order to enhance the capacity to recognize, prevent and fight human trafficking within communities;
7. Adopt a victim-centred, trauma-informed and, in that respect and in line with Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/06, gender-sensitive approach, that fully respects human rights and fundamental freedoms in all preventive and assistance efforts;

8. Recognize the important contribution that media can make to the prevention of human trafficking, *inter alia*, through the adoption of voluntary professional standards to responsibly and sensitively cover cases of human trafficking;
9. Identify, develop and share best practices, including as contained in the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later, for successful national and global partnerships between the public and private sector in combating human trafficking, to promote respect for human rights and corporate social responsibility, including through public awareness-raising about the risk of human trafficking in production and sources of goods and provision of services;
10. Encourage the private sector to adopt policies and procedures to prevent all forms of human trafficking, to be actively involved in multi-stakeholder efforts, to develop awareness about the risks of human trafficking and to take into account best practices such as establishing independent monitoring, verification and certification mechanisms to document compliance with and implementation of codes of conduct or self-established ethical standards, including through providing incentives for businesses to act with due diligence and transparency to prevent the abuse and exploitation of workers throughout their supply chains and to enable a level playing field for responsible companies;
11. Promote policies, in complementarity with national legislation, that take into account whether businesses are taking appropriate and effective steps to address the risks of human trafficking, including with regards to their subcontractors and employees, when considering the awarding of government contracts for goods and services;
12. Take appropriate measures to identify and eradicate the abusive and fraudulent recruitment and employment practices which can lead to trafficking for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, for forced criminality, or other forms of trafficking, including measures to promote clear criteria for the official registration of recruitment and placement agencies and through reinforcing the role of competent authorities, such as labour inspectors;
13. Promote measures to prevent and address the use of forced labour by diplomatic and other personnel of diplomatic missions and consular posts and international organizations, and promote a zero-tolerance policy for trafficking by such personnel, and take into account international best practices as compiled, for example, in the OSCE Handbook on how to prevent human trafficking for domestic servitude in diplomatic households and protect private domestic workers, and noting that many such measures are consistent with the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic Relations and Consular Relations as well as headquarter agreements of international organizations and recognizing that the Vienna Conventions include a duty to respect the laws and regulations of the receiving State, including those designed to prevent and address human trafficking;
14. Task the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and, as appropriate, other relevant executive structures in accordance with their mandates and in co-ordination with the OSCE Special Representative, to continue co-operation in the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons, and other regional and global platforms, *inter alia*, the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons;
15. Encourage the relevant executive structures in accordance with their mandates and in co-ordination with the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating

Trafficking in Human Beings, to continue undertaking research, in consultation with the participating States, to conduct capacity-building activities, to assist participating States, upon their request, in developing policies and guidelines to strengthen efforts to prevent human trafficking;

16. Task the Secretary General to review existing policies, audit and reporting procedures and recruitment safeguards, and to ensure that no activities of the OSCE executive structures, including the issuing of contracts for goods and services, contribute to any form of trafficking in human beings, in accordance with the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, and to report on this review and on the implementation of the OSCE Code of Conduct, Appendix 1 to Staff Regulations and Rules to the Permanent Council.

Attachment to MC.DEC/6/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of Canada (also on behalf of the United States of America):

“Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

In connection with the adoption of the decision, Canada, also on behalf of the United States, would like to make the following interpretative statement under paragraph IV.1(A)6 of the OSCE Rules of Procedure.

The United States and Canada strongly support this decision. Human trafficking is one of the most egregious crimes of our time, which robs human beings of their freedom and their dignity. We must all unite to end the scourge of human trafficking.

We believe it is a priority to ensure that the rights of victims are protected, that they are not re-traumatized or endangered, and that their privacy and dignity is respected.

In this decision, we recognize the important contribution that media can make in preventing human trafficking.

It is therefore in this particular context that we accepted the wording concerning media. We do not view ‘responsibly’ used in this context as reflecting any intention of participating States to direct or dictate journalistic or editorial content, and our acceptance of the word ‘responsibly’ in this context does not create a precedent for its use in another context, and certainly not in the overall context of the media.

We reiterate our unwavering support for freedom of expression and independence of the media.

I request that this interpretative statement be attached to the decision and to the journal of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.”

DECISION No. 7/17
STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO COMBAT ALL FORMS OF CHILD
TRAFFICKING, INCLUDING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, AS
WELL AS OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF
CHILDREN

(MC.DEC/7/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Reaffirming the Copenhagen Document (1990), Sofia Ministerial Council Decision No. 13/04 on the special needs for child victims of trafficking for protection and assistance (2004), Brussels Ministerial Council Decision No. 15/06 on combating sexual exploitation of children (2006), Madrid Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/07 on combating sexual exploitation of children on the Internet (2007), and Kyiv Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/13 on combating trafficking in human beings (2013),

Reaffirming, if they are a party, the relevant provisions of pertinent international instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the decisions and recommendations of pertinent international bodies,

Deeply alarmed by the persistence of all forms of child trafficking, both transnational and internal, including the trafficking of children for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation, and reiterating the need to take more vigorous measures against it,

Reaffirming that the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in decisions taken with regard to trafficked or sexually exploited children, and the importance of respecting the special needs of children for protection and assistance, and the opportunity for the child to be heard,

Distressed that sexual exploitation of children can result in serious, lifelong consequences for the physical and psychological development and well-being of a child and, in many instances, is a form of human trafficking,

Recognizing that all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children violate human dignity and undermine the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Considering that all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children constitute grave and heinous crimes, in many cases involving organized crime, that must be prevented, investigated, prosecuted and penalized,

Recalling that the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings calls on participating States to develop and implement policies and actions,

including law enforcement co-operation between participating States, to prevent the tourism industry from being used for all forms of trafficking in human beings, in particular for sexual exploitation of children,

Acknowledging that the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism, which can include travel from one country to another, is a serious crime and contributes to the demand that fosters trafficking in children for sexual exploitation,

Commending participating States that are working with the travel and tourism industry, including airlines and other modes of transportation, as well as hotels, the broader hospitality industry, civil society, and relevant international organizations to prevent all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, and to establish and implement procedures for identifying, reporting and addressing suspected child trafficking,

Underlining that information and communications technologies (ICTs) can play a positive educational, developmental, and awareness-raising role for children, but can also be misused to facilitate access to children for exploitation or for advertisement of children for sexual exploitation, and that social media platforms can be misused to groom children who may be subjected to sexual exploitation as well as all forms of child trafficking,

Recalling that the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings calls on participating States to train border officials, law enforcement officials, judges, prosecutors, immigration, and other relevant officials regarding the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies for human trafficking and related crimes, including all forms of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children,

Concerned that children who access pornography on the Internet may become desensitized to it and more likely to become a victim of or perpetrate sexual exploitation,

Taking note that new forms of age verification technologies have been developed over the last decade and could help protect children from accessing pornography on the Internet,

Expressing concern that children in migration flows, particularly unaccompanied minors, can be particularly vulnerable to human trafficking and sexual exploitation and that specialized facilities, adequate security, training for and sufficient numbers of staff, as well as of female patrollers, can mitigate these risks,

1. Encourages co-operation among participating States, international organizations, and civil society in combating all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, taking note of their efforts to combat these crimes;
2. Encourages participating States to adopt a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach that takes into account the respective gender-specific concerns of girls and boys, in the best interests of the child, and fully respects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of children subjected to human trafficking or sexual exploitation;

3. Calls on OSCE participating States which have not already done so to consider legal measures that would allow them to prosecute their citizens for serious sexual crimes against children, even if these crimes are committed in another country;
4. Calls on OSCE participating States to prevent all forms of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, including in tourist destinations, through education and awareness-raising, and to work with the private sector and civil society to raise awareness among the tourism industry, as well as business travellers and tourists, to help eliminate demand that fuels child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children;
5. Calls on OSCE participating States to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination among relevant authorities, such as law enforcement and immigration and border services of participating States, Partners for Co-operation, and destination States outside the OSCE region, including through considering measures, in full accordance with national laws and national and international data protection frameworks, such as:
 - (a) Adopting additional administrative measures in relation to perpetrators, such as the registration in sex offender registers of persons convicted of child sexual exploitation or abuse, as appropriate;
 - (b) Where relevant, a means to exchange and/or receive information transnationally among law enforcement agencies and/or judicial authorities on persons convicted of child sexual exploitation or abuse;
6. Urges participating States to prosecute human traffickers and perpetrators of sexual exploitation of children, including those who misuse information and communication technologies to recruit children or facilitate access to children for the purpose of subjecting them to trafficking or sexual exploitation, and impose penalties that are effective, dissuasive, and proportionate to the crime;
7. Calls on participating States which have not already done so to promote the implementation of age verification technologies with a view to limit the access of children to pornographic websites;
8. Encourages participating States to call on information and communication technologies and social media companies to prevent the distribution of and take down child sexual abuse content online, and to protect children by combating grooming by human traffickers online for all forms of child trafficking as well as other sexual exploitation of children, including through the development of new tools and technologies;
9. Calls on participating States to share data, as appropriate and while protecting personal data from criminal use, concerning child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children with the Interpol International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) image database, which is a hub for victim identification worldwide and also can help identify traffickers and their collaborators, and trace the financial flow to dismantle criminal networks;
10. Calls on participating States to enhance further specialized training on information and communications technologies for border officials, law enforcement officials, judges, prosecutors, immigration and other relevant officials as well as teachers and health

professionals, as appropriate, to combat all forms of child trafficking as well as other sexual exploitation of children;

11. Encourages participating States to raise public awareness on the vulnerabilities of children in migration flows to all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, to increase the capacity and broaden the scope of first line responders to identify child victims of trafficking and other sexual exploitation, and provide them with protection, as well as appropriate assistance and referrals for legal assistance as well as effective remedies and other services as applicable, in line with the relevant provisions of the 2013 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings;

12. Tasks the relevant OSCE executive structures in accordance with their mandates and in co-ordination with the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings to continue to assist participating States, upon their request, with implementation of their commitments related to all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children;

13. Invites OSCE Partners for Co-operation to share voluntarily the commitments of the participating States on combating all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children.

Attachment to MC.DEC/7/17

**INTERPRETATIVE STATEMENT UNDER
PARAGRAPH IV.1(A)6 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND
CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE**

By the delegation of the Russian Federation:

“In joining the consensus regarding the OSCE Ministerial Council decision on strengthening efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking, including for sexual exploitation, as well as other forms of sexual exploitation of children, we should like to express our satisfaction at the adoption of a document on such an important topic as countering trafficking in children, which, as we have repeatedly emphasized, is a priority for our country. We are grateful to our United States, Belarusian and Italian colleagues for such an important initiative.

However, we express disappointment that our proposal on the importance of protecting children not only from pornographic content, but also from other forms of harmful information, which threatens their life, physical and mental health, and also increases the risk of them falling victim to exploiters, was not included in the decision. We believe it necessary to further reflect these aspects in similar documents.

At the same time, we should like to emphasize that in the light of the importance of the issues considered in the document, we expect the participating States to implement it in its entirety.

We request that this statement be appended to the decision adopted and the journal of the day.”

DECISION No. 8/17
PROMOTING ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION IN THE OSCE AREA
(MC.DEC/8/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recalling the relevance of, and our full respect for all OSCE norms, principles and commitments related to our co-operation in the economic and environmental dimension, and bearing in mind the comprehensive approach of the OSCE to security,

Reaffirming the commitments related to aspects of economic participation contained in the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension adopted at the Maastricht Meeting of the Ministerial Council in 2003, the Ministerial Council Decision on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere adopted in Vilnius in 2011, the Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism adopted in Dublin in 2012, the Ministerial Council Decision on the prevention of corruption adopted in Basel in 2014, the Ministerial Council Declaration on Youth adopted in Basel in 2014 and the Ministerial Council Decision on strengthening good governance and promoting connectivity adopted in Hamburg in 2016,

Highlighting that promoting economic participation implies job creation, better access to education, vocational training and the labour market, as well as improvement of conditions for employment and entrepreneurship,

Reaffirming that peace, good international relations, the security and stability of the State and the security and safety of the individual within the State, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights, including internationally recognized workers' rights, are crucial for the creation of a climate of confidence which is essential to ensure positive economic and social development and to promote economic participation,

Recognizing that economic participation, social inclusion and sustainable growth are interdependent and contribute to prosperity, trust, stability, security and co-operation in the OSCE area,

Acknowledging that co-operation on economic activities can strengthen sustainable economic, social and environmental development, thereby promoting social cohesion, stability and security and positively contributing to the prevention of terrorism and the fight against organized crime,

Reaffirming that good governance at all levels implies a clear, transparent and predictable framework of economic policies, institutions and legislation in which business can thrive and the confidence of investors can grow, thereby enabling States to reduce poverty and inequality, and to increase social integration and opportunities for all,

Recognizing that more effective prevention of corruption and the promotion of good governance reinforce trust in public institutions, improve corporate social responsibility and thereby promote economic participation and enhance economic growth,

Acknowledging the importance of the active participation of the private sector, including small and medium-sized enterprises, trade unions, civil society and media, in preventing and combating corruption, enhancing good governance, fostering integrity and promoting a sound business and investment climate, thereby contributing to social inclusion and broader economic participation,

Recognizing that regional and subregional integration or co-operation processes and agreements can give an important impulse to trade and sustainable development in the OSCE area and the OSCE participating States,

Recalling the need for economic and social policies aimed at promoting social justice and improving living and working conditions,

Acknowledging the potential of young people to contribute to economic, political and social development, and recognizing the importance of facilitating the integration of young people into professional life, thereby promoting economic participation,

Recognizing that women's participation in the economic sphere contributes significantly towards economic development, sustainable growth and the promotion of cohesive societies,

Welcoming the substantial discussions held in the framework of the 25th Economic and Environmental Forum on "Greening the economy and building partnerships for security in the OSCE region" and of the thematic Economic and Environmental Committee meetings held in 2017,

1. Calls upon participating States to:
 - Strengthen co-operation on economic activities, where appropriate, thereby promoting sustainable economic, social and environmental development and contributing to confidence and trust, stability, security, the prevention of terrorism and the fight against organized crime;
 - Continue their efforts to improve social conditions, provide adequate and effective safety nets, promote education and vocational training, strengthen health-care services and increase employment opportunities;
 - Promote good governance and strengthen the legal and institutional frameworks conducive to a positive investment climate and the development of businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises, thereby promoting social inclusion and economic participation;
 - Further strengthen the co-operation of labour market institutions, including local employment services and training institutions, trade unions and employers' organizations as social partners, business community, higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders to improve labour market transparency, access and conditions for employment and entrepreneurship;
 - Continue their efforts to promote economic participation of and employment opportunities for young people by, *inter alia*, ensuring the necessary conditions for

the education and vocational training of youth, and through programmes facilitating youth access to the labour market;

- Strengthen measures that enable the development of women's entrepreneurial and other work-related skills, and promote and protect equal opportunity for participation of women in the labour market;
2. Encourages participating States to make use of the OSCE to foster the exchange of best practices and to promote capacity-building initiatives in line with the provisions of this decision;
 3. Tasks relevant OSCE executive structures, including field operations, within their mandates, to assist participating States, upon their request, in implementing the provisions of this decision;
 4. Encourages the OSCE Partners for Co-operation to voluntarily implement the provisions of this decision.

DECISION No. 9/17
TIME AND PLACE OF THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OSCE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
(MC.DEC/9/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Decides that the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council will be held in Milan on 6 and 7 December 2018.

DECISION No. 10/17
SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AND STOCKPILES
OF CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION

(MC.DEC/10/17 of 8 December 2017)

The Ministerial Council,

Recognizing the importance of OSCE measures aimed at combating illicit trafficking in all its aspects with regard to small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA) and their contributing to the reduction and prevention of the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread thereof,

Reaffirming the commitments of the participating States as per the OSCE Documents on SALW (FSC.DOC/1/00/Rev.1, 20 June 2012) and SCA (FSC.DOC/1/03/Rev.1, 23 March 2011),

Willing to complement and thereby reinforce the implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA, particularly by promoting co-operation, transparency and responsible action by participating States in the export, import and brokering of SALW and conventional ammunition,

Remaining committed to undertaking efforts to address illicit trafficking of SALW and SCA and noting the threat posed by the illicit conversion, transformation or reactivation of SALW and mindful of the security and safety risks and threats in this regard,

Taking note of the Arms Trade Treaty, which entered into force in 2014,

Taking note of the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, their Parts and Components and Ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,

Noting the United Nations Security Council's focus on addressing issues related to SALW and the importance of regional organizations to those efforts,

Recalling FSC Decision No. 8/08 and taking note of ongoing activities in the United Nations General Assembly on related issues,

Taking note of United Nations Security Council resolutions 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), and 2370 (2017) where relevant to the mandate of the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC),

Recalling Basel Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/14 on SALW and SCA,

Recognizing the continuing importance of OSCE measures aimed at addressing security risks and the safety of stockpiles of SALW, SCA, explosive materials and detonating devices in surplus and/or awaiting destruction in some States in the OSCE area,

Recalling Ministerial Council Declaration on OSCE Assistance Projects in the Field of SALW and SCA (MC.DOC/3/16),

Also recalling the broad range of OSCE assistance in the field of SALW and SCA,

Taking note of the efforts of the OSCE executive structures for SALW/SCA project management, including through the related OSCE trust fund repository programmes, encourage them to continue to promote co-ordination and assessment of progress with the view to enhancing synergies and avoiding duplication and call upon them to further assist participating States in implementing projects in an efficient and transparent manner, in accordance with the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA and relevant FSC decisions,

Commending the successful projects conducted by the OSCE on the destruction of surplus SALW and SCA while recognizing in this regard the importance of appropriate sustainable national SALW and ammunition management structures and procedures in participating States where projects are being conducted,

Recalling FSC Decision No. 2/16 on enabling the provision of assistance to OSCE Partners for Co-operation and welcoming FSC-related activities on SALW and SCA with the OSCE Partners for Co-operation in the context of the FSC and using procedures outlined in the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA,

1. Welcomes the OSCE Meeting to Review the implementation of OSCE assistance projects in the field of SALW and SCA and takes note of other related FSC activities since the 2016 Ministerial Council:
 - The ongoing efforts of the FSC aimed at improving the implementation of commitments set out in the OSCE Document on SALW, the OSCE Document on SCA, and related FSC decisions, including the OSCE Plan of Action on SALW (FSC.DEC/2/10, 26 May 2010);
 - The conduct of capacity-building events at the national, regional and OSCE-wide level on SALW and SCA to enhance the full implementation of OSCE-relevant commitments;
 - The focused discussions in the Security Dialogues on national projects, improving the physical security and stockpile management of SALW and conventional ammunition, measures to prevent uncontrolled spread of SALW, regional efforts in combating the illicit trade of SALW, and sharing international and national experience in the field of management of SCA and destruction of its surplus;
 - Efforts by the Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) to ensure coherence and complementarity with the relevant United Nations framework aimed at, *inter alia*, enabling the synchronization and implementation for voluntary online submission of national implementation reports on SALW to the OSCE and the United Nations;
 - The Implementation Meeting on Deactivation of SALW (SEC.GAL/181/17), recognizing the specific threat posed by the illicit conversion, transformation, or reactivation of SALW, in particular with regards to their use for terrorism and transnational organized crime;
 - The progress in and results of OSCE SALW and SCA projects;

- The development of a voluntary online tool for the submission of OSCE SALW-related information exchanges;
2. Tasks the Forum for Security Co-operation, in accordance with its mandate, in 2018, to:
- Continue to strengthen efforts to fully implement the existing measures and commitments set out in the OSCE Document on SALW, the OSCE Document on SCA, and related FSC decisions;
 - Promote OSCE achievements in combating illicit trafficking, reducing and preventing the excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW at the Third UN Conference to Review Progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the illicit trade in SALW in all its aspects and its International Tracing Instrument to be held from 18 to 29 June 2018 in New York;
 - Consider commencing biennial meetings to assess the implementation of the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA;
 - Continue discussing the outcomes of the Review Conferences and Biennial Meetings of States on the Programme of Action to improve coherence and complementarity with the relevant United Nations framework;
 - Continue further steps to improve the efficiency and outcome of SALW and SCA projects to ensure the maximum possible value in dealing with the challenges associated with SALW and SCA in line with the OSCE assistance mechanisms as outlined in the OSCE Documents on SALW and SCA and relevant FSC decisions;
 - Continue holding periodic meetings to review practical assistance projects on SALW and SCA;
 - Further intensify efforts to continue implementing the OSCE Plan of Action on SALW in all its aspects;
 - Continue to support the timely and full submission of OSCE SALW-related information exchanges, making use of the reporting template introduced by the CPC for one-off information exchanges related to the OSCE Document on SALW, including sample formats for national end-user certificates and/or other pertinent documents, regulations concerning brokering activities with regard to SALW and the annual information exchange on the points of contact on SALW and SCA;
 - Explore the possibility of a voluntary use of the United Nations International Ammunition Technical Guidelines in OSCE assistance projects on SCA;
 - Continue to explore ways to review and, where appropriate, supplement the OSCE Document on SALW, the OSCE Document on SCA and the OSCE Handbooks of Best Practices on SALW and on Conventional Ammunition, as well as the CSCE Principles Governing Conventional Arms Transfers;

- Consider adopting a best practice guide regarding the deactivation of SALW and having further discussions on this topic;
 - Continue to exchange views and information and share best practices, on a voluntary basis and if relevant to the mandate of the FSC, on:
 - Addressing the impact of excessive and destabilizing accumulation and uncontrolled spread of SALW and SCA on women and children;
 - Creating equal opportunities for women’s participation in policymaking, planning and implementation processes to combat illicit SALW as well as with regard to the OSCE Assistance Projects in the field of SALW and SCA;
 - Explore ways to prevent the diversion of SALW and SCA to illicit markets;
 - Explore ways to complement the existing OSCE measures aimed at addressing the illicit trafficking of SALW;
 - Explore ways to enhance outreach to the OSCE Partners for Co-operation on issues related to SALW and SCA in line with relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and OSCE commitments and further develop co-operation with Mediterranean partners;
 - Submit progress reports, through its Chairperson, to the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the Ministerial Council in 2018 on work in relevant areas, in accordance with its mandate;
3. Invites the participating States to:
- Continue providing extrabudgetary contributions on a voluntary basis to support FSC assistance projects on SALW and SCA;
 - Explore possibilities to provide, where appropriate, voluntary expert advice in OSCE assistance projects on SALW and SCA by participating States having specific knowledge;
 - Continue, within the Security Dialogue, discussions on topical security issues related to SALW and SCA;
 - Continue, within the Security Dialogue, as appropriate, general discussions related to the Arms Trade Treaty;
 - Organize capacity-building events at the national, regional and OSCE-wide level in support of the implementation of OSCE commitments on SALW and SCA;
 - Make use of the voluntary online tool for the submission of OSCE SALW-related information exchanges and provide extrabudgetary contributions for its further development;

4. Encourages the OSCE Partners for Co-operation to voluntarily implement the provisions of this decision.

**III. STATEMENTS BY THE CHAIRPERSON
AND DELEGATIONS**

**OPENING STATEMENT BY THE
OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE AND FEDERAL MINISTER FOR
EUROPE, INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF AUSTRIA, AT
THE OPENING SESSION OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF
THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC.DEL/13/17 of 7 December 2017)

Dear colleagues,

I am very pleased to be able to welcome you to Vienna today.

At our meeting in Mauerbach in July, we were able to hold fruitful talks at the midway point of this year.

The decision that we took there to fill the four leading positions in the OSCE was very important for the functioning of our Organization. I am especially pleased therefore to be able to welcome among us today our Secretary General, Thomas Greminger, our Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Harlem Désir, and our High Commissioner on National Minorities, Lamberto Zannier.

Dear colleagues,

We set ourselves three special priorities this year:

- To improve the situation of the local population in conflicts;
- To counter the danger of radicalization together;
- To rebuild trust among the participating States.

As far as the military conflicts are concerned, we are still confronted every day by fatalities, victims of military operations and violence. In the crisis in and around Ukraine alone, 3.8 million people on both sides of the line of contact are dependent on humanitarian support. We have therefore placed our focus on the fate of the civilian population. The OSCE can make a tangible contribution here; and it must do so. I am pleased that we – with all the States around this table here – have been able to achieve something together. Owing to time constraints, I will give only three examples:

- In Ukraine we were able to enlarge the mandate and budget of the OSCE Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM). During my visit to the line of contact I was able to ascertain that the population there would like more patrols. Now – at least in theory – round-the-clock monitoring by the SMM is possible with the latest technology. Monitoring along the entire line of contact, however, requires a general improvement in the security situation.
- In the Republic of Moldova we were able to achieve tangible progress for the local population: for example, the opening of a bridge that had been closed for 25 years and

the recognition of university qualifications. This will make people's lives considerably easier.

- In Georgia we dealt with current environmental questions across the contact lines and promoted dialogue.

These are all small measures, but they make life easier for the local population. I am pleased that we have been able to help in these various places.

In addition to the armed conflicts in the OSCE area, we have been greatly concerned about the threat posed by radicalization and terrorism, from which none of our countries are safe – as the attacks this year have made all too tragically clear. It was a concern of mine that we work together in that regard. There are movements attempting to promote fear and unrest so as to disrupt and even destroy life together in our societies. They come from many different directions – Islamic radicalization, particularly in our countries, terrorist organizations, but also both right- and left-wing political extremism willing to resort to violence.

The report by Professor Neumann, with its recommendations as to how we as States can combat radicalization effectively and make better use of the OSCE as a networking hub, was an important contribution. We should now engage in the necessary follow-up.

In order to help here and strengthen the role of the OSCE in the long term, I have decided to provide the Organization – more specifically the OSCE Secretariat's Action against Terrorism Unit – with support amounting to one quarter of a million euros. In this way, the experience can be collated in a manual on prevention, providing States with expertise to help with their implementation.

The crisis of confidence between our countries continues. We must work against this trend. Greater security can only be achieved with greater trust. We have therefore deliberately chosen topics that affect all States and require common solutions; arranged meetings in such a way that the special concerns and wishes of the participating States are taken into account as far as possible; and lastly organized this Ministerial Council meeting in such a way that we can make the best possible use of the OSCE as a platform for dialogue.

In this way, building on our decision in Hamburg last year, we were able this year to begin the Structured Dialogue on challenges and risks in the OSCE area; to successfully hold the "5+2" talks in Vienna two weeks ago; and to organize numerous meetings on the margins of this Ministerial Council on different topics, for example very specific talks on the security situation in Ukraine.

Dear colleagues,

The OSCE is more indispensable than ever today for security in Europe. With all its instruments and events in the three dimensions, with all its field missions and projects, the OSCE is a unique forum that we should use more.

The economic and environmental dimension helps to overcome economic and political dividing lines. This year we were able to give impetus to greater economic

participation, better governance, more connectivity and closer co-operation in the environmental field.

Capacity-building and increased co-operation in the areas of Internet security, border management and policing are also important components of our work in the OSCE.

Our dialogue on human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law is often controversial, but also indispensable. This also includes the important aspect of the involvement of civil society in OSCE events. As the holder of the Chairmanship, we have heard the concerns of some delegations on this question and take these concerns very seriously. We have therefore begun an informal process of reflection and hope that we can soon come to a common understanding.

In an organization with 57 participating States not everyone can be satisfied all the time. Allow me, however, to remind you that our co-operation is based on rules that we have all accepted by consensus. It is therefore also important that we all abide by these rules. We can only solve challenges through consensus. And trust, dialogue and a willingness to compromise are needed to achieve this consensus.

I am therefore following the discussions about the reform of the participating States' contributions to the OSCE budget with increasing concern. We need a solution here so as not to jeopardize a stable basis for the financing of the Organization.

I hope I can count on you to enable us to achieve results at this Ministerial Council that reflect our determination to give the citizens in the OSCE area more security.

I am looking forward to your participation and the opportunity for exchange within the plenary session that will follow, but also during our lunch together and the various meetings and discussions on the margins of our conference.

**CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE
OSCE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE AND FEDERAL MINISTER FOR
EUROPE, INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF AUSTRIA, AT
THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF
THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC.DEL/45/17 of 11 December 2017)

Dear colleagues,

Throughout this year, we have had to overcome many difficulties and find consensus on difficult issues.

As you know, we set ourselves three special priorities this year.

- To combat the danger of radicalization together;
- To improve the situation for the local population in the conflicts;
- And to restore confidence among the participating States.

I am convinced that we will have to continue countering radicalization in the coming years and prevent radicalization in our societies. The populations of our States rightly expect us politicians to act. The OSCE is a highly suitable forum for this purpose.

We also wanted to contribute to defusing conflicts and improving the humanitarian situation for those affected by crises and conflict. As we also heard yesterday in our discussion, the crisis in and around Ukraine continues to cause us great concern. The continued fighting has a considerable impact on the daily lives of the local people.

I should like to highlight, in particular, the important decision in spring to strengthen the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, with a substantial increase in the budget to 105.5 million euros to allow for more monitors, increased monitoring activities and improved technical equipment. I have personally witnessed on the ground how grateful the population is to the OSCE and above all to the observers.

Together with Germany and Italy, we issued a Troika statement on the crisis in and around Ukraine, which is also attached to the journal of the meeting.

Our third priority was the restoration of trust. The decision to fill the top four positions in our Organization, after months of intensive consultations and negotiations, is essential to the OSCE's capacity to act. I should like to take this opportunity to thank you for your willingness to compromise.

The successful launch of the Structured Dialogue on fundamental security issues on the European continent is an important step towards achieving greater mutual trust.

We also used the economic and environmental dimension to link business, diplomacy and politics and held important meetings on the human dimension, discussing key issues such

as freedom of the media, tolerance and non-discrimination, gender equality and freedom of assembly.

Dialogue has been our focus this year and especially over the past two days. My goal in this regard has been to rebuild trust and confirm our common commitments and principles.

We have held several very successful and high-level conferences, including ones on cybersecurity on 15 February, economic connectivity on 15 and 16 May, terrorism on 23 and 24 May, and the Annual Security Review Conference from 27 to 29 June. We also met for an important informal meeting of OSCE Foreign Ministers on 11 July in Mauerbach.

Building on Austria's traditional positioning as a place of dialogue, I am particularly interested for the OSCE to be understood and used more intensively as a multilateral forum for working out joint solutions.

More than 1,500 delegates took part in the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting this year, using various platforms, including the 16 side events, for an open discussion. I also particularly welcome the meetings held on the sidelines of the Ministerial Council meeting, such as that between the United States of America and the Russian Federation, and between Armenia and Azerbaijan, or the meeting on security in eastern Ukraine and the possible co-operation in this regard between the OSCE and the United Nations.

Finally, we have been able to agree on the adoption of a number of declarations and decisions. These will define the work of the OSCE for the coming year and the years afterwards.

Among these decisions and declarations, I should like to highlight the following:

- The decision on cybersecurity; the only relevant multilateral decision to strengthen international co-operation and security in this area that it was possible to adopt worldwide this year;
- The decision to strengthen our joint efforts to combat trafficking in human beings;
- Particularly important for me in the economic and environmental dimension was the adoption of the decision to promote economic participation with a focus on employment and training opportunities for young people and women.

As is the case every year, there was not consensus everywhere. Nevertheless, we were able to:

- Present a Quadriga declaration with Germany, Italy and Slovakia as a political road map for the OSCE in the coming years;
- Prepare a declaration by the Chairmanship on countering radicalization and terrorism so that the good work in the OSCE can continue. To this end, we will make 250,000 euros available to the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit;

- Furthermore, together with Kazakhstan, Chair of the Economic and Environmental Committee, we were able to issue a declaration on promoting the green economy and strengthening the environmental dimension.

All these declarations are attached to the journal of the meeting.

It is particularly important to me that as participating States we continue our dialogue next year in these areas and in the human dimension.

The OSCE is a challenging and unique organization. In times of heightened uncertainty, an organization like this that stands for greater security and trust is important.

With that in mind, I thank you again for your support this year.

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA,
CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK,
ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND,
ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO,
THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL,
ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY AND THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 1 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States of America, as well as my own country, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of our security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on our security environment. We welcome the decision on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe is a top priority. We remain committed to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. Full implementation and compliance with these commitments is essential to rebuild trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia's unilateral military activity in and around Ukraine continues to undermine peace, security, and stability across the region, and its selective implementation of the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty and long-standing non-implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty have eroded the positive contributions of these arms control instruments. We call on Russia to fully adhere to its commitments and treaty obligations. Reciprocal military transparency and risk reduction have the potential to improve stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We are determined to preserve, strengthen, and modernize conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

We remain, *inter alia*, committed to improving implementation of and achieving concrete progress in 2018 on modernizing the Vienna Document to adapt it to the evolving security environment, including through its substantive update. We welcome the wealth of concrete proposals aimed, *inter alia*, at strengthening risk reduction mechanisms, enhancing military transparency, preventing military incidents and rendering verification more effective. We call on Russia, which has a very substantial conventional military force, to constructively engage by joining other participating States in the ongoing discussions in the OSCE to

modernize the Vienna Document, so that we can reach agreement on meaningful updates. Full implementation and modernization of the Vienna Document will help to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also underline that the OSCE remains a relevant and inclusive forum to rebuild trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue.

We welcome the Structured Dialogue as an opportunity to renew a meaningful exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders of European security in the OSCE area to rebuild trust. The process will take more time but we value the significant, initial work done in the Structured Dialogue at the OSCE during 2017, including discussions of threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military-to-military contact, and analysis of trends in military force postures and exercises. We look forward to the continuation of the Structured Dialogue in 2018.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this ministerial meeting.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF DENMARK
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, ANDORRA, AUSTRIA,
BELGIUM, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CANADA,
CROATIA, CYPRUS, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, ESTONIA, FINLAND,
THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, FRANCE,
GEORGIA, GERMANY, GREECE, ICELAND, IRELAND, ITALY,
LATVIA, LIECHTENSTEIN, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MALTA,
MOLDOVA, MONACO, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS,
NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SAN MARINO,
SERBIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND,
UKRAINE, THE UNITED KINGDOM AND
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 2 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the following 44 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and my own country, Denmark.

We make this statement in the same week where we celebrate the anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; a collective commitment to recognize and protect the equal dignity, freedom and rights of every human being.

Nearly seven decades later, we deeply regret that we are witnessing a continuing deterioration in some participating States in the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, all of which are essential to the realization of comprehensive security. At the same time, we regret that the participating States were unable to reach consensus on draft decisions addressing these challenges.

As highlighted in the Vienna Declaration adopted by the OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference, the fight against terrorism and violent extremism must go hand in hand with the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

However, in certain parts of the OSCE region, the space for civil society is rapidly shrinking, both online and offline, and attacks on human rights defenders continue to increase. There are attempts to silence civil society, human rights defenders and free and pluralistic media through restrictive legislation, intimidations, or even violent acts and murder for which those responsible go unpunished. Women and girls continue to face discrimination and violence, and LGBTI persons experience hate crimes and violent ill treatment.

These policies and practices not only violate or abuse human rights and fundamental freedoms, they are also often counter-productive, as they increase mutual suspicion in society, undermine trust in the rule of law and marginalize vulnerable communities.

For these reasons, we speak out when human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated or abused. Whether it is human rights defenders facing reprisals for their actions, or persons being harassed, bullied or attacked because of who they are, whom they love or what they believe or say. We will challenge harmful stereotypes, combat myths with facts, and speak out against discrimination on all grounds. We recall our commitments and hold ourselves and each other to account. There may be times where we cannot prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to protest.

We commend all individuals and organizations who work tirelessly to safeguard our commitments on human rights and hold governments accountable for their actions. They deserve our recognition and deepest respect.

Our defence of and support for human rights defenders and civil society are not simply a matter of principle. When people can freely exercise their human rights, fundamental freedoms and civil society thrives, and minorities are not marginalized, societies are more resilient and peaceful. When women and girls can pursue unlimited opportunities, a country realizes its full potential. When free and pluralistic media can inform the public, abuses of power, corruption and disinformation are uncovered.

We commend the work of the OSCE autonomous institutions, the ODIHR, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media, for their efforts to stand up for human rights, thereby contributing to our common security. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights.

We will continue to take forward the principles that underpin the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the international covenants and the Helsinki Final Act and stand up for human rights, across the OSCE region, and worldwide.

Finally, we also would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to the Austrian Chairmanship for its tireless efforts to strengthen the human dimension.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SPAIN
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, IRELAND,
ITALY, KAZAKHSTAN, MALTA, MONACO, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA,
SAN MARINO, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA AND SWITZERLAND)**

(Annex 3 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malta, Principality of Monaco, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland, as well as by my own country, Spain.

Mr. Chairperson,

At the 2013 Ministerial Council in Kyiv we all recognized the evolving nature of transnational threats in the OSCE region and beyond, as well as the need to provide collective responses, including by strengthening the co-operation with our OSCE Mediterranean and Asian Partners. Since then, further transnational challenges have emerged, underscoring once again the interdependence between the security of the OSCE area and that of our Partners for Co-operation.

We believe that, in order to frame a common response to such challenges, we need to deepen the political dialogue between OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation in all possible venues, starting from the Ministerial Council, in line with the spirit of the Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation adopted in Madrid in 2007 (MC.DOC/1/07) and the Basel Ministerial Council Declarations on Co-operation with the Asian and Mediterranean Partners (MC.DOC/9/14 and MC.DOC/10/14).

We therefore see merit in amending the OSCE Rules of Procedure in a way that will allow heads of delegations from Partners for Co-operation to address the Ministerial Council following the heads of delegation of equal rank from participating States, as it follows:

- Ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank from the participating States;
- Ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank from the Partners for Co-operation;
- Deputy ministers or representatives of equal rank from the participating States;
- Deputy ministers or representatives of equal rank from the Partners for Co-operation;
- All other heads of delegations from the participating States;
- All other heads of delegations from the Partners for Co-operation.

We see this as a concrete signal of the political will to further engage with the partners within the framework of the OSCE and enhance our political dialogue.

Such an amendment will also codify the current practice, introduced under the Swiss Chairmanship, of inviting participating States to address the Ministerial Council according to the rank of their head of delegation, with ministers or heads of delegations of equal rank taking precedence over other representatives.

We encourage other participating States to further consider such a proposal, with a view to reaching the necessary consensus for its adoption in the future.

Mr. Chairperson,

We remain committed to further strengthening our relationship with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation to increase our ability to frame a collective response to the challenges of our time.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request that it be attached to the journal of this ministerial meeting.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF GERMANY, ITALY AND SLOVAKIA)**

(Annex 4 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

The “Quadriga” Declaration

We, the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Austria, Italy and Slovakia, representing the previous, current and incoming Chairmanships of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are concerned by developments within the OSCE area that have deepened mistrust, increased tensions, caused conflict and instability within and between States.

Serious challenges in the OSCE area include fundamental breaches of the OSCE’s principles and commitments, armed conflicts, in particular the crisis in and around Ukraine, protracted conflicts, terrorism, violent extremism, transnational threats, violations of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, cyber threats, challenges arising from large movements of refugees and migrants, deteriorating economic and social integration. Responses require effective multilateral co-operation. Therefore, we need to rebuild trust and improve good neighbourly relations.

We reiterate our commitment to the concept of comprehensive, co-operative, equal and indivisible security, guided by the principles of equal partnership, solidarity and transparency. We remain inspired by the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community as outlined in the Astana Commemorative Declaration.

OSCE principles and commitments, in particular those enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act, form the basis of our common security. We deplore grave breaches of the Helsinki principles. We reaffirm our commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the OSCE area. The role of civil society is essential in this regard.

We are most concerned about the crisis in and around Ukraine and its wider impact on security and co-operation in Europe. We emphasize the importance of the full and swift implementation of the Minsk agreements. We commend the diplomatic efforts of the Normandy format; we recognize the vital role of the Trilateral Contact Group; and we express our strong support for the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. We reaffirm that the SMM is mandated to have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine.

We stress the role of the OSCE as a vital instrument for preventing and resolving armed conflicts. In particular, the OSCE continues to address the conflict in Georgia and contributes to facilitating negotiations and reducing tensions concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We commend the recent progress on the Transdniestrian settlement process, and we welcome today’s OSCE Ministerial Statement.

We reaffirm the need for a strong commitment by OSCE participating States to the full implementation and further development of arms control agreements and confidence- and security-building measures to enhance military and political stability within the OSCE area.

We believe dialogue to be essential to enhancing security and co-operation. In this light, we support the ongoing Structured Dialogue and are committed, building on the work done, to continuing this process.

We are resolved to strengthen our efforts to counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, while consistently upholding human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We will continue to enhance sustainable growth within the OSCE area by promoting the objective of economic connectivity and encouraging environmental co-operation.

We stress the value of effective co-operation with our Asian and Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

We welcome the new leadership team of the OSCE executive structures and support efforts to strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization. We believe that a stronger sense of ownership and shared responsibility will enhance the spirit of co-operation, promoting better relations among OSCE States and ensuring conditions in which people can live in peace.

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF GERMANY AND ITALY)**

(Annex 5 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Troika Statement on the Crisis in and around Ukraine

We, the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Austria and Italy, the Troika of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), are deeply concerned about the crisis in and around Ukraine, particularly by the continued fighting and the use of heavy weapons which have severe negative consequences for the security of the local population in eastern Ukraine. We are also concerned about the wider impact of the crisis on stability and co-operation in Europe and our commonly agreed principles and commitments. We call for implementation of a durable and verifiable ceasefire and a new impetus to intensify efforts to resolve the conflict.

We would have preferred to reach consensus on a joint declaration on the OSCE's response to the crisis in and around Ukraine. Due to disagreement, in particular, over a reference to the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine and the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, this was not possible again this year. Nevertheless, we, together with nearly all participating States reaffirm our full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders and call on the sides to accelerate the disengagement process, demining and withdrawal of heavy weapons, and to agree on new disengagement areas. We also stress the importance of the full, swift and comprehensive implementation of the Minsk agreements in their entirety.

Like all participating States we continue to have the gravest concerns about the situation on the ground. We deplore the suffering of civilians – particularly children and the elderly – and the grave humanitarian, economic and environmental impact of the crisis. We underline the urgent need to address pressing humanitarian issues, including by enabling access by international humanitarian organizations to the entire territory of Ukraine.

We call for the immediate release and exchange of all hostages and unlawfully detained persons, based on the principle of “all for all”, in accordance with the Minsk agreements. We condemn the indiscriminate use of mines and their devastating impact on civilians and the environment, as well as the threat they pose to SMM patrols. We, like most participating States, urge the sides to enhance their efforts to clear mines, explosive devices and unexploded ordnance, and to refrain from laying additional mines and increase mine awareness. We are concerned by ceasefire violations in the vicinity of critical infrastructure. We call on the sides to continue to assist the SMM to enable local ceasefires, particularly for the repair of critical infrastructure, and to establish safety zones around such installations. We need greater efforts to reduce the risk of ecological and humanitarian disasters in the region. We urge the sides to enhance connectivity, and to repeal unilateral steps that run counter to the spirit of the Minsk Agreements.

The OSCE will continue to work towards a peaceful solution of the crisis, fully committed to upholding the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and all other OSCE principles and commitments to which we have all agreed. We support the diplomatic efforts in the Normandy format, and welcome close co-operation between the Chairmanship,

Trilateral Contact Group (TCG), Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), and the members of the Normandy Group.

Like all participating States, we recognize the central role of the TCG and its working groups in facilitating the practical implementation of the Minsk agreements and we reiterate our full support for the Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Ambassador Martin Sajdik, and the co-ordinators of the four working groups. We appreciate the good offices provided by Belarus in hosting the meetings.

Despite political differences, there is overwhelming support for the work of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), and appreciation to its monitors who are operating in a challenging environment under the able, almost four-year-long leadership of Ambassador Ertugrul Apakan.

As demonstrated in the declaration of support for the SMM adopted by the Permanent Council on 27 April 2017, all participating States lament the death of paramedic Mr. Joseph Stone and the injuries suffered by two other monitors while on patrol with the SMM on 23 April 2017. We welcome the findings of the investigations into this tragic incident and the resulting enhanced efforts to improve the security of the monitors.

All participating States have agreed that the SMM is mandated to have safe and secure access throughout Ukraine and have called for this to be fully respected. We condemn any threats against SMM monitors and damage of OSCE assets.

Following the visits by the CiO to the region and the talks with the local population most affected, the need for more and enhanced monitoring by the SMM became apparent. We welcome the decision by all participating States to adopt the budget of the SMM and applaud the work that the SMM has done this year to expand its footprint, increase the number of monitors, and enhance the use of technology. We call on the SMM to continue to enhance efforts in monitoring and supporting the implementation of all OSCE principles and commitments. In this regard, we also welcome the relevant activities of the OSCE executive structures, including the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

We acknowledge the role played by the OSCE Observer Mission to two Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk, and call for further dialogue on how to enhance monitoring at the Ukrainian/Russian State border.

We support establishing closer co-operation between the OSCE and the United Nations with the aim to contribute to fostering the peaceful resolution of the crisis in and around Ukraine.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON

(Annex 6 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Chairmanship Declaration on Preventing and Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism

The Austrian Chairmanship of the OSCE condemns terrorism in the strongest possible terms, in all its forms and manifestations, and all terrorist attacks, in particular those perpetrated in 2017. We offer heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and governments that have been targeted. Terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.

The increasing number of terrorist attacks and alarming number of victims in the OSCE area, including attacks by terrorists acting alone or in small cells, continue to raise serious concerns, as does the proliferation of the terrorist and violent extremist ideology and narratives that motivate all these acts. Any act of terrorism is criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of its motivation; we condemn, in the strongest terms, the incitement of terrorist acts and repudiate attempts at the justification or glorification (or apologie) of terrorist acts that may incite further terrorist acts. We respect the right to freedom of expression reflected in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Furthermore, terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality or civilization.

We strongly reaffirm our determination and commitment to remaining united in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism (VERLT). We stress that terrorism can only be defeated through increased international solidarity and co-operation and by a sustained and comprehensive approach involving the active participation and co-operation of all participating States and relevant international and regional organizations, as well as, where appropriate, civil society, and directed at impeding, impairing, isolating and incapacitating the terrorist threat. We condemn unequivocally and express outrage at the indiscriminate killing and deliberate targeting of civilians, at numerous atrocities, at persecutions of individuals and communities, *inter alia* on the basis of their religion or belief, by terrorist groups, such as the so-called Islamic State, also known as ISIL/DAESH, Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. We note with appreciation the international counter-terrorism efforts being made and emphasize in this context that security in the OSCE area is intricately linked to security in adjacent areas.

We underscore the central role of the United Nations in preventing and countering terrorism and violent extremism as and when conducive to terrorism, and strongly reaffirm our commitment to taking the measures needed to protect all people within our jurisdictions against terrorist acts and the need for all actions to be conducted in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, and all other applicable obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law, as well as relevant UN Security Council resolutions. We recall and reaffirm all relevant OSCE commitments adopted in the field of preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, in particular the 2015 Ministerial Declaration on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism. Accordingly, we underscore the importance of our commitments under the UN Global

Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the need to continue to implement all its aspects in an integrated manner, in close co-operation with the newly created UN Office of Counter-Terrorism. We take note of the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations. We also take note of the relevant Good Practices documents adopted by the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). We encourage the OSCE participating States to consider, as appropriate, becoming Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism and to its Additional Protocol.

We welcome the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 2354 (2017) and of the Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives (S/2017/375), with its recommended guidelines and good practices for effectively countering the ways that terrorist groups and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities use their narratives to encourage, motivate and recruit others to commit terrorist acts. We invite participating States and OSCE Partners for Co-operation to actively engage in and reinforce their work to address these challenges, in particular the spread of terrorist narratives, and to this aim undertake appropriate national and international measures, in accordance with their obligations under international law, in line with the relevant UNSC resolutions, in particular UNSC resolution 2354, and consistent with relevant OSCE commitments. We invite OSCE executive structures, within their mandates and available resources and complementing ongoing UN efforts, to facilitate thematic discussions focused on implementing UNSC resolution 2354 on a regional level and on exchanging lessons learned and good practices for promoting a comprehensive response to the spread of terrorist and violent extremist ideologies and narratives.

We acknowledge that the OSCE, as the largest, most inclusive and comprehensive regional security organization, has unique organizational strengths that make it suited to providing a platform for the exchange of good practices and lessons learned on preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, and emphasize that the profile of the OSCE in this field could be strengthened further, in accordance with and building upon the existing mandates. In addition, voluntary reporting by OSCE participating States in the Security Committee of the OSCE Permanent Council is an opportunity to share valuable lessons that could be built upon.

We stress that OSCE participating States have the primary role in preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, while respecting their obligations under international law, in particular human rights and fundamental freedoms. We reiterate that all participating States should refrain from providing any form of support, active or passive, to entities or persons involved in terrorist acts. We reaffirm that those who participate in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing or perpetrating terrorist acts must be held accountable and brought to justice, on the basis of the principle “extradite or prosecute” in compliance with relevant obligations under international law, as well as applicable domestic legislation. We strongly reaffirm our determination and commitment to pursue a sustained and comprehensive approach and to strengthen co-operation at all relevant levels on preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT. In this context, we emphasize the importance of strengthening inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination.

We commend the OSCE’s work in this field, which complements efforts being made by the United Nations, as well as other international organizations. We welcome the OSCE United in Countering Violent Extremism (#United CVE) campaign and the OSCE’s efforts to support and build the capacity of civil society actors in preventing VERLT, with emphases on women, youth, and religious and community leaders, as appropriate. We also welcome the

OSCE's work on scenario-based discussions, including table-top exercises aimed at building public-private partnerships, societal resilience, as well as its work on the protection of critical infrastructure from terrorist attacks. We further acknowledge the role effective community policing can play in identifying individuals at risk of radicalization that leads to terrorism.

We reaffirm our intention to take resolute action, in full implementation of UNSC resolution 2178 and other relevant UNSC resolutions, and consistent with OSCE commitments, in particular the 2014 Declaration on the OSCE Role in Countering the Phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters in the Context of the Implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 2170 (2014) and 2178 (2014) (MC.DOC/5/14), to counter the threat posed by FTFs to countries of origin, transit and destination, including those returning to their countries of origin or relocating from or to conflict zones. We encourage commitment to co-operating and consistently providing mutual support in preventing and countering terrorism, including by eliminating the supply of weapons to terrorists and preventing the recruitment and mobilization of individuals as terrorists, in compliance with obligations under international law, and consistent with OSCE commitments.

We underline our resolve to prevent and suppress terrorist financing and we commit ourselves to deepening international and regional co-operation within the UN, the OSCE, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and FATF-style regional bodies. We encourage a strengthening of the measures against the financing of international terrorist groups, in accordance with the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism. We also encourage swift, effective and comprehensive implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) standards, in the OSCE area and worldwide. We welcome the strengthening of the co-operation between the OSCE and the UNODC in offering capacity-building on countering terrorist financing in the OSCE area and for the OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

We note with increasing concern the multifaceted nexus between international terrorism and transnational organized crime, as described in relevant UNSC resolutions. In this context, we invite participating States to make full use of available multilateral and bilateral mechanisms and data-sharing systems and to contribute to existing databases and update them systematically, while fully respecting their obligations under international law, including the right to be free from arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy.

We remain committed to ensuring that national criminal justice systems are based on respect for human rights and the rule of law, due process and fair trial guarantees and are effectively complemented by appropriate preventive measures. We stress the importance of the development and maintenance of effective, fair, humane, transparent and accountable criminal justice systems, as well as of ensuring effective prison management consistent with applicable international law and national legislation, as a fundamental basis of any strategy to prevent and counter terrorism and VERLT.

We emphasize the importance of a sustained, multidimensional, and comprehensive approach to preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, aimed at effectively addressing all internal and external conditions conducive to their spread, in accordance with applicable international law and consistent with OSCE commitments, and while recognizing that none of these conditions can excuse or justify terrorism or VERLT. We also emphasize the importance of developing tailored and human rights-compliant strategies, policies and programmes, including a gender perspective, in line with applicable international law and domestic legislation, designed to reduce the appeal of terrorism and VERLT.

We emphasize the importance of building whole of society resilience to terrorism and VERLT, as well as of fostering the role of civil society in supporting a global campaign against terrorism, and the need to further promote public-private partnerships. We underscore the importance of involving civil society, in particular families, youth, women, victims of terrorism, and religious, cultural and educational leaders, as well as the media and the private sector, in preventing terrorism and VERLT, as applicable.

We recognize the need to foster an environment that is not conducive to terrorism and, in this context, stress the importance of counter-narratives which should aim not only to rebut terrorist messages but also to amplify positive narratives, in order to provide alternatives and address issues of concern to audiences who are targeted by terrorist narratives. We encourage participating States to adopt measures to counter terrorist narratives complying with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, international refugee law and international humanitarian law and consistent with OSCE commitments. We emphasize the value of public-private partnerships in countering terrorist narratives, and the need to involve a wide range of actors, including families, youth, women and religious, cultural and educational leaders. Where appropriate, participating States could engage and co-operate with religious authorities and community leaders possessing relevant expertise in crafting and delivering effective counter-narratives.

We stress the importance of the role played by the media, civil society, religious groups, the private sector and educational institutions in efforts to enhance dialogues and broaden understanding, and in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Fully respecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression, we stress the necessity to act co-operatively, including with ICT and social media companies, in accordance with international law, to continue to develop and implement practical measures to counter the exploitation of the Internet and other information and communication technologies for terrorist purposes, including to commit, incite, recruit, fund or plan terrorist acts.

We recognize that efforts to prevent terrorism and VERLT can benefit from increasing youth participation and promoting their sense of belonging to societies, including by the creation of an enabling environment and opportunities for youth to participate and engage voluntarily and freely in public life and in the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic principles and the rule of law, tolerance and non-discrimination, and dialogue and mutual respect; such efforts can also benefit from the facilitation of youth access to social services and employment and from support being given to youth-led and youth-focused awareness-raising initiatives, including through the Internet and social media. We also underscore the important role of education in building relevant skills, such as critical thinking, media literacy, and the sense of responsibility, in order to enable youth to reject terrorist narratives and challenge them more effectively. In this context, we underscore the need to enhance the exchange of information, lessons learned and good practices on how to effectively engage with youth in preventing terrorism and VERLT.

We condemn all the acts, methods and practices of terrorist groups, including indiscriminate or targeted killings, torture, kidnapping and hostage-taking, abductions, and acts of violence which cause destruction and displace people. We express deep concern that acts of sexual and gender-based violence are known to be part of the ideology of certain terrorist groups, and are used as an instrument to increase their power in supporting the financing of terrorism, recruitment and the destruction of communities. We recognize the differential impact terrorism and VERLT have on women and children, with particular

respect to such matters as violations and abuses of human rights, and acknowledge that women and children are often directly targeted by terrorist groups. We highlight the need to consider evidence-based policies in mechanisms and strategies for preventing terrorism and VERLT, as appropriate, in dealing with female, juvenile recruits and returnees. Children formerly associated with terrorist groups, or who have been forced to travel to conflict zones affected by terrorist attacks, should be treated in a manner consistent with their rights, dignity and needs.

We encourage States to co-operate in efforts to address the threat posed by terrorists, including relocating and returning FTFs, by, *inter alia*, developing and implementing, after prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration strategies, policies and programmes before, during and after imprisonment and as part of non-custodial measures of justice. Such programmes should be compliant with international law, in particular international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international refugee law. They should also ensure national ownership and address specific concerns, vulnerabilities and needs of men, women and children, including accompanying family members of FTFs, as well those of incarcerated offenders, as appropriate. A comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach may benefit from the concerted efforts of those best placed to bring about successful outcomes, such as counter-terrorism practitioners from law enforcement bodies and criminal justice systems, social workers and civil society, including families, teachers, local communities, women, non-governmental organizations and religious, cultural and educational leaders, within their competencies. In this regard, we also emphasize the importance of further research, thematic discussions and sharing of good practices and international guidelines, as well as of tailored technical assistance offered by relevant international organizations, including the OSCE. To this end, we invite the OSCE executive structures to work with and assist the OSCE participating States on these matters, upon request, within existing mandates and available resources.

We welcome the activities pursued by OSCE executive structures, including OSCE institutions, within existing mandates and available resources, in support of the implementation of OSCE commitments in the field of preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT, in line with the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security.

We recognize the importance of subregional efforts to counter the transnational threat of terrorism. We therefore encourage and empower OSCE executive structures, within their mandates and available resources, to facilitate subregional co-operation to prevent and counter terrorism and VERLT, including with the Mediterranean and Asian Partners for Co-operation, as relevant.

We welcome the efforts of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in the field of preventing and countering terrorism and VERLT. Furthermore, we encourage parliamentarians from the OSCE participating States to continue to engage in dialogue with a view to strengthening international and domestic legislation, in order to prevent and counter terrorism and VERLT, to build resilience within our societies, to promote solidarity with victims of terrorism, and to speak out strongly and promptly against intolerance, discrimination, terrorism and VERLT.

We invite the OSCE Partners for Co-operation to join us in affirming this declaration.

**STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF KAZAKHSTAN)**

(Annex 7 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

**Declaration of the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship and the
Chairmanship of the Economic and Environmental Committee,
Kazakhstan, on Greening Our Economies and Fostering Our
Environmental Co-operation**

The Chairmanship-in-Office and the Chairmanship of the Economic and Environmental Committee,

After a yearlong of constructive consultations and engaging negotiations, the Chairmanship-in-Office and the Chairmanship of the Economic and Environmental Committee are appreciating the active participation and broad support of all participating States in almost achieving a consensus,

Reaffirming and recalling the commitments and principles related to environmental co-operation contained in the OSCE Strategy Document for the Economic and Environmental Dimension adopted in Maastricht in 2003, the Ministerial Council Declaration on Environment and Security adopted in Madrid in 2007, the Ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Dialogue and Co-operation on Energy Security adopted in Athens in 2009, the Ministerial Council Decisions on Improving the Environmental Footprint of Energy-Related Activities and on Protection of Energy Networks from Natural and Man-Made Disasters adopted in Kyiv in 2013, the Ministerial Council Decision on Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction adopted in Basel in 2014, and the Ministerial Council Decision on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity adopted in Hamburg in 2016,

Recognizing that greening our economies and fostering our environmental co-operation can increase economic prosperity while reducing environmental risks, thereby contributing to stability, security and enhanced co-operation in the OSCE area,

Recalling the often cross-boundary nature of environmental challenges, including disasters, climate change, unsustainable use of natural resources, hazardous waste and pollution, that calls for co-operation,

Recognizing the role of OSCE executive structures, including field operations, within the scope of their mandates, in addressing environmental challenges,

Acknowledging that women are often disproportionately affected by disasters, climate change and environmental degradation, and that women should play an active role in designing and developing strategic responses to environmental threats,

Recognizing that energy efficiency and renewable energy can contribute to sustainable economic growth, a diversified energy mix, resource efficiency and energy access, and improve energy security,

Acknowledging that the responsible and sustainable management of natural resources, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, energy efficiency and the increasing use of renewable energy contribute to conserving nature, addressing climate change and greening our economies,

Recognizing that the implementation of green innovations, the use of green and low-carbon technologies and sound waste management measures offer economic opportunities and contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental pollution,

Highlighting that good environmental governance, including transparency, corruption prevention, public participation and equal opportunities for women and men in environmental decision-making, supported by raising awareness and enhancing education on environment and sustainable development, contributes to addressing environmental challenges more effectively,

Acknowledging the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a comprehensive framework contributing to peace, security and co-operation,

Acknowledging the Paris Agreement as a global instrument for enhancing collective action against climate change and for contributing to stability and sustainable development,

Supporting the efforts towards reducing environmental risks, greening our economies and promoting sustainable development through relevant regional and international organizations and multilateral agreements, *inter alia*, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement,

Acknowledging the outcomes of the Eighth Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi and the Eighth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development in the margins of the International Specialized Exhibition EXPO 2017 in Astana,

Welcoming the substantial discussions held in the framework of the 25th Economic and Environmental Forum on “Greening the economy and building partnerships for security in the OSCE region”, in particular those of the Preparatory Meeting held in Astana in June 2017 and of the Concluding Meeting in Prague in September 2017, of the Economic and Environmental Dimension Implementation Meeting and of the thematic Economic and Environmental Committee meetings held in 2017,

Calls upon participating States to:

Strengthen our environmental co-operation in support of disaster risk reduction, climate action, sustainable use of natural resources, sound hazardous waste management and pollution prevention and control, thereby also contributing to security and confidence-building;

Promote the sustainable use and management of ecosystems for the prevention of environmental disasters;

Promote energy efficiency and renewable energy for economic growth and sustainable development;

Strengthen good environmental governance, *inter alia*, by preventing corruption, by promoting transparency, by raising awareness and enhancing education on environment and sustainable development, by promoting engagement of all relevant stakeholders, including the public and private sector, civil society, media and academia, and by ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in environmental decision-making processes;

Further strengthen measures that contribute to greening our economies, *inter alia*, by increasing resource efficiency and circular economy, and exchanging best practices and knowledge in environmentally sound technologies;

Foster our environmental co-operation to strengthen security, as applicable, through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement;

Strengthen the role of women in greening our economies and fostering our environmental co-operation.

**STATEMENT BY
THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

(Annex 8 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

The delegation of Estonia, in its capacity as EU Presidency, passed the floor to the representative of the European Union, who delivered the following statement:

We express our deep gratitude to Minister Kurz and to the Austrian Chairmanship for the generous hospitality we have enjoyed not just during the Ministerial Council, but throughout the year. Minister Kurz, you should rightly be very proud of your excellent team for the tremendous work put into preparing and hosting this Ministerial Council, and for the Chairmanship's tireless efforts in taking us through difficult discussions, this week and during the whole of 2017.

In light of ongoing challenges the EU would have liked to join a strong message in a ministerial political declaration. We regret that this was not possible.

For a fourth year, the Ministerial Council has taken place against the bleak backdrop of the crisis in and around Ukraine. We had hoped and worked for agreement on a ministerial declaration on OSCE action addressing the crisis in and around Ukraine and we regret the renewed failure to get consensus language on the most serious security challenge Europe is facing. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and destabilization of eastern Ukraine continues to violate the principles and commitments, as enshrined notably in the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter, which constitute the basis of the European security order. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, which we will not recognize. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukrainian sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. The European Union will support the continued international diplomatic efforts within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group. Respect for our fundamental principles and commitments must be restored.

We reaffirm our strong support for the OSCE's role in the crisis in and around Ukraine, and to its essential and multifaceted contribution to facilitating the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We also reiterate our unequivocal support for the essential role of the SMM in advancing the full implementation of Minsk agreements and call for full, safe and unhindered access of the monitors throughout Ukraine. We call on all sides to work effectively to fully implement the Minsk agreements and to re-establish full Ukrainian control of its internationally recognized borders, so as to ensure a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE principles and commitments. We underline Russia's responsibility in this regard.

The resolution of the protracted conflicts in the Republic of Moldova, in Georgia and of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a top priority for the European Union. We call again on all parties to show the political will necessary to make progress in resolving them in 2018. We reiterate our strong support for the Geneva International Discussions, the Transnistrian Settlement process and the mediation of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. In this context we welcome today's ministerial declaration confirming the progress achieved towards reaching a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. We welcome the joint statement

by the Heads of Delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chair countries. We regret that it was not possible to adopt a statement on the conflict in Georgia.

Instruments of military transparency reduce risks, increase predictability, and thus play an important role in fostering confidence and stability. We welcome that we could reach agreement on the Ministerial Council decision on SALW and SCA, which remains an important contribution of the Organization to the stability and security in the OSCE region. This decision provides fresh impetus on our work in an area in which the EU and its Member States invest heavily. We also emphasize the need to work towards an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and CSBMs, together with our commitment to full implementation of the existing commitments in the politico-military area. We remain strong supporters of the Vienna Document modernization and the continued operation of the Open Skies Treaty. We regret that we could not reach consensus on declarations on promoting military stability and security and the 25th anniversary of the FSC. We welcome the successful launch of the Structured Dialogue, value the work done in 2017 and, building on this work, we will continue to actively engage in this process.

In light of terrorist attacks and ongoing terrorist threat in the OSCE area and worldwide, we were ready to speak out again strongly against the continued threat posed by terrorism. Negotiations on the text were fruitful and reflected a good balance – hence we welcome the Chairmanship’s statement. Building on previous commitments, we tried to reflect the increasing concern to all of us, on how to address the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters, as well as on how to counter terrorist narratives, particularly taking into account the youth perspective, while respecting freedom of opinion and expression. We had wanted to highlight again the important contribution of civil society – and the importance to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms to effectively prevent VERLT. It is regrettable that the text could not be adopted.

Our comprehensive security cannot exclude or marginalize half of our populations. Gender equality should be a core value for every participating State, and we deeply regret that we could not adopt a decision on strengthening the participation of women in the security sector, as this is an important issue to address to increase the operational effectiveness of the security sector. We saw this initiative as central to the work of our Organization and look forward to continuing efforts in this area with the Chairmanship. We are also particularly disappointed that we could not adopt a decision on preventing and combating violence against women, which remains one of the most pervasive and persistent human rights violations across the OSCE area. We reiterate that the engagement of men is essential for its elimination.

The cross-dimensional Ministerial Council decision on strengthening efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings represents an important deliverable of this year’s Ministerial Council. We welcome that it calls for the adoption of a victim-centred and gender-sensitive approach, which fully respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for the promotion of dialogue and co-operation among all relevant stakeholders. We also welcome the agreement, building on previous commitments, to strengthen efforts to combat all forms of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

We welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Council decision on enhancing OSCE efforts to reduce the risk of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies. The OSCE has played a pioneering role in adopting and

implementing confidence-building measures to address cybersecurity. Progress was made this year on the implementation front and this decision provides again a welcome push to continue to address the cyber challenges we all face in a cross-dimensional manner, while preserving the mandate of the Informal Working Group established pursuant to Permanent Council Decision No. 1039.

We reaffirm the importance we attach to our co-operation on economic and environmental issues as an important element of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. We welcome that we could adopt the decision on the promotion of economic participation in the OSCE area. We consider good governance, social inclusion, the fight against corruption and tackling unemployment, youth unemployment in particular, as essential to ensure prosperous, stable and secure societies. Furthermore, greening our economies and fostering our environmental co-operation are of fundamental importance. In the context of global efforts to combat climate change, in particular after the adoption of the Paris Agreement, we deeply regret that we were not able to find consensus on a text dealing with this critical and urgent issue.

The signals sent from the parallel civil society conference, this year again, reminded us about the urgent need to address the ongoing increasing restrictions on civil society and the crackdown in human rights and fundamental freedoms in many parts of the OSCE region. We appreciate the contribution of civil society in the implementation of our OSCE commitments, and we support their broad participation in OSCE events. Our commitments are more relevant than ever and we call on all participating States to live up to them and reverse existing violations. Despite considerable engagement from many delegations, which led to notable substantive progress, we deeply regret that for the third year in a row we were not able to adopt any texts in the third dimension, even though they enjoyed the support of the vast majority of participating States. Freedom of the media and freedom of assembly are at the core of the comprehensive concept of security, and we regret that the positions of a few participating States prevented us from adopting texts on these key policy topics. We hope and expect that efforts in these priority areas will continue in the coming years. In the same vein, we will remain committed to combating all forms of intolerance and discrimination in a holistic manner. We must continue to work on strengthening respect for fundamental freedoms, raise human rights violations, advance the implementation of our commitments and support OSCE activities in this regard.

The European Union stresses its strong support for the OSCE autonomous institutions, the OSCE field missions and the Secretariat. We reiterate our deep appreciation for the work of the ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities and our unwavering support for their strong and flexible mandates. Their ability to carry out these mandates must be preserved.

The Austrian Chairmanship had rightly emphasized the importance of incorporating the youth perspective in our work and promoting further participation of young people. We look forward to further discussions on this issue.

We also look forward to our continued fruitful co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

The OSCE's southern region – the Mediterranean – remains a priority in 2018. We appreciate the Italian Chair's efforts throughout the year on common interests and risks that

impact security in the Mediterranean region and the OSCE area as a whole. The OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo this year confirmed the relevance of migration in the security context – not just as a challenge, but also as an opportunity.

We greatly appreciate Italy's readiness to assume the Chairmanship of the OSCE at this critical point in time. Minister Alfano, we look forward to working with you and your able team during your Chairmanship and we wish you every success. You can count on our full support. In this vein, we would like to see timely adoption of the budget for 2018 and the adoption of a decision on scales of contributions.

I request that this statement be attached to the journal of today's meeting.

The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹, Montenegro¹ and Albania¹, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and San Marino align themselves with this statement.

1 The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF UKRAINE

(Annex 9 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Mr. Chairperson-in-Office,
Excellencies,

The delegation of Ukraine is grateful to the Austrian hosts for the warm hospitality in Austria's and the OSCE capital. We highly appreciate the work of all members of the Austrian Chairmanship team and their dedication during the year.

The conflict in and around Ukraine, caused by Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine, illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, military intervention in Donbas stayed at the top of the OSCE agenda throughout the year and in the centre of the discussions at this Ministerial Council meeting. This aggression and related flagrant breach of Helsinki Final Act principles and Paris Charter norms remain the biggest threat to Ukraine's and European security and to the rules-based order. This year once again, we have not been able to agree on a document that would chart the way to the resolution of the conflict with full respect for OSCE norms and principles. The reason is that Russia would not recommit itself to such basic rules as respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers of participating States, and non-use or threat of use of force. The Russian Federation is not willing to implement in full its Minsk commitments, instead perpetrating further hostilities, violence and destruction. This Russian position provides clarity on the origin of the security threats to Ukraine and other European nations.

It is in this disturbing context that we underline the importance of exploring ways to increase the OSCE's effectiveness in dealing with cases of clear, gross and continuing violations of OSCE principles and commitments, as was agreed at the OSCE Istanbul Summit. We request the incoming Italian Chairmanship to launch respective consultations.

Addressing the serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the illegally occupied Crimean peninsula, including by seeking unimpeded access there of the OSCE and other international organizations, must remain in the focus of our efforts.

Ukraine supported the Chairmanship's efforts on the draft decisions of the Ministerial Council and promoted a number of specific aspects with a direct link to security. We reiterate the importance of incremental progress and added value in the adoption of OSCE documents. We welcome the consensus reached in a number of areas.

We deeply regret that in the human dimension, which constitutes one of the main pillars of our common security, decisions were again not adopted, in particular those on free and pluralistic media, on freedom of assembly and on combating intolerance based on religious grounds. This situation is not acceptable in the environment of significant challenges to human rights and fundamental freedoms and particularly grave human rights violations in the situations of occupation.

We should continue to focus our efforts and strong attention on seeking compliance with the relevant OSCE commitments.

We wish our Italian friends every success in steering the OSCE work next year. Please be assured of Ukraine's readiness to closely co-operate with the incoming Chairmanship across the OSCE mandate.

The delegation of Ukraine kindly requests that this statement be attached to the journal of this Council meeting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF CANADA

(Annex 10 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Mr. Chairperson,

I will begin by reiterating Minister Freeland's statement yesterday that we oppose recent attempts to redefine European borders by force, as one of the fundamental principles of the OSCE is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. We regret that, once again, due to the failure of Russia to uphold this principle, consensus was blocked on a ministerial communique, as well as on declarations on the crisis in and around Ukraine and on Georgia. Both issues must remain at the very top of our Organization's agenda.

Mr. Chairperson,

The Ministerial Council just adopted seven substantive decisions and statements. Canada is disappointed that consensus was not reached on important cross-cutting and human dimension topics, notably on freedom of assembly, on freedom of the media and expression, and on the protection of religious freedom.

We are particularly disappointed by the failure to achieve consensus on the two draft decisions on combating violence against women and on the role of women in the security sector, which focus on gender equality issues. Canada will continue to press for meaningful and concrete progress within the OSCE on these critical issues.

For us, the protection of human rights and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusion are and must remain at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. As Minister Freeland said yesterday, the attempts by some OSCE participating States to roll back provisions of democracy and the rule of law, often under the guise of a response to the threat of terrorism, undermine democracy and adversely affect everyone, and in particular vulnerable groups, be they migrants, women and girls, LGBTI persons or persons of various faiths and beliefs and, of course, the human rights defenders who nobly attempt to assist such groups.

While we welcome the decision adopted on small arms and light weapons, we also regret that we could not achieve consensus on other politico-military issues. It is important to continue working to improve transparency, risk reduction and modernization, and full implementation of existing conventional arms control agreements. We look forward to continuing the Structured Dialogue in 2018 and to addressing all aspects of our shared comprehensive security in that context.

Mr. Chairperson,

Despite these disappointing outcomes, we are convinced that the well-established OSCE commitments and principles we have all agreed upon must continue to guide our collective action, and we salute the contribution made by our OSCE autonomous institutions, the Secretariat and field missions. Their work is essential and deserves both our accolades and our unstinting support.

We also take this opportunity to once again express our strong support for the OSCE's essential contribution to ensuring a sustainable political solution to the conflict being fought in eastern Ukraine, in line with OSCE principles and commitments and including facilitation of the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. We salute the contribution to peace and security of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, and reiterate our full support in ensuring that it is able to safely and securely implement its mandate on the full territory of Ukraine. We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its recognized borders, as well as the fact that Canada does not and will not recognize the illegal annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, which remain integral parts of Ukraine.

Mr. Chairperson,

In closing, my delegation thanks you and the entire Austrian team of the 2017 OSCE Chairmanship for the efforts you have made to guide the OSCE throughout the year and for your ongoing hospitality here in Vienna. Canada very much looks forward to working closely with Italy as it takes over the OSCE Chairmanship and to meeting in Milan next year.

I would ask that this statement be reflected in the journal of this Ministerial Council meeting.

Thank you.

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWEDEN
(ALSO ON BEHALF OF CANADA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC,
ESTONIA, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, POLAND, ROMANIA, THE UNITED
KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)**

(Annex 11 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

This statement is delivered on behalf of Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

We reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

We express our full support to the strong determination of Georgia, in its aspirations of European and Euro-Atlantic integration and commend the commitment shown by the Georgian authorities in this regard.

We welcome the progress made by Georgia in further consolidating its democracy, improving transparency of its institutions, upholding human rights and fostering economic development, thereby setting a very positive example.

We congratulate the government and people of Georgia on well-administered local elections of 2017 conducted in respect with fundamental freedoms and international commitments. We note the preliminary findings and conclusions of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission and expect the government to implement its recommendations to further improve the election environment in the country.

We remain concerned over the continued occupation of the territories of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, based on full respect of the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, and the fundamental norms and principles of international law.

We call upon the Russian Federation to fully implement the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 Ceasefire Agreement, *inter alia* to withdraw its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia.

We urge the Russian Federation to reverse its recognition of Georgia's regions as independent States.

We support the Geneva International Discussions as an important format to address the consequences of the August 2008 war, and underline the need for progress on the core issues of the discussions, including the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia aimed at providing security and stability on the ground, and ensuring the safe and dignified return of IDPs and refugees.

We welcome the efficient work and contributions of the EU Monitoring Mission in preventing the escalation of tensions on the ground and call upon the Russian Federation to grant the EUMM an access to the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We support the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Gali and Ergneti and

encourage the participants to find proper solutions for the safety and humanitarian needs of the conflict-affected population.

We express our deep concern over the increase of Russian military exercises and further build-up to the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia by the Russian Federation. We condemn the gross violations of rights related to freedom of movement, residence, property, as well as right to education in one's native language and underline that the so-called borderization through placement of artificial obstacles and fortifying the occupation line with barbed and razor wire fences further aggravates the humanitarian situation on the ground.

Of particular concern is the intensified ethnic discrimination in the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We express our concern for recent mass demolition of houses of Georgian IDPs in Eredvi village, South Ossetia, Georgia, under the Russian investment programme that is an illustration of purposeful policy to completely erase the traces of ethnic Georgian population from the occupied territories.

We support the fundamental right of IDPs and refugees to return to the places of their origin in safety and dignity.

We call upon the Russian Federation to enable access by international human rights monitoring mechanisms to the occupied territories of Georgia.

We welcome Georgia's constructive policy aimed at de-escalation of tensions with Russia including unilateral steps such as the pledge of non-use of force in restoring its territorial integrity, its constructive participation in the Geneva International Discussions, as well as its efforts to engage with the population residing in the occupied regions and support concrete projects in healthcare, education and environmental fields that are being implemented to this end.

We encourage the OSCE's engagement in the process of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict in Georgia and support the implementation of confidence-building measures with an aim to rebuilding trust and improving the living conditions of the conflict-affected communities.

We also encourage OSCE participating States to agree on reopening an OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, in particular for the benefit of the civilian population, including a monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the occupation line. The mission will considerably strengthen the OSCE's engagement in the Geneva International Discussions and Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms, as well as in implementation of CBMs.

The Friends look forward to working with the OSCE and Georgian authorities to develop supportive humanitarian, educational, medical, environmental and other outreach opportunities to increase contacts. The Friends will continue to raise awareness of the conflict in Georgia and need for its peaceful resolution.

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

(Annex 12 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Mr. Chairperson,

In his opening statement yesterday, Secretary Tillerson called the OSCE an indispensable pillar of our common European security architecture – an architecture that bolsters peace and stability throughout the region. As this Twenty-Fourth OSCE Ministerial Council comes to a close, let us reflect for a moment on the vision rooted in the Helsinki Final Act and on what that should mean for all of us here today.

The signatories of the Helsinki Final Act believed that a rules-based international order could help us meet common challenges. The OSCE was born with the hope that through commitments to basic principles of international behaviour – including respect for the territorial integrity of States, the inviolability of frontiers, and respect for the sovereignty of other States and the human rights of our people – we could avoid the kinds of conflicts that rocked the European continent throughout the twentieth century and, collectively, build a Europe whole, free, and at peace.

Events of the last decade have tarnished this optimism. Most recently, in 2014, Russia-led forces violated Ukraine's borders. The United States is committed to Ukraine's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. We call for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, and will never accept Russia's occupation and attempted annexation of Crimea. And Crimea-related sanctions will remain in place until Russia returns full control of the peninsula to Ukraine. We join several other participating States today in voicing our regret regarding the failure to produce a declaration on this number one threat to the security of Europe, and we welcome Italy's commitment to prioritizing this issue during its upcoming Chairmanship.

The United States remains committed to the SMM (the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine) as a vital component for achieving peace in Ukraine. As participating States, we share ensuring that each and every monitor, regardless of their nationality, enjoys the full support of all of us. On behalf of the United States of America, I would like to thank my colleagues and those ministers who were kind enough to mention the horrific loss of Mr. Joseph Stone in their opening statements. As I've said before, it's our collective responsibility to make sure that there is no more loss of monitors. It should never happen again. And particularly those participating States that have the direct ability to influence that, I call upon them to take extra precautions to ensure that we never lose another monitor. In this light, let me be even more clear. We call on Russia and its proxies to end their harassment and intimidation and attacks on the Mission, and to permit the Mission to access all of Ukraine, including the internationally-recognized border with Russia.

Secretary Tillerson noted yesterday that the United States welcomes the frank exchanges that have already occurred in the Structured Dialogue on the challenges that nations view as primary threats to peace and safety. At a time when existing arms control agreements are being violated, we cannot seriously discuss new arrangements. The United States does stand ready to participate actively in intensified discussions next year under the Italian Chairmanship on the full range of threat perceptions that have been raised. As

Secretary Tillerson noted yesterday, we need to take action to rebuild military transparency by updating and modernizing the Vienna Document, even as we press for full implementation of existing agreements.

On Moldova, the United States welcomes the statement agreed at this Ministerial Council highlighting the important accomplishments of the recent “5+2” meeting in Vienna, including the reopening of a key bridge to facilitate the free movement of goods and people, as well as several other important steps that will improve the lives of people on the ground. However, that text does not address all the issues relevant to the OSCE’s work to promote a political settlement of the conflict in Moldova. We need to continue to focus on achieving implementation of Summit commitments relating to Russian military withdrawal from Moldova and on Moldova’s call to transform the current peacekeeping force into a genuinely multinational presence.

We were pleased to join the Friends of Georgia in issuing a statement at this Ministerial that makes clear our support for Georgia’s territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders, and we welcome the frank discussion on a Georgia regional statement, though disagreements on core principles made agreement on a text impossible.

We support the efforts of the Minsk Group to find a lasting and peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. We welcome the 6 December meeting of the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan and the issuing of a statement yesterday by the Heads of Delegation of the Minsk Group Co-Chair countries. We were pleased by commitments made by the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan at their October summit to intensify negotiations and to reduce tensions along the line of contact.

We welcome the cyber decision, which sets the informal working group on cyber up for continued success. However, we regret that consensus on an important new counterterrorism declaration – which would have established a new policy framework for the OSCE’s work in rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters and their accompanying family members – was not achieved.

Mr. Chairperson,

We are living in a time when civil society and independent media are under considerable pressure in a number of participating States. As you noted in your statement, intolerance in many forms is on the rise in our region. It is in this context that it is regrettable that agreement was not reached on texts in the areas of media freedom, discrimination on religious grounds, and freedom of peaceful assembly. I wish to express our profound appreciation to the Chairmanship for its efforts to help advance our work and to train the spotlight on these important issues. The United States joins the overwhelming number of participating States in categorically opposing the eleventh hour attempt by one participating State to insert language aimed at compromising the mandate and independence of the Representative on Freedom of the Media. As Secretary Tillerson said yesterday, the United States “will reject efforts to weaken any of (the OSCE’s) institutions.”

Looking forward, we should now turn our attention to focusing on collective efforts on implementing our international obligations and OSCE commitments on human rights and fundamental freedoms, looking to leverage the expertise of the Representative on Freedom of

the Media, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Chairmanship's Representatives, and our field missions.

Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to commend the civil society representatives who gathered in Vienna for the parallel conference on the eve of the Ministerial. I thank them for their participation and their insightful report and thoughtful recommendations across all three dimensions of our work. I had the privilege of meeting with a number of them yesterday, and I came away from that meeting as convinced as ever that civil society's contribution of ideas and insights is crucial to the integrity and advancement of the Helsinki process and to the achievement of comprehensive security. The United States will oppose any attempts to reduce or unduly restrict civil society's access to and participation in OSCE proceedings, and will continue to champion the courageous efforts of civil society activists across the region.

We welcome the adoption today of two strong texts on combating trafficking in persons: one on prevention of human trafficking and one on combating all forms of child trafficking as well as other sexual exploitation of children. The latter decision addresses imminent threats to children from traffickers on the Internet, encourages participating States to prosecute traffickers who misuse the Internet to facilitate access to children for exploitation, strengthens our commitments to international law enforcement co-operation for the prevention of child sex tourism, and calls on participating States to take new, strategic, and specific actions to protect children from accessing pornography on the Internet.

Mr. Chairperson,

Regrettably the failures of some participating States to implement their OSCE commitments should not render those commitments any less valid nor the fundamental truth underlying our Organization's concept of comprehensive security any less true. In our view the OSCE is, and will continue to be, a major contributor to regional security and stability, as necessary and relevant today as it was in 1975. Our collective commitments to the Organization are just as real. Despite individual budget constraints and other challenges, the 57 participating States must continue to provide the OSCE with the resources it needs to carry out its mandate, especially in the independent institutions and field missions. All – let me be clear – all participating States must assist the Italian Chairmanship and agree to both a 2018 Unified Budget and a continued mechanism for assessing participating States' Scales of Contributions before the end of the year.

Mr. Chairperson,

Before concluding, allow me to thank – on behalf of Secretary Tillerson and his entire delegation – you and your team. Thank you for your hospitality, patience, and hard work. I wish to commend Italy for taking on the Chairmanship next year, during a particularly challenging time. Italy can count on full US support and co-operation next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I ask that this statement be attached to the journal of the day.

**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

(Annex 13 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

Mr. Chairperson,
Esteemed colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I should like to express our gratitude to the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, to Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz personally and his entire team, as well as to the Vienna city authorities for their hospitality and the excellent organization of this Ministerial Council meeting.

The main achievement of this Ministerial Council is the quality discussions held on a wide range of pan-European issues. It is this ability rather than the number of decisions adopted that we see as the OSCE's key role as the leading forum for political dialogue.

We regret that the politicized position of some countries has once again prevented the adoption of a number of important Ministerial Council decisions, including a common political declaration and a statement on the OSCE's efforts to facilitate a settlement of the internal Ukrainian crisis. Moreover, two countries have even blocked the attempt by the Austrian Chairmanship to adopt a non-confrontational document in support of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine.

At the same time, discussions on other conflicts in the OSCE's area of responsibility were more productive. We welcome the statement on Transdniestria, which reflects the progress made towards a settlement and the resolve to settle the remaining issues. We reaffirm our initiative regarding the need for an agreement to be concluded between the Governments of Moldova and Transdniestria on guarantees for the implementation of the agreements reached.

We welcome the joint statement by the heads of delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group three Co-Chair countries on a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Although no document has been adopted on the Geneva Discussions on security in the Trans-Caucasus, we believe that the talks at the Ministerial Council have confirmed the need for this important format of direct dialogue between Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, with a focus on reaching an agreement between them on the non-use of force.

Unfortunately, the politico-military dimension has fallen victim to confrontational policies. Only one document has been adopted on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition. Nevertheless, we regard the discussions on ways of revitalizing an equal and mutually respectful pan-European dialogue on de-escalation of tension as a major outcome of the Ministerial Council meeting. For our part, we should like to point out the illogical and counter-productive nature of any attempt to push through decisions on the "modernization" of the OSCE's existing politico-military tools. There can be no talk of this until NATO changes its policy of "containment" towards Russia. At the same time, we stand ready to participate in the Structured Dialogue and hope that it will be as depoliticized as possible.

It is important that a serious discussion on jointly countering transnational threats has taken place at the Ministerial Council meeting. Stepping up counter-terrorism co-operation is especially relevant in the light of an unprecedented wave of terrorist acts in Europe. We regret that no Ministerial Council documents have been agreed upon on countering terrorist ideology and propaganda, or on extremism and radicalization. We believe that the Ministerial Council decision in support of the OSCE's systemic work in the field of information and communication technologies will help to form a responsible attitude among the participating States towards co-operation and renunciation of unsubstantiated accusations of involvement in cyberattacks.

Our work on the economic aspects of the OSCE's activities has enabled us to agree on a decision on the broader participation of women and young people in economic affairs and on encouraging private enterprise. In that connection, it is regrettable that some countries are unwilling to reflect the issue of the alignment of integration processes in Ministerial Council decisions. We expect this issue to remain on the OSCE's agenda. We should like to draw attention to the joint statement adopted by the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries on connectivity and alignment of integration processes, which was circulated in the OSCE. We regret that a decision on reducing the environmental risks of economic activity has not been adopted.

Although no decisions on the "integration of integrations" have been adopted, we note the development of dialogue between organizations and associations on the OSCE platform involving the heads and representatives of the Collective Security Treaty Organization, NATO, the EAEU and the European Union, including on the sidelines of this Ministerial Council meeting.

Discussions at the meeting have shown that the human dimension is still being seriously affected by substantial distortions and politicization. Russia proposed that the Ministerial Council consider a draft decision on optimizing the OSCE human dimension events. We regret that this proposal did not achieve consensus. Still, we hope that discussion on this issue will continue.

We are pleased that decisions were adopted on combating trafficking in human beings and protecting children from trafficking and sexual exploitation. At the same time, serious problems such as attacks on freedom of the media in some OSCE States and attempts to rewrite history have not been reflected in the Ministerial Council documents. We draw attention to the statement by the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States on preventing and precluding the destruction and desecration of monuments and other items commemorating the courage and heroism of those who fell fighting Nazism and fascism during the Second World War. We expect the OSCE to address this issue.

The unconstructive position taken by some States has again prevented us from carrying out the instructions of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel in 2014 regarding the adoption of declarations to protect Christians and Muslims. We call on the future Italian Chairmanship to work towards settling this issue next year. An event on the safety of Christians, which Russia and Hungary organized on the margins of this meeting, demonstrated the importance of this issue and focused on the numerous threats facing Christian communities in the Middle East and Europe.

In conclusion, I should like to thank our Austrian colleagues for their sincere efforts to formulate a balanced OSCE agenda for 2017, which takes into account the interests of all participating States, and also for their most constructive approach towards reaching consensus on Ministerial Council decisions.

We trust that Italy will be able to take up this baton in a fitting manner next year and wish it every success in its future endeavours.

Thank you for your attention. I request that this statement be appended to the journal of the day.

IV. REPORTS TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

**REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO THE
TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC.GAL/5/17 of 8 December 2017)

Mr. Chairperson,
Minister Kurz,

Thank you for your warm welcome, and thank you for your dedicated leadership of the OSCE this year. I would also like to thank your teams in Vienna headed by Ambassadors Raunig and Koja.

Ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to begin my first address to the Ministerial Council by thanking all of you for the confidence you have placed in me. I will make every effort to meet your high expectations. In return, I am counting on your commitment, on your support and on your active engagement in guiding the Organization.

Security begins with trust – and trust begins with dialogue. This is the impulse that drove the Helsinki process. It is high time that we revive it today.

I believe we all would like the OSCE to be a space where real progress can be made in reconciling differences and enhancing co-operation. I am convinced that the OSCE has the flexibility, the tools and the expertise to be an effective force for stability and peace in today's increasingly complex and volatile security environment. And I am eager to work with all of you to ensure that our organization is well prepared to tackle both challenges and opportunities.

We must recommit to the principles and commitments our organization stands for. At the same time, we must be pragmatic and find common ground where interests coincide, and build a unifying agenda for the OSCE. Small but steady steps will produce incremental progress. But this requires you, the participating States, to recommit wholeheartedly to genuine dialogue and co-operation.

We already work together effectively to combat transnational threats like terrorism, violent extremism, and trafficking in drugs, arms and people. Our joint efforts to create confidence-building measures to prevent crises stemming from cyber and ICT threats show how well an incremental approach can work.

The Structured Dialogue, our flagship dialogue initiative, is a critical example, in today's increasingly unpredictable security environment, of constructive engagement in the politico-military dimension. Eventually I expect this informal process to produce results, including military risk reduction and confidence- and security-building measures. And further down the road, it should lead to renewed focus on conventional arms control.

Economic connectivity and environmental co-operation are increasingly acknowledged as areas where the OSCE builds trust and adds value, in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda of the UN. They also have great unifying potential.

I hope progress in these dimensions will also bring participating States together to reaffirm and strengthen our shared principles and commitments to human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law.

Dear Ministers,

No other regional organization has such a sophisticated toolbox for preventing and resolving conflicts as the OSCE. We have fantastic instruments in our institutions, field operations and the Secretariat. And we are keen to contribute to resolving the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. The Organization is well equipped to respond to crises – as we demonstrated in our rapid reaction to the crisis in and around Ukraine.

Working toward a sustainable resolution of this crisis remains the Organization's top priority. The OSCE will continue to de-escalate tensions through our missions on the ground, and facilitate political efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement.

I am deeply concerned by the intensified military activity and the worsening humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine. We all need to push harder to break the political stalemate, and for full implementation of the Minsk Agreements by all sides.

Recent discussions about a possible UN peace operation in eastern Ukraine have spotlighted the OSCE's added value as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, and as a longstanding partner in conflict management, conflict resolution and post-conflict rehabilitation. We are ready to co-operate with the UN on any concrete proposals that emerge from the Security Council, and the OSCE should be closely involved in planning from the outset.

Recalling the tragic death in the line of duty of one of our colleagues in the Special Monitoring Mission, I call on the sides to fulfil their obligation to guarantee the safety of OSCE monitors, and to grant them full and unhindered access throughout the conflict zone.

Dear Ministers,

The OSCE needs to be ready to respond to crises quickly and effectively, but we also should be prepared to seize opportunities.

A new, co-operative spirit in Central Asia; transformations in South East Europe; positive developments in Moldova, which I hope will accelerate progress toward a peaceful settlement; and broad recognition of the need for co-operation on shared security concerns on both shores of the Mediterranean – in all of these developments, I see great potential – and growing expectations – for the OSCE to do more. With modest additional resources, we could respond in a meaningful way to all of these opportunities, enhancing security for us all.

I have already mentioned the critical role of dialogue. My own efforts will focus on bringing together key stakeholders to find a way forward on specific concerns, and introducing fresh perspectives on critical issues.

I will also pursue pragmatic, result-oriented partnerships, and ensure that our efforts to address common security challenges are complementary and mutually reinforcing. I will work closely with the Troika to develop medium-term strategies for our Mediterranean and

our Asian Partnerships. I aim to revitalize the Platform for Co-operative Security, our well-established but under-utilized mechanism for engaging with regional organizations both east and west of Vienna. And I will also continue to strengthen and further operationalize our relationship with the United Nations, for the benefit of our organization and our region.

Dear Ministers,

The OSCE is the world's largest regional security organization, working in all three security dimensions and covering an area with over one billion people. We run 16 field operations, including a large-scale mission in a conflict zone. We do all this, and so much more, on assessed budgets totalling less than 220 million euros.

The Organization is lean, but it also needs to be fit for purpose. I will strive to make the executive structures more responsive to the needs of participating States, to maximize our collective impact, and to ensure that the funds you put at our disposal are put to the best possible use. I intend to strengthen the Secretariat's strategic planning capacities; enhance cross-dimensionality, coherence of action and internal synergies across the Organization; and mobilize synergies among our gender instruments.

I will also focus on revamping personnel policies, including the secondment system; and budget reform, which will increase transparency, enable us to do multi-year strategic planning, and introduce a more methodological approach to reprioritization and efficiency.

Ultimately the OSCE can only be as effective as the participating States enable it to be. It is up to you to provide the Organization with the resources we need to close the gap between what you expect us to do, and what we are currently able to do.

I am well aware that many participating States face financial constraints. But if you believe in the OSCE, as I do, then I urge you to strengthen the Organization by supporting moderate growth in all three dimensions.

For my part, I pledge to be transparent and cost-conscious.

Organizational issues can and should be used to unite rather than divide. So I call on all of you to take greater ownership of the Organization. Adopting a sensible budget for 2018 by year-end would send a strong signal that you take the OSCE seriously and are committed to its work. On a practical level, it would provide the Organization with planning security and ensure that we can deliver the results you expect.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the entire OSCE staff. I have been extremely impressed by their commitment and by their hard work. They deserve our thanks for enabling the Organization to do so much with its limited resources to promote security, stability and co-operation across our region and beyond.

Next year the OSCE will continue to grapple with serious challenges, and I hope it will also seize new opportunities. I look forward to working with the incoming Italian Chairmanship, and I offer you my assurances of the Organization's steadfast commitment to support the implementation of your decisions.

Thank you.

**LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
FORUM FOR SECURITY CO-OPERATION TO THE
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR EUROPE, INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF AUSTRIA, CHAIRPERSON OF THE TWENTY-FOURTH
MEETING OF THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(Annex 14 to MC(24) Journal No. 2 of 8 December 2017)

As the Chairperson of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), it is a pleasure for me to inform you about the activities of the Forum in 2017.

In preparing this letter, I have consulted with the previous 2017 FSC Chairmanships of Romania and the Russian Federation. During 2017, the Chairmanships worked in close co-operation with each other to ensure continuity and efficiency in the implementation of the Forum's annual work programme.

Even though the situation in and around Ukraine remained the dominant topic of the discussions in the FSC, several initiatives put forward by participating States led to the adoption of six decisions, which were designed to support the implementation of existing commitments.

Also, the participating States decided to approve the use of the OSCE Communications Network to address security of and in the use of information and communication technologies in line with Permanent Council Decisions No. 1039, No. 1106 and No. 1202, upon the identification of contact centres/points for cyber/ICT security-related communications within capitals and provided that relevant operational requirements are elaborated and unhindered provision of services to the OSCE participating States in the politico-military dimension is ensured.

The strategic discussions during the Security Dialogues emphasized the FSC's importance as a platform for addressing and discussing security issues of common interest. Specifically, an active dialogue took place on matters related to topical European security issues, including, *inter alia*, confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs), the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, UN Security Council resolutions 1540 (2004) and 1325 (2000) and subregional military and defence co-operation. All three FSC 2017 Chairmanships actively stimulated discussions by organizing a total of nineteen Security Dialogues.

By continuing promoting regional stability and comprehensive and co-operative security Romania and Serbia dedicated Security Dialogues to the subregional issues in South East Europe and the Black Sea; politico-military activities undertaken by OSCE missions; SALW projects in the Republic of Moldova and implementation of the Agreement on Sub-Regional Arms Control Article IV, Annex 1-B, Dayton Peace Accords. Furthermore, under the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation, a number of Security Dialogues were held with the participation of Collective Security Treaty Organization, Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Wassenaar Arrangement emphasizing the importance of the OSCE's comprehensive and co-operative concept of security.

Under the Chairmanship of Romania, the 27th Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting took place in Vienna, between 28 February and 1 March 2017 during which the participating States discussed the present and future implementation of agreed confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs).

Under the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation, the sixth Annual Discussion on the Implementation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was held on 14 June 2017, in Vienna. Furthermore, under the respective Chairmanships of Romania and Serbia the role of the military chaplains in the armed forces and the freedom of belief (in peacetime or at war), as well as were the role of parliaments in the democratic control of armed forces was discussed. In May 2017, a seminar on the Code of Conduct for participating States of South East Europe and other interested participating States and Partners for Co-operation was held in Budva, Montenegro. Additionally, for the first time a Conference on the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security was held in October 2017 in Washington D.C., United States of America. This event provided a unique opportunity to discuss the provisions of the Code of Conduct in the North American context and to facilitate better implementation, to promote awareness and to support outreach of the Code of Conduct. With the Code of Conduct providing the key normative framework for security sector governance, the FSC Support Section has also supported the OSCE towards developing a coherent and co-ordinated approach to security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) and in bringing the concept of SSG/R closer to its participating States.

With the participation of International Atomic Energy Agency, EU, non-proliferation issues were promoted at the Security Dialogues organized by Romania and the Russian Federation with the emphasis on implementation of UNSCR 1540 (2004), in particular, to identify new and emerging risks and threats to international WMD proliferation regime and through national export control experiences and best practices of the OSCE participating States. The 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts recognized the efforts already made by the OSCE participating States to promote the implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), as well as the role of the OSCE Secretariat in promoting the appointment of 1540 national Points of Contact and encouraging the development of a network among them.

By supporting gender equality and integrating gender perspectives in politico-military dimension, Romania and Serbia organized two Security Dialogues seeking the role of military in implementing the UNSCR 1325 and enhancing women's role in both conflict-related and peacetime operations. The OSCE and UNODA initiative was launched during the Romanian Chairmanship on "Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education Partnership" enhancing knowledge and training of women in the field of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. For this purpose a Scholarship for Peace and Security was developed by support of a number of participating States.

The issue of confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) was accorded particular importance during the tenure of the three FSC Chairmanships, which was highlighted through a number of activities in 2017. Romania held a special meeting on Vienna Document 2011 raising topical issues on arms control, modernization of the Vienna Document and its need for update.

In 2017 a significant work was accomplished in the area of small arms and light weapons (SALW) and stockpiles of conventional ammunition (SCA). A meeting on deactivation of SALW was held on 30 March 2017. As a result a process of developing

minimal standards for deactivation of SALW was taken forward and enhanced. Furthermore, by contributing to transparency, predictability and stability in the OSCE area, an online reporting tool was introduced under the Chairmanship of the Russian Federation allowing participating States to simultaneously submit national SALW reports to both the OSCE and the UN. This contributes to lessen the reporting burden on participating States and to encourage a co-ordinated approach to reporting. On the basis of the OSCE Document on SALW, Serbia organized a special meeting to review the implementation of OSCE assistance projects in the field of SALW and stockpiles of conventional ammunition on 3 and 4 October 2017. As the result of the meeting the various aspects of project management issues were discussed as well as shortcomings and room for improvements were identified.

The FSC contributed within its mandate to the Annual Security Review Conference, held from 27 to 29 June 2017 through sessions, focusing on politico-military elements, including conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. During the Conference, discussions were held with focus on elements related to the wide range of politico-military security in the OSCE. Moreover, a special session was devoted to the Structured Dialogue, a process that addresses challenges and risks in the wider politico-military sphere and explores possibilities of reversing the negative trends in the European security architecture.

The Romanian FSC Chairmanship issued a perception paper (FSC.DEL/124/17) containing Chair's conclusions and recommendations after the thematic debates that were held in accordance with their programme of work. In their view, the perception paper would add an extra layer of memory about progress the FSC succeeded to achieve in addressing topics of broad interest and would assist future Chairs in defining the starting line of their related endeavours.

All three FSC Chairmanships in 2017 continued to work jointly with the Permanent Council (PC) on issues of relevance of both bodies as part of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive and indivisible security. To this end, with the participation of high officials from the NATO, EU, US four joint FSC-PC meetings have been held by November 2017 on military aspects of cybersecurity, on support to the national authorities in migration crisis by the security forces, and on developments with regard to the Structured Dialogue, in order to address cross-dimensional issues relevant to the work of both the FSC and the PC.

Finally, media coverage indicated a significant level of public interest in the FSC's work, judging from the OSCE webpage views, engagement on Twitter, Facebook podcast interviews, comments and shares.

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS FOR
CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC.GAL/4/17 of 6 December 2017)

Germany is committed to strengthening and further developing the partnership of the OSCE with its Partners for Co-operation. While holding the Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group in 2017, Germany supported the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship in its activities to promote an open and interactive dialogue between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation, following a demand-driven approach and responding to the interests and priorities of the Asian Partners.

Five meetings of the Asian Contact Group were held in Vienna during the course of the year, providing a valuable platform for information exchange, dialogue and sharing of best practices between the OSCE participating States and the Asian Partners for Co-operation.

The subjects of the five meetings were jointly selected by the German Asian Contact Group Chairmanship together with the Asian Partners in order to reflect the wide range of topics of interest to the individual Asian Partner countries and to support the priorities of the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship. Each meeting featured speakers from one of the Asian Partner countries as well as presentations on the chosen topics by experts from international organizations, academia and civil society.

At the first meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 26 April, Mr. J.-K. Lee, Director-General for International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, gave a presentation about the security situation on the Korean Peninsula in the light of recent developments and their implications for the OSCE area. He described the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) as the imminent threat in East Asia, but also globally due to the complexity of the challenges it poses to the international security system – such as nuclear threats and missile threats, as well as threats posed by chemical weapons, cyberattacks, and human rights abuses. A global approach must be taken to resolving the DPRK security threat, with the full support of the international community, including the OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, by means of using the OSCE's comprehensive security approach and learning from the OSCE's experience of regional co-operation. Mr. V. Mantels, Head of the UNSCR 1540 Support Team at the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) in New York, presented his report on the security threat posed by the DPRK. He noted that there has been a significant development in the missile programme and chemical weapons programme, and that no information is available about the country's compliance with the Biological Weapons Convention. He added that the real concern is the possibility that some of these weapons might end up in the hands of non-State actors and terrorists. Ambassador V. Gonzalez-Roman, Permanent Representative of Spain to the OSCE and Co-Chairperson of the OSCE Group of Friends of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, presented the perspective of the Group of Friends. She commended the work carried out by the OSCE to promote the implementation of UNSCR 1540 since 2009 through the adoption of relevant decisions by the Forum for Security Co-operation. Regional organizations have an important role to play, and OSCE participating States and executive structures should join the Group and take part in its

activities. Ambassador B. Hammer, Permanent Representative of Australia to the OSCE, emphasized that there is a pressing need to stop further development of the DPRK nuclear programme, and noted that on 22 April, the DPRK threatened to use nuclear weapons against Australia. He further stressed that the DPRK is a global security threat that sets a bad example at a global level. Finally, Ambassador K. Koinuma of Japan noted that the situation on the Korean Peninsula is becoming increasingly tense. With regard to the development of the DPRK's missile programme, he warned that if the DPRK managed to mount a warhead on a long-range missile, Europe would face an imminent security threat.

The main speaker at the second meeting of the Asian Contact Group, held on 9 June, Mr. N. Alikhail, Director General of Security Co-operation and Border Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, delivered a presentation on empowering youth in countering violent extremism from the perspective of Afghanistan. He noted that violent extremism is no longer confined by borders, and that Islam has never been used to provoke terrorism. The past four decades have been difficult for Afghanistan with the surge in terrorist activities. Afghanistan's very youthful population poses a major challenge. He noted that the reasons for the increase in youth involvement in violent extremism included poverty, frustration, and unemployment. He thanked the OSCE for its contribution to Afghanistan, and emphasized the importance of further co-operation and sharing of best practices in empowering youth in countering violent extremism. Ms. R. Ostrauskaite, OSCE Co-ordinator of Activities to address Transnational Threats, provided an update on the Department's activities. Mr. N. Prucha of the University of Vienna offered a concise historical overview of the spread of historical Islamic writings, which have been used to emphasize the peaceful nature of Islam. Finally, Mr. H. Saeedi, participant in a workshop organized in Almaty by the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship on the role of youth in preventing violent extremism, shared his experience with the participants.

The 2017 OSCE Asian Conference was held in Berlin, Germany, on 19 and 20 June. Co-organized by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the OSCE, the Conference focused on confidence-building in times of geopolitical changes, connectivity and regional economic co-operation, and the regional contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The event provided a timely opportunity for OSCE participating States and Asian Partners for Co-operation to share ideas and experiences with a view to identifying avenues for specific co-operation. The three thematic sessions reflected the OSCE's three dimensions while incorporating discussions on current topics of particular concern. The first session focused on confidence-building in times of geopolitical changes. Participants agreed that the current security environment presented risks but also opportunities and that work to recreate confidence in Europe and in Asia had to be a common priority. Furthermore, the world was facing a changing environment with many common challenges. In response to the challenges of our time, the OSCE, which itself served as a confidence-building measure, was active in various areas, such as countering violent extremism and terrorism, the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, engagement with non-State actors, involvement of civil society, especially women and youth, and strengthening regional co-operation. The second session addressed connectivity and regional economic co-operation. Economic co-operation could serve as a confidence-building measure contributing to peace and security in Europe and beyond, which is why connectivity was a priority of the German OSCE Chairmanship 2016. Connectivity was also a concept developed in South-East Asia, Eurasia and the European Union. Connectivity contributed to economic integration and co-operation, while at the same time feeding into confidence-building measures. Connectivity could mean joint development of infrastructure, tapping into opportunities, enhancing

digitalization, and the alignment of common standards. The third session, dedicated to the regional contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighted the central role of the OSCE, the world's largest regional security organization, as an important platform for dialogue. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognized the close relationship and interdependence between peace and security and development, and the OSCE could make specific contributions to the attainment of those Goals.

The OSCE Secretariat organized a side event at the Conference on "Engaging with Afghanistan and its neighbours – the OSCE's contribution to confidence-building by empowering women". The project is an example of the OSCE's holistic approach to security. Gender equality is a cross-cutting priority and one of the cornerstones of the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security. The project supports women in taking responsibility for matters directly affecting them and their communities. Through their engagement, women have the potential to strengthen good governance and environmental security, and thus contribute to sustainable development, conflict prevention and a more secure future for all.

The third meeting of the Contact Group was held on 7 July in Vienna, with a focus on the Indo-Pacific security dynamic. The first speaker, Mr. R. McKinnon, Assistant Secretary for Strategic Issues and Intelligence Branch at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, gave an overview of the Indo-Pacific region. He stated that it is a region with global significance, likely to drive the global economy well into the next decade and probably beyond. At the same time, he noted, the region is the locus of the most significant shifts in strategic and economic weight since the end of the Cold War. He encouraged European nations to continue to pursue constructive engagement with China, along with other Indo-Pacific countries; part of this should be the reinforcement of global rules and norms. Mr. T. Huxley, Executive Director at the International Institute for Strategic Studies IISS-Asia in Singapore, gave a presentation of IISS and its activities, the most prominent one being the Shangri-La Dialogue which is the most important annual gathering for defence and security establishments of the Indo-Pacific region. He noted that the Indo-Pacific regional security architecture is weak and that the region could benefit from an OSCE-type organization that could bring all stakeholders into a permanent framework for political and strategic dialogue. Ambassador K. Koinuma of Japan described the situation in the Asia-Pacific from the Japanese perspective and added that the region has countries with rapidly growing economies and populations. Ambassador V. Roger-Lacan, Permanent Representative of France to the OSCE, shared input from the French centre for policy and analysis on Asia. She pointed out that the reconfiguration of the security situation in Asia with the growing power of China, the current stalemate in the relationship between China and the United States of America over the DPRK, and the uncertainty as to the American security guarantees in Asia call for a reconfiguration of Europe's co-operation with the Asia-Pacific region. Finally, Mr. W. Donko, Minister and Head of the Unit for Eastern Asia, Australia/Oceania and the Asia-Europe Meeting in the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria, stated that there is an increased geostrategic and geopolitical competition in the region, causing volatility; what is needed is effective multilateralism.

At the fourth meeting on 6 October, Mr. M. Nakagome, Deputy Assistant Minister and Deputy Director of the European Policy Division, European Affairs Bureau, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, stated that Japan attaches great importance to co-operation with the OSCE. He stressed that North Korea poses a grave and imminent threat to the peace and stability of the international community. Ms. L. Rockwood, Executive

Director of the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, gave a presentation on the situation in the Korean Peninsula. She said that when it comes to dealing with the regime in Pyongyang, military action should be avoided at all costs; the risk of cascading into a nuclear war would have catastrophic consequences. Mr. F. Grare, Head of Asia at the Centre for Analysis, Forecast and Strategy at the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, pointed out that it is clear that the progress made by the DPRK changes the nature of the threat and the magnitude indicates a new situation. He added that the intercontinental ballistic missile capability poses not only a regional but also a global problem. Mr. D. Slinn, former UK Ambassador to the DPRK, shared his insights with the participants. He stressed that traditional diplomacy is not applicable in the case of the DPRK, that the acquisition of nuclear weapons is a long-term objective for the regime, and that they are not prepared to negotiate.

The fifth Contact Group meeting, held on 24 November, was dedicated to the topic of migration and its impact on security and development, with an exchange of views and experiences between the OSCE and the Asia-Pacific region. Mr. S. Petchamesree, Senior Lecturer and chairperson of the Ph.D. Programme in Human Rights and Peace Studies at the Institute of Human Rights and Peace Studies, Mahidol University, Thailand, presented insights into the current migration landscape in the Asia-Pacific, partly based on personal research. In view of the challenges linked to irregular and mixed migration movements, genuine migration policies had to be put into place, in the sense of human rights-based migration governance featuring participation, accountability and empowerment. Mr. M. Profazi, Senior Regional Adviser for Europe and Central Asia at the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, stressed that against the background of a polarized public debate, efforts have to be made to continue portraying success stories of migration and integration. The Permanent Representative of Italy to the OSCE and Chairperson of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group, Ambassador A. Azzoni, commended the political dialogue with the OSCE Partners, including on migration, given the growing interest in a debate on this topic within the OSCE. He affirmed that as the incoming OSCE Chairmanship, Italy will pay particular attention to the opportunities of migration, and that therefore it is important to learn about the economic and environmental drivers of migration, also in the Asia-Pacific. Mr. V. Žugić, Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, presented various activities of his Office in the field of migration, and invited the Asian Partners to participate in a project set up in order to update capacity-building tools for effective labour migration policies, including a focus on the Asia-Pacific.

The German Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group expresses its sincere gratitude to all the Asian Partners for Co-operation and to the participating States for their commitment and constructive co-operation in the framework of the OSCE Partnership. By wishing the best of success to the incoming Austrian Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group, Germany encourages continuing and deepening the productive exchange with the Asian Partners for Co-operation at meetings in Vienna and at the annual conference on the themes to which both the OSCE and the Partners have committed over the past years and which reflect all aspects of a comprehensive security approach.

REPORT ON THE OSCE MINISTERIAL TROIKA MEETING WITH THE ASIAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION

The meeting was opened by Ambassador M. Linhart, Deputy Foreign Minister of Austria and Representative of the 2017 OSCE Chairmanship, who thanked Germany for its able chairing of the 2017 Asian Contact Group and said that Austria would use the “German model” as a basis for its own Contact Group Chairmanship. Ambassador Linhart encouraged the Partners to preserve that Group’s enriching culture of open discussion and suggested that, besides considering the state of play and lessons learned, they also propose possible ways forward. He announced that Australia had agreed to co-organize the 2018 OSCE Asian Conference. The Conference agenda would be focused on all three dimensions of security following close consultations with the Partners and the 2018 OSCE Chairmanship. Austria would further consider a rolling schedule for the Asian Contact Group, which reflected a common choice of topics as initiated by the Asian Partners. He recalled the thematic priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship, particularly highlighting the prevention and countering of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism as well as politico-military topics. Austria hoped to continue the discussion on this thematic focus in 2018, also with the Asian Partners, and encouraged the proposal of concrete ideas for joint initiatives.

Representing the Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group, Mr. M. Potzel, Commissioner for South Asia and Special Representative of the Federal Government for South Asia as well as for Afghanistan and Pakistan, thanked the Partners for their active support in 2018 in preparing for both the Partners’ meetings in Vienna and the OSCE Asian Conference in Berlin. Germany particularly valued the dialogue established in the Group over the past 20 years and the Partners’ support and contributions to OSCE activities, both financially and through seconded personnel. Mr. Potzel reported on the activities within the Asian Contact Group, which had focused on regional security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region and on the Korean peninsula, had involved an exchange of experiences in countering violent extremism by empowering youth, and had focused on migration as a factor in security and development. He highlighted the discussions held at the Conference in Berlin on confidence-building measures and connectivity, as well as on the opportunities for the OSCE and its Partners to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals, a tangible benefit of that co-operation framework. He concluded by emphasizing Germany’s commitment to continue strengthening and further developing the Asian Partnership and particularly highlighted the German-supported Young Diplomat Programme in the OSCE Secretariat, which was dedicated to the Partners for Co-operation and which had the potential for further growth.

Ms. Y. Oh, Deputy Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Global Affairs of the Republic of Korea, praised Germany for its able work in 2017 and thanked Austria for its hospitality at the Ministerial Council meeting. Deputy Minister Oh mentioned the various intimidating global and borderless challenges that posed serious threats to international peace and security, while emphasizing the continuing potential for co-operation among States and international organizations, including in the context of the OSCE Asian Partnership. That year had been particularly fruitful with regard to relations between the OSCE and the Republic of Korea. Her country particularly appreciated the OSCE’s increased level of co-operation through discussions in the Asian Contact Group meetings, the OSCE’s engagement in the Northeast Asia Platform for Peace and Cooperation (NAPPC), as well as

the press release by OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Kurz and OSCE Secretary General Greminger in early September, denouncing the latest nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). She recalled that at the 2015 Conference in Seoul, cybersecurity, the fight against terrorism, and disaster risk reduction had been identified as new avenues for further co-operation. Consequently, the Republic of Korea had stepped up its engagement with the OSCE and hosted the first Interregional Conference on Cyber/ICT Security in April 2017. Deputy Minister Oh announced that the Republic of Korea wished to continue its efforts to promote co-operation in the area of new security challenges and planned to host another interregional conference in the first half of 2018, this time focusing on preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism. During the meeting, she further suggested the involvement of more civil society representatives in the discussions within the Asian Contact Group.

Mr. M. Naeem Poyesh, Counsellor at the Embassy of Afghanistan, thanked Germany for the excellent work in 2017, which had resulted in highly interesting meetings in Vienna and a very fruitful Conference in Berlin including a side event entitled "Engaging with Afghanistan and its neighbours – OSCE's contribution to confidence-building by empowering women". He recalled that the Deputy Foreign Minister for Economic Co-operation, Ms. A. Raz, had delivered a keynote speech in Berlin. He also noted that the Director General for Security Co-operation and Border Affairs, Mr. N. Alikhil, had addressed the Asian Contact Group at its meeting in June dedicated to the topic "Empowering youth in countering violent extremism – sharing experience between the regions". Mr. Poyesh reiterated Afghanistan's readiness to host a second OSCE Asian Conference in the coming years, following the one held in Kabul in 2008. He expressed Afghanistan's support for all activities aimed at raising the profile of the Asian Contact Group meetings and for securing both broad participation from among the OSCE participating States, and an open and lively discussion. Mr. Poyesh announced that at its co-hosted Contact Group meeting in 2018, Afghanistan would like to focus on a topic that could be linked to concrete programmes and projects for Afghan stakeholders, with a particular focus on the issues of migration, connectivity, terrorism, and capacity-building. He concluded by commending the OSCE activities in Central Asia that were also aimed at capacity-building and technical assistance for Afghanistan.

Ambassador B. Hammer of Australia thanked Germany for its constructive and energetic approach in chairing the Asian Contact Group in 2017. He reaffirmed Australia's strong commitment to that partnership framework focused on engaging in and learning about the key security challenges that equally affected Europe, Asia, and the world as a whole, and which threatened the rules-based international system. In that context, the focus of the Asian Contact Group on discussing Indo-Pacific security challenges had been particularly valuable. Thematically, the discussions had dealt with the threat posed by the DPRK, the territorial dispute over the South China Sea, and wider common security challenges such as countering violent extremism, and how to tackle irregular and large-scale migration. In 2018, Australia would like to see the Asian Contact Group continue to pay some attention to Indo-Pacific security issues, which should also be reflected in the 2018 Conference, co-hosted by Austria and Australia. The event should further look into the use and the relevance of a multilateral approach to dealing with comprehensive security challenges.

Ambassador K. Koinuma of Japan recalled his country's continuous and close co-operation with the OSCE, which was notably reflected in Japan's outstanding financial support for the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, for border training activities

in Turkmenistan, and for ODIHR election observation missions. He continued by stressing his country's concerns regarding the increasingly severe security environment in Asia as a result of the DPRK's provocative actions. Japan appreciated the relevant press releases by the Chairperson-in-Office and the OSCE Secretary General of 3 September and recalled the discussion of the latest developments on the Korean Peninsula at the Asian Contact Group meeting in October. Ambassador Koinuma emphasized Japan's wish to continue to include that subject in the OSCE agenda, in order to realize a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, he expressed his personal opinion that while it was of great importance to address global issues, such as the current challenges presented by China and the DPRK, within the framework of the OSCE, those countries themselves were not represented in the debate, and several participating States had voiced the opinion that such highly political issues should not be dealt with within the OSCE. Ambassador Koinuma expressed his wish to discuss such structural challenges with the incoming Italian OSCE Chairmanship, as well as with the Austrian 2018 Chairmanship of the Contact Group. Finally, Ambassador Koinuma suggested expanding the number of Asian Partners in the OSCE.

Ambassador S. Saicheua of Thailand reflected on relations with the OSCE, which had greatly intensified under the able leadership of the German Contact Group Chairmanship. During 2017, Thailand had engaged closely on a number of topics including the issue of irregular migration. Ambassador Saicheua said that at the November meeting of the Contact Group, Thailand had presented its Indo-Pacific-related experiences with migration and its impact on security and development, and the common challenges governments faced in formulating a coherent region-wide policy. At the Berlin Conference, Thailand had presented its Sufficiency Economy Principle as a comprehensive means to sustainably tackle social challenges and promote the Sustainable Development Goals. In that regard, he invited OSCE participating States and Partners to participate in training organized by the Thailand International Cooperation Agency in 2018. He also recalled that Thailand was the only Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member engaged in co-operation with the OSCE and expressed appreciation for the OSCE's participation in the ASEAN Workshop on Strengthening and Enhancing Cybersecurity Cooperation in the ASEAN Region held in Bangkok in June. He concluded by announcing that Thailand would participate in the OSCE's Young Diplomat Programme by deploying one colleague from the Foreign Ministry to the OSCE Secretariat in the current year with the co-operation of Germany and the OSCE Secretariat.

Speaking as the representative of the incoming OSCE Chairmanship, Ambassador M. Clemente, Minister Plenipotentiary and Chairmanship Liaison Officer in the Office of the Secretary General, said that Italy would follow Austria's path – currently it held the Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, in the following year it would hold the OSCE Chairmanship, and finally it would hold the Chairmanship of the Asian Contact Group. Ambassador Clemente highlighted the OSCE as a leading example of multilateralism, which was in a strong position to follow up on common challenges ranging from extremism and terrorism to organized crime such as illicit drug trafficking. Migration, which had been a priority issue for the Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group – prominently discussed also at the 2017 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo – remained a continuous challenge and would therefore be further considered during the Italian OSCE Chairmanship. He announced Italy's concrete initiatives aimed at further enhancing the Partners' level of participation in the OSCE, *inter alia* a proposed change to the Rules of Procedure for the order of speakers at Ministerial Council plenary sessions so that Partners

for Co-operation could alternate with speakers from participating States. Although that had not been realized in 2017, Italy would continue to work on the matter and planned to issue a relevant statement on the margins of the Ministerial Council.

Mr. T. Greminger, Secretary General of the OSCE, emphasized his continued personal commitment to the Asian partnership and referred to the 2014 Basel Declaration on Co-operation with the Asian Partners, as well as the joint work plan of the 2014 and 2015 OSCE Chairmanships of Switzerland and Serbia, which had provided a boost to the Asian Partnership. He noted with appreciation that work had been done in the preceding two years in the suggested areas for increased co-operation, namely counter-terrorism, disaster risk reduction, information and communications technology security or cybersecurity, as well as structured co-operation with regional organizations in Asia. The Secretary General further praised the OSCE Asian Partnership as a forum where discussions on topics that had not yet been included in the Organization's broader agenda were initiated and he encouraged the continuation of those discussions and their translation into concrete action in the course of the coming years. While concurring that current security threats evolved rapidly and unpredictably and that their implications were global and affected the OSCE participating States and Asian Partner countries equally, he called for better thematic links between the Asian Partners' security concerns and the OSCE agenda. The Secretary General expressed his personal commitment to advocating an advanced dialogue and co-operation with the Partners and regional organizations, and further called for the OSCE Troika's support in engaging key players in the Partnership. The Secretary General proposed that the OSCE Troika work in close co-ordination with the Partners to develop a three-year plan for the Partnership, identifying key topics for dialogue, and clear objectives for co-operation. He emphasized the importance of high-level political support for joint activities to maintain the dynamic spirit of that partnership and to keep it mutually beneficial and constructive.

Mr. G. Tsereteli, President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), pointed out that the PA continued to pursue closer co-operation and engagement with the Asian Partners as a reflection of the Ministerial Council declarations on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation adopted in Madrid in 2007 and in Basel in 2014. He encouraged the Partners to use the OSCE model to tackle security issues in Asia and referred to the principles of the Helsinki Final Act, which were also applicable to the regions beyond the OSCE. He recalled that in his function as President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, he also served as Special Representative for Central Asia, and he should be more actively involved with the OSCE Asian Partnership. He invited the Partners to participate in the 2018 PA autumn meeting in Bishkek and ensured them that the PA was open to and stood ready for increased co-operation.

**REPORT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE
CONTACT GROUP WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR
CO-OPERATION TO THE TWENTY-FOURTH MEETING OF THE
MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

(MC/GAL/11/17 of 18 January 2018)

The major themes of the 2017 Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group were dialogue and co-operation. The Chairmanship focused more on common ground than on the differences that may exist between the OSCE area and that of the Mediterranean Partners by setting a positive and constructive agenda aimed at fostering the active participation of each State. Building on efforts undertaken by previous Chairmanships, Italy worked on finding areas of co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners through an inclusive and concrete approach. The Italian Chairmanship supported several initiatives and practical projects and, jointly with the Secretariat, established and funded a number of extrabudgetary projects as follow-ups to the meetings. The OSCE's Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation participated actively.

Meetings of the OSCE Mediterranean Contact Group

Six Mediterranean Contact Group meetings were held in Vienna in the course of 2017. At the beginning of the year, the Italian Chairmanship agreed on the topics of the meetings with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation and consulted with the OSCE participating States and the OSCE Secretariat on a regular basis throughout the year. The idea of a positive agenda was very well received as it allowed for a focus on opportunities rather than on challenges while continuing to respond to common threats. The Partners for Co-operation contributed actively to all of the meetings. Representatives of the Secretariat regularly updated the Mediterranean Contact Group on activities of special relevance to the Partners.

The first meeting, held on 21 February, was focused on "Countering trafficking in cultural property in the Mediterranean region". The event aimed to raise awareness of the implications of illicit trafficking in cultural property for security and stability in the OSCE area, as well as to consider opportunities for the OSCE, as a regional security organization, to contribute to the fight against such trafficking. The meeting was opened by Mr. A. Cesaro, Under Secretary of State of the Italian Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ambassador C. Strohal, Special Representative for the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, and Ms. R. Ostrauskaite, Co-ordinator of Activities to Address Transnational Threats, OSCE Secretariat. Their speeches were followed by a session attended by three panellists: Mr. F. Parrulli, Head of the Carabinieri Unit for the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Mr. H. Moret, Secretary General of the Abu Dhabi Conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage, and Mr. C. Catesi, Co-ordinator, Works of Art Unit, INTERPOL General Secretariat.

The main topic of the second meeting, held on 20 March, was "Cybersecurity: enhancing co-operation outside the OSCE borders as a common strategic priority to face challenges arising from the use of information and communication technologies – prospects for co-operation in cybersecurity between the OSCE and the Mediterranean Partners in the future". The meeting promoted a debate on the issue of cybersecurity with a focus on how to reduce the risks stemming from the use of information and communication technology.

Speakers included: Mr. G. Nanni, Head of Symantec Corporation's "Governmental Affairs – Europe, Middle East, Africa", Mr. I. Moed, Head of the Department of Cybersecurity of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Representative of the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts in the years 2014–2015, Mr. G. Lindstrom, Head of the Emerging Security Challenges Programme of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, and Mr. M. Yedaly, Head of the Information Division at the Infrastructure and Energy Department of the African Union Commission. They provided an up-to-date picture of cyber-related threats, with a specific focus on the Mediterranean region, then reported on concrete actions States can take and on the results obtained so far.

The third meeting, held on 12 June, was devoted to "Energy security in times of economic and political uncertainty – looking green at the future of the Mediterranean". The meeting fostered the exchange of best practices for achieving energy security in the Mediterranean region while meeting the "green" objectives of international environmental governance. The panel included: Ms. F. Hamdouch, Head of Strategic Steering at the Moroccan Agency for Solar Energy (MASEN), Ms. J. Kameel, Managing Director of Nahdet El Mahrousa, Egypt, Mr. L. Tomik, Director of the Centre for Energy Systems (CESYS), Slovakia, and Mr. M. Taylor, Senior Energy Analyst at the International Renewable Energy Agency's Innovation and Technology Centre (IRENA). The Mediterranean Contact Group meeting concluded with an update by the Chair on upcoming initiatives supported by the Italian Chairmanship.

The fourth meeting took place on 17 July and was entitled "Women, peace, and security: increasing political participation of women and the role of women in the prevention and mediation processes as a factor of positive change in the Mediterranean". It provided the OSCE, its participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation with the opportunity to exchange best practices in the area of women, peace, and security, with a special focus on the importance of gender mainstreaming in the security sector and across the conflict cycle. The panellists included Ms. K. M. Mehali, Director of Women's Affairs, Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs, Algeria, Ms. L. Quartapelle, Member of Parliament and President of the Honorary Board of Women in International Security (WIIS), Italy, Ms. I. Fellin, Gender and Security Expert and President of WIIS, Italy, Mr. M. Gomes, Diplomatic Adviser at the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean, and Ms. J. Poutanen, Senior Manager of the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), Martti Ahtisaari Centre, Finland. The discussion focused on the measures still needed to bring women onto a par with men in conflict prevention and resolution efforts, especially given that women are disproportionately affected by violence and conflict dynamics in both the OSCE area and the Mediterranean region. During the meeting, a Mediterranean Contact Group workshop funded by Italy on understanding mediation within the framework of women, peace, and security, run by the OSCE Mediation Support Team/Conflict Prevention Centre in co-operation with the OSCE Gender Unit and the External Co-operation Section of the Office of the Secretary General, was announced.

The fifth meeting, held on 25 September, was focused on the theme "Economic development as a way to address the root causes of instability: the role of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as start-ups, as a way to increase job opportunities. The role and potential of education in promoting the establishment of SMEs". The meeting provided an overview of the diversity of ecosystems needed for start-ups to develop and thrive, by including perspectives from venture capitalists and angel investors, business accelerators and incubators, policymakers and start-ups themselves. All six OSCE Mediterranean Partners for

Co-operation were represented by a speaker on the panel, namely, Mr. L. Djaffer, CEO and Co-founder of “Emploitic.com”, Algeria, Ms. M. Lasheen, Counsellor and Head of the Economic Unit at the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Y. Inbar, Consul for Economic Affairs in Munich, Germany, representing Israel, Mr. F. Hakki, CEO of Oasis 500, Jordan, Ms. A. Morine, entrepreneur and President of the Association of Women’s Entrepreneurs in Morocco, and Ms. A. Mansour, President and Co-founder of the Tunisian Centre for Social Entrepreneurship. In addition, the Co-ordinator for OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities provided an update about OSCE support to entrepreneurship and good governance in economic activities. The Italian Ambassador, Mr. A. Azzoni, Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group meeting, announced the OSCE award for young green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean.

The Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group ended on a positive note on 13 November with a meeting on the topic of “Shaping the concept of a Mediterranean of the future by fostering dialogue between think tanks and policy planners of the two shores”. The meeting allowed for “out of the box” thinking to be exchanged among a panel of both government and think tank representatives. The discussion focused on a positive vision of the Mediterranean region, focusing on what unites rather than divides countries from the Mediterranean basin and beyond. Panellists included: Ambassador A. Barucco, Head of Analysis, Planning and Historic Diplomatic Documentation at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ambassador H. Boukrif, Director for Policy Planning, Algerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. N. Tocci, Director of “Istituto Affari Internazionali” (IAI) in Rome, Mr. U. B. Yaakov, Senior Researcher at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) in Israel, and Mr. H. Hussein, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the American University of Beirut.

2017 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

The annual Mediterranean Conference, held on 24 and 25 October in Palermo, Italy, was devoted to the subject of challenges and opportunities presented by the large movements of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean. The Conference had the largest turnout ever with 71 delegations taking part and over 30 high-level political representatives (ministers and deputy ministers), including participants from Libya – invited as “guests of the Chairmanship”. The Conference featured a high-level political segment on 24 October which was opened by Mr. A. Alfano, Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation; Mr. M. Linhart, Austria’s Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General. The Conference resumed discussions on the OSCE’s role in the governance of large movements of migrants and refugees after the adoption of Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/16 on the same topic. The agenda focused on three topics in particular: countering smuggling and trafficking in human beings, a major common challenge in a time of large movements of migrants and refugees; the economic and social potential of migration and the role of integration policies in promoting inclusive growth, sustainable development, peace and stability; successful integration, a common responsibility based on a two-fold approach involving encouraging the social inclusion of migrants and refugees and combating intolerance, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination, including that based on religious grounds. Participants engaged in an open dialogue, and the debate highlighted how emergencies and crises, if dealt with in a spirit of responsibility and solidarity, can be turned into opportunities for renewed regional and international co-operation.

The consolidated summary of the Conference was circulated under SEC.GAL/194/17.

Co-operation beyond political dialogue: projects and other initiatives

While holding the Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Italy established and funded a number of extrabudgetary projects as follow-ups to the meetings, in order to complement and reinforce the political dialogue between the participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation.

Most notably, a workshop on “Combating illicit cross-border trafficking in cultural property in the Mediterranean” was held in Vicenza from 6 to 10 November, in collaboration with the Centre for Excellence for Stability Police Units (CoESPU) and with the Carabinieri Unit for the Protection of Cultural Heritage. The event provided the participants with an informal platform to analyse strategies for enhancing the existing co-operation and for discussing methods and best practices for the OSCE regarding the illicit trafficking of cultural property and its impact on security and stability in the OSCE area.

On 7 and 8 November, Italy organized a workshop on “Understanding mediation within the framework of women, peace, and security” in Vienna, in collaboration with the Mediation Support Team, the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre, the Gender Section, and the External Co-operation Section. The event aimed to support and to enhance the network of Mediterranean women mediators within the OSCE area.

Italy also launched the GEMS Award, an extrabudgetary project aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs in Mediterranean Partner countries. Financial prizes were awarded to six young entrepreneurs whose work was evaluated as “green” and/or “social” (one per Mediterranean Partner).

On the occasion of the sixth meeting, Italy organized, jointly with 18 delegations (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey) a Mediterranean Reception which concluded the 2017 Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group.

Acknowledgement

The 2017 Italian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE participating States and the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation for their engagement, commitment, support and intensive co-operation within the 2017 Mediterranean Contact Group.

REPORT ON THE OSCE MINISTERIAL TROIKA MEETING WITH THE MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS FOR CO-OPERATION

The meeting on 6 December was opened by Ambassador M. Linhart, Deputy Foreign Minister of Austria and representative of the 2017 OSCE Chairmanship. Ambassador Linhart noted that the Troika Meeting had become a tradition and provided a useful platform for taking stock of the ongoing co-operation with the Mediterranean Partners in the spirit of an open and constructive dialogue. He further noted that the OSCE Mediterranean Conference on migration held in Palermo had been the highlight of 2017 and drew attention to the continuing relevance of the themes tackled during the Austrian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2016, such as youth empowerment and the common goal of countering extremism in societies both south and north of the Mediterranean.

Speaking as the Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, Ambassador A. Azzoni, Italy's Permanent Representative to the OSCE, took stock of a successful year for the Mediterranean Partnership. He stressed Italy's deliberate decision to focus on a constructive and positive agenda, choosing topics where common ground could be found while developing co-ownership. He noted that several of the topics addressed in the Mediterranean Contact Group had been followed up on with concrete activities, in particular a workshop on the role of women in mediation processes, an expert meeting on countering trafficking in cultural property (marking the beginning of a multi-year project), and the launch of the GEMS Awards, an Italian-funded initiative to select a number of start-ups in the Mediterranean Partner countries that had excelled in supporting green and socially responsible development. Ambassador Azzoni said that the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo had reinforced agreement that Mediterranean issues and migration were essential components of European security. He further noted that Italy had submitted a draft ministerial decision (PC.DEL/1506/17) on changing the current Rules of Procedure related to the order of statements at the Ministerial Council, reflecting the intention to provide the OSCE Partners for Co-operation with an opportunity for a higher level of engagement. He regretted that a number of participating States had not been ready to support that proposal but affirmed that Italy would continue to work towards building consensus on it.

Ambassador F. Mebarki of Algeria confirmed her country's high level of interest in the OSCE and noted the active participation of Algerian experts in a number of OSCE initiatives and events in 2017. The year had been a rich one for the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership and she expressed appreciation for Italy's choice to focus on a positive agenda. She further mentioned that the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo had been a success from Algeria's perspective, attracting high-level political participation and allowing for Algeria's foreign policy approaches and perspectives to be shared with a large number of countries. Ambassador Mebarki looked forward to continuing Algeria's positive engagement with the OSCE during Slovakia's 2018 Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group.

Ambassador O. A. Youssef of Egypt praised Austria and Italy for their able work in 2017 and noted that the Mediterranean Contact Group had chosen a good mix of topics allowing for common positions to emerge on a number of important issues. Ambassador Youssef made reference to recent terrorist attacks in Egypt and called for co-operation to be stepped up with the OSCE on countering terrorism; Egypt expected support from the international community in tackling that common challenge. Ambassador Youssef looked forward to developing a constructive and effective dialogue

with the OSCE under Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2018 and stressed the importance of the concept of "partnership" – a notion based on mutual respect and understanding that should be animated with a spirit of authentic solidarity. Ambassador Youssef noted that a Ministerial Council side event on the situation of Christians in the Middle East would not be featuring any perspectives from the region and expressed regret for the lack of consultation. Finally he expressed appreciation for Italy's efforts, unfortunately unsuccessful to date, aimed at changing the Rules of Procedure of the Ministerial Council to allow for more meaningful participation in the discussions by the OSCE Partners.

Ambassador T. Lador-Fresher of Israel confirmed her country's deep interest in the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, thanked Italy for the rich and interesting programme in 2017, and stressed that Israeli experts had shared expertise on a range of topics in 2017, including cybersecurity, counter-terrorism, and the role of start-up companies in supporting development and innovation. Ambassador Lador-Fresher shared the view of Egypt that counter-terrorism should remain at the centre of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership as a key and pressing shared priority. She further mentioned that the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo had been a success and looked forward to Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2018. She closed by noting that informal meetings among Mediterranean Partners could go a long way towards facilitating the preparation for and development of the Mediterranean Contact Group meeting and praised Slovakia for having already created one such opportunity.

Ambassador H. Al Hussein of Jordan noted that since the 2015 OSCE Mediterranean Conference at the Dead Sea, the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership had sustained significant momentum. He congratulated both Austria and Italy for their able contribution to the OSCE in 2017 and looked forward to Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group. The common ground between the OSCE participating States and Mediterranean Partners had been enlarged in 2017 thanks to Italy's focus on a positive and constructive agenda. At the same time, he noted that the same topics could either unite or divide and that a successful agenda was not so much one that prioritized certain topics over others but one that was able to identify shared approaches based on mutual understanding. Ambassador Al Hussein confirmed that, from Jordan's perspective, counter-terrorism should remain a priority, but the continuing humanitarian emergency involving refugees should also become a key area for co-operation. He also advocated the mainstreaming of interfaith and intercultural dialogue in the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partnership. He joined the Ambassador of Egypt in expressing regret for the organization of a side event on the situation of Christians in the Middle East without proper consultation.

Ambassador L. Bouchaara of Morocco thanked Italy for having introduced a new spirit of dialogue into the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, congratulated Austria on its excellent Chairmanship and looked forward to Slovakia's Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2018. He also noted the new OSCE Secretary General's great experience, including in relation to the Mediterranean Partners, and congratulated him on his recent appointment. He noted with satisfaction that inclusivity had become the operating principle in the dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners and shared the view of other colleagues about the importance of the concept of partnership. In that respect, he argued that the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo had allowed Mediterranean Partners to express their interests and their perspectives on a topic that was potentially divisive. The same spirit of partnership should apply to all discussions. Therefore, Ambassador Bouchaara joined others

in noting that a side event on the situation of Christians in the Middle East had not been prepared in an inclusive manner. He expressed appreciation for Italy's efforts to change the Rules of Procedure at the Ministerial Council to allow for meaningful participation by the Mediterranean Partners, noting that if successful, those changes would further strengthen the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership.

Mr. K. Tazarki, *chargé d'affaires* of the Tunisian Mission to the OSCE, echoed previous speakers in congratulating Austria and Italy for their successful leaderships and in looking forward to Slovakia's successful Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2018. The OSCE was a very important platform for Tunisia and ongoing constructive engagement was to be expected. He noted that starting in 2014, Tunisia had expressed an interest in receiving support from the OSCE in the area of small and light weapons and expressed the hope that, after the necessary intermediate steps, 2018 could finally mark the year of the launching of a concrete project in Tunisia on the same topic. Mr. Tazarki further suggested dialogue and co-operation on the issue of youth returning from situations of conflict and tension, with a focus on the return of radicalized youth and terrorist fighters. Mr. Tazarki joined other speakers in appreciating Italy's efforts to ensure more meaningful participation by the Mediterranean Partners in the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings.

Ambassador B. Cadenbach, Director for Security Policy, Federal Foreign Office of Germany, recalled her country's own contribution to the dialogue with the Mediterranean Partners and congratulated Italy on a successful Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group. She noted that Italy had introduced new topics, for instance a focus on the Mediterranean of the future and the role that policy planners could play in shaping a common agenda. She echoed others in characterizing the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo as the highlight of 2017, noting that the Conference had been able to shed light on the opportunities as well as the challenges of migration. Germany remained committed to developing practical co-operation projects with the Mediterranean Partners and she highlighted a project launched in 2016 on strengthening border management capacities. She noted that new topics proposed by Italy in 2017, such as the fight against trafficking in cultural property, could also be dealt with in the context of that project.

Ambassador R. Boháč of Slovakia, as the incoming Chairperson of the Mediterranean Contact Group, noted that the Mediterranean was more and more part of a common geopolitical as well as geo-economic space. He congratulated Italy on a successful OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo and noted the potential for future synergies as Mediterranean co-operation would remain a priority during the 2018 OSCE Chairmanship. Ambassador Boháč listed possible topics for the Mediterranean Contact Group in 2018, including energy security and critical energy infrastructure, cybersecurity, education as a means of combating radicalization, water management and interconnectivity, and security sector governance and reform. Further consultations would be held before the programme was finalized. He also mentioned that the 2018 OSCE Mediterranean Conference was to take place in Spain and that the provisional topic was the promotion of economic growth, prosperity, and co-operation as a contribution to the development of the region's security. He echoed other speakers in underlining the spirit of partnership that should animate the OSCE Mediterranean dialogue.

Mr. T. Greminger, OSCE Secretary General, noted that the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership was attracting increasing political attention. He echoed other speakers in noting that a spirit of true partnership needed to be cultivated and cherished. In the polarized

environment of Euro-Mediterranean relations, the OSCE offered a unique platform allowing for diverse perspectives to be aligned on common principles, and the Organization did not approach the region with problematic baggage from the past. He stressed that countering terrorism must remain a priority and that a focus on youth was important in that respect. Mr. Greninger appreciated Italy's plans to maintain Mediterranean co-operation as a central focus of the OSCE agenda in 2018 and noted that an international conference on anti-Semitism was already scheduled for January in Rome. He called for similar attention to be paid to other forms of discrimination, such as Islamophobia. He made the following proposals on making the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership more strategic: the establishment of a three-year plan agreed on by the OSCE Troika, Mediterranean Partners, and relevant players to provide continuity in OSCE action; exploration of the appointment of a Special Representative for the Mediterranean whose mandate would not be to address ongoing regional conflicts but to focus on the promotion and implementation of a multi-year plan of practical co-operation with the OSCE Mediterranean Partners; easing rules of procedure regarding the use of the Partnership Fund for the implementation of projects in the territory of the Mediterranean Partners, in particular by lifting the consensus requirement; and expanding the programme of OSCE visits and scoping missions to the Mediterranean Partners to increase the visibility of the OSCE and its expertise in the relevant capitals.

The Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (PA), Ms. M. Tidei, recalled the numerous resolutions of the OSCE PA on topics of relevance to the Mediterranean Partners, and drew attention to a recent report on migration issued by the Assembly. She further recalled the importance of the Mediterranean Chapter of the Helsinki Final Act that had presciently recognized the indivisibility of European and Mediterranean security and aspired to address the entire Mediterranean region. In that context, she underlined the importance of welcoming Libya's standing application to become an OSCE Partner. Ms. Tidei further referenced events recently organized by the OSCE PA in the context of its Mediterranean engagement, including a Mediterranean Forum in Andorra and a country visit to Morocco which had featured discussions on, among other topics, experiences in countering radicalization. Ms. Tidei also mentioned the OSCE PA's active contribution to discussions at the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Palermo and called for continuing co-operation between the Assembly and the OSCE Chairmanships.

REPORT TO THE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON STRENGTHENING THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE OSCE IN 2017

(MC.GAL/7/17/Rev.1 of 13 March 2018)

Introduction

1. The legal status of the OSCE, in particular its enjoyment of international legal personality, has been the subject of discussion in the CSCE/OSCE for more than forty years. The CSCE was originally conceived as a diplomatic conference convening to discuss the politically binding principles and commitments agreed at summit level in the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The expanded functions and embryonic institutionalization adopted at summit level in the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe implied the need for the CSCE to be endowed with legal status, capacity, privileges and immunities. Expanded institutionalization, also extending to field operations deployed in zones of armed conflict in the years after the 1992 Helsinki Summit,¹ has served to underscore that need and has made it critical.

2. In 1993, meeting in Rome, the CSCE Council of Ministers considered the relevance of an agreement granting internationally recognized status to the CSCE institutions and noted the importance of ensuring appropriate treatment of the CSCE's institutions and personnel. It adopted model provisions for legal capacity, privileges and immunities but left it to the discretion of each participating State to separately determine how to implement those provisions at the national level, subject to their constitutional and related requirements. The Decision of the Rome Council was adopted without prejudice to the treatment granted by the governments hosting the Secretariat, Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), a treatment recognized by the CSCE Council as comparable to that granted by States to the United Nations.²

3. In addition to the name change from CSCE to OSCE, the 1994 CSCE Summit in Budapest decided that implementation of the 1993 Rome Council Decision would be reviewed and declared, furthermore, that participating States would examine possible ways of incorporating their commitments into national legislation and, where appropriate, possible ways of concluding treaties.³ The concerted effort in 2007 to attain a consensus text resulted in the Draft Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE, agreed at expert level (2007 Draft Convention).⁴ Adoption of the 2007 Draft Convention text is still pending, while discussions continue on whether a constituent document for the OSCE is a prerequisite.

1 Helsinki Decisions 1992, Chapter III, "Early warning, conflict prevention and crisis management (including fact-finding and rapporteur missions and CSCE peacekeeping), Peaceful settlement of disputes", reinforced in 2011 by Vilnius Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/11 (MC.DEC/3/11) on elements of the conflict cycle, related to enhancing the OSCE's capabilities in early warning, early action, dialogue facilitation and mediation support, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

2 Rome Council of Ministers (1993), Decision CSCE/4-C/Dec.2 (1 December 1993).

3 Budapest Document 1994, Decision I on strengthening the CSCE.

4 Letter from the Chair of the informal working group at expert level to the OSCE Spanish Chairmanship (CIO.GAL/159/07) dated 22 October 2007, annexing the Final Document of the Informal Working Group on the Draft Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE.

4. In the meantime, consistent with the 1993 Rome Council Decision, legal status, privileges and immunities have been granted by various participating States through national legislation or under bilateral agreements or arrangements with the CSCE/OSCE. Consequently, the OSCE is operating under a variety of legal measures, which has resulted in a fragmentation of its legal framework. The fragmented legal framework is precarious: as experience has shown, national legislation and the bilateral arrangements or agreements can be amended or interpreted unilaterally with little notice being given to the OSCE. The ad hoc nature of the arrangements also deprives the Secretary General of any leverage in negotiations of arrangements with other participating States.

5. Operational problems are not the only ones to illustrate the need for a uniform solution. The OSCE Staff Regulations and Staff Rules explicitly require the OSCE to ensure the protection of its officials (Staff Regulations 2.03 and 2.07). They also stipulate that the Secretary General, heads of institutions and missions, and staff and mission members shall enjoy privileges and immunities. These form the framework of the OSCE's duty of care for its officials.

6. Since 2009, the open-ended Informal Working Group on Strengthening the Legal Framework of the OSCE (IWG) has endeavoured to resolve this matter. It meets three times per year in a continuing effort to achieve progress in the area of legal protection for the OSCE. Under the Austrian Chairmanship, led by the Special Adviser of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the Legal Framework, Ambassador Helmut Tichy, the IWG resumed its work at the outset of 2017 with four options for consideration, as detailed in the Chairmanship invitation and draft agenda for the first IWG meeting of 2017.⁵ As in earlier years,⁶ these four options are:

- Option 1: Adoption of the 2007 Draft Convention.
- Option 2: Adoption of a constituent document prior to, or in parallel with, adoption of the 2007 Draft Convention.
- Option 3: Development of a “Convention Plus” (a hybrid solution consisting of elements of a constituent document incorporated into the 2007 Draft Convention).
- Option 4: Implementation of the 1993 Rome Council Decision through signature and ratification of the 2007 Draft Convention by a group of interested participating States.

7. The proceedings of the IWG meetings convened in 2017 are recorded below.

5 CIO.GAL/8/17/Rev.1, dated 25 January 2017.

6 Reports to the Ministerial Council on Strengthening the Legal Framework of the OSCE, respectively MC.GAL/5/14/Corr.1 dated 3 December 2014; MC.GAL/4/15 dated 1 December 2015; and MC.GAL/7/16 dated 9 December 2016.

Proceedings of the Informal Working Group in 2017

First meeting: February 2017

8. The first meeting of the IWG in 2017 was convened by the Austrian Chairmanship on 10 February 2017;⁷ it was attended by over forty participating States. The Chairmanship encouraged delegations to continue discussing the four options for strengthening the legal framework of the OSCE.

9. In its update on the operational consequences of the OSCE's lack of a clear legal status, the Secretariat noted that, despite the lack of clarity as to whether the OSCE enjoys "international legal personality", the debate is taking place at the political level and has ultimately not prevented the OSCE, at the operational level, from pursuing the mandates assigned to it by the OSCE decision-making bodies. By way of explanation, the Secretariat further asserted that, by virtue of the OSCE's critical need of a legal status, privileges and immunities in order for it to function, the OSCE enjoys these on a *de facto* basis, citing the 1949 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. In that Advisory Opinion, the Court concluded that the United Nations possessed international legal personality as a necessary consequence of the important tasks that its Member States had assigned to it, despite the lack of any express provision to that effect.⁸ For want of any better legal argumentation when faced with operational problems, the Secretariat can only assert that the OSCE possesses objective *de facto* international legal personality and enjoys functional privileges and immunities on the basis of customary international law.

10. The Secretariat furthermore pointed to the legal uncertainty inherent in the fragmentation of the OSCE legal framework, deriving from the coexistence of three kinds of jurisdictions: a small number where the OSCE enjoys legal status, privileges and immunities by virtue of national measures; others where only a particular structure is granted status but not the entire OSCE; and a majority of jurisdictions (currently 29 participating States) where no national measures have been adopted to formally recognize the OSCE. As a result, there are broad differences in treatment, with the various national measures (or lack thereof) leaving not only gaps but a lack of transparency with regard to the enforceability of those national measures.

11. The Secretariat elaborated on the possible implications of operations in territories not under government control, noting that OSCE officials have hitherto relied on legal advice to the effect that their status-neutral engagement in such territories has no legal consequences since only States can recognize States, and the activities of international organizations have no effect under international law for the recognition of such non-recognized entities or disputed territories. In that connection, it pondered the possibility that, if the OSCE does not have international legal personality, the OSCE is carrying out its consensus-based activities purely as an instrument through which 57 participating States exercise their collective will. If that view is correct, the implications of the OSCE's engagement may be of far greater significance than has been intended by the participating States.

7 CIO.GAL/8/17/Rev.1, dated 25 January 2017.

8 International Court of Justice, ICJ Reports 183 et seq., Advisory Opinion, "Reparation for Injuries Suffered in the Service of the United Nations" (1949).

12. Participants were also presented with an update on responses received by the Secretariat to the Legislation Survey⁹ and to the Questionnaire on Supporting Security for Local Elections.¹⁰ As no submissions had been received since the last IWG meeting of 2016, the Chairmanship announced that it would re-circulate both questionnaires in a single document and call for more responses.

13. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussion of the four options for strengthening the legal framework. Given the absence of consensus, the four options remained on the agenda for the next meeting.

14. Following the close of the meeting, the meeting documents were published as SEC.GAL/26/17, dated 15 February 2017.

Second meeting: July 2017

15. The second meeting of the IWG was held on 3 July 2017 at the invitation of the Chairmanship,¹¹ with the aim of identifying pragmatic solutions to legal issues arising in the field, in order to support the safety and security of officials of OSCE field operations. A special focus was directed at the duty of care as one of the OSCE's legal obligations as an employer.

16. Under the agenda item "OSCE Legal Personality: Implications for Field Operations", presentations were given on practical issues arising in the field by a representative of the Austrian Ministry for Defence and Sports and a former Legal Adviser to the United Nations.

17. Under the agenda item "Duty of Care: Safety and Security", representatives of the German Center for International Peace Operations (Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze, ZIF) and the Stabilisation Unit of the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK Stabilisation Unit) introduced the "Voluntary Guidelines on Duty of Care for Seconded Civilian Personnel".¹² The Voluntary Guidelines were prepared by the ZIF, the UK Stabilisation Unit and the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding and are aimed at harmonizing the approach to and implementation of the duty of care. The Voluntary Guidelines also can serve as a basis for clarification and exchange between sending and receiving organizations with regard to their expectations of each other in this respect.

18. Under the same agenda item, the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) and OSCE Legal Services presented their respective approaches to the duty of care in their organizations. The UNDSS representative introduced the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS), which focuses on policies, guidelines and processes aimed at managing security risks in UN operations and on the trained security personnel involved.

9 Survey of National Implementation Measures adopted by OSCE participating States in respect of OSCE Legal Capacity, Privileges and Immunities, CIO.GAL/152/14.

10 Set of questions for OSCE participating States with regard to a possible OSCE contribution to supporting security for local elections, CIO.GAL/132/16.

11 CIO.GAL/85/17/Rev.1, dated 17 June 2017.

12 http://www.zif-berlin.org/fileadmin/uploads/experten-einsaetze/Voluntary_Guidelines_on_the_Duty_of_Care_to_Seconded_Civilian_Personnel_Final_170420.pdf.

Over the past decade, the challenges faced by the UN have changed significantly, requiring a more flexible, pro-active and responsive approach by the UNDSS. A working group on “Reconciling duty of care for UN personnel while operating in high-risk environments” and the UN Duty of Care Coordination Committee have been established to address these challenges. For its part, OSCE Legal Services outlined the approach to the duty of care concept followed by OSCE management, which consists in the elements of the duty of care being mainstreamed into policies, procedures, and administrative and operational decision-making. The increase in the number of OSCE officials deployed in hazardous areas has resulted in a corresponding increase in demands for the elements encompassed in the legal concept of duty of care to be addressed.

19. Following the close of the meeting, the meeting documents were published as SEC.GAL/135/17, dated 5 October 2017.

Third meeting: October 2017

20. The third meeting of the IWG was convened on 6 October 2017 at the invitation of the Chairmanship.¹³ In the opening remarks, the Chairmanship invited the delegations to move forward in their discussions and in particular to give serious consideration to Option 4, i.e., the implementation of the 1993 Rome Council Decision through the signature and ratification of the 2007 Draft Convention by a group of interested participating States.

21. In the update on the operational consequences of the OSCE’s lack of clear legal status, the Secretariat presented an assessment of the problems concerning taxation of OSCE officials resulting from fragmentation (or absence) of legal arrangements granting the OSCE legal status, privileges and immunities, as follows. The Secretariat and the three Institutions – the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media (Vienna), the High Commissioner on National Minorities (The Hague), and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (Warsaw) – receive treatment comparable to that of the United Nations, and consequently the staff of all four structures have been granted exemption from national taxation by their host States (Austria, the Netherlands and Poland) with no discrimination on the basis of nationality. In contrast, the issue of “local staff income tax” has arisen in field operations and is reflected annually in the “Horizontals” section of the annual OSCE Unified Budget Proposal.¹⁴ The source of the problem lies in the Memoranda of Understanding concluded with the States hosting the field operations which grant application, *mutatis mutandis*, of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (VCDR), an instrument intended to regulate the relations between States and not between States and an international organization. Over half of the VCDR cannot be applied to an international organization (e.g., rupture of diplomatic relations, etc.) and the customary practice of taxing the salaries of local staff in embassies is covered by one of the provisions which cannot be applied to the international civil service.

13 CIO.GAL/177/17 of 19 September 2017.

14 The forecast of tax for 2018 has been published in the OSCE Unified Budget Proposal, PC.ACMF/46/17, Section III, pages 432–433, paragraphs 89–92. While five field operations are listed as experiencing national taxation by the host States, the MOU for one (Bishkek) is presently being negotiated with a view to achieving tax exemption. In November 2017, another in the list (Uzbekistan) granted tax exemption to all officials, including their own nationals. Consequently, at the time of writing, out of 16 field operations, only three are being taxed by the respective host States.

22. The Secretariat traced the historical origin of the principle of tax exemption in the international civil service to 1919 with the establishment of the League of Nations in Geneva and the decision that the salaries of League personnel, including Swiss nationals, would be tax-exempt. This was continued in the United Nations and in all other international organizations because of the three following underlying principles:

- (a) The principle of sovereign equality of States, affirmed in Article 2 of the Charter of the United Nations and Principle I of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. Consistent with that principle, sovereign States do not pay taxes to other States. The budget of an international organization is drawn from the public funds of its member States, and these funds are intended for implementation of the agreed mandate of the organization and are not to be diverted to the treasuries of other States through taxation. Unlike the case of taxation of locally recruited staff of diplomatic representations, when the sending State can invoke a principle of reciprocity to recover the funds paid into a treasury of a receiving State, member States of international organizations are deprived of any leverage other than refusing to pay assessed contributions to the budget of the organization, which may put the organization's operational activities at risk. Beginning in 2017, one State has formally declared that it will no longer pay funding for taxes and others have orally indicated that they may do the same.¹⁵
- (b) The principle of independence of international organizations and their officials. This principle, recognized by the League of Nations and the United Nations, is implemented by, *inter alia*, granting immunity, inviolability and tax exemption to the organizations and their officials; taxation is viewed as a form of interference in the operations of the organizations and their officials.
- (c) The principle of equal treatment of staff provides that no discrimination shall be made among officials of international organizations on the basis of nationality or any other personal characteristic. Subsidiary to this is the general principle of labour law, equal pay for equal work, which provides that officials of the same rank in the same category receive the same net salary. Taxation causes net incomes of the taxed to diverge widely from those of staff who are not taxed.

23. The principle of tax exemption in the international civil service has been upheld by the Administrative Tribunal of the World Bank, the OECD Appeals Board, and the European Court of Justice. The principle has been characterized by the Administrative Tribunal of the International Labour Organization as “an essential condition of employment in the international civil service”, being described as “an important guarantee of independence and objectivity”. The OSCE Staff Regulations and Staff Rules provides that OSCE officials shall conduct themselves at all times in a manner befitting the status of an international civil servant (Staff Regulation 2.01). This status is reiterated in the OSCE Code of Conduct and also appears in the standards of remuneration with references to the United Nations Common System. This reflects unequivocally the intention to incorporate the staff component of the OSCE into the framework of the international civil service, with its own internal justice system, application of international administrative law, etc.

15 PC.DEC/1252/Corr.1, dated 1 June 2017, Attachment 2.

24. Consistent with the practice of other international organizations, in nearly identical terms, the OSCE Staff Regulations and Staff Rules provides for remedies in order to ensure that taxation does not impact OSCE officials.¹⁶ However, to prevent it impacting the budget of the OSCE, co-operation by the taxing authorities (tax exemption or tax reimbursement) is needed and is lacking in certain instances. The issue of “local staff income tax” has become increasingly contentious and acrimonious in the OSCE Advisory Committee on Management and Finance. On at least two occasions, the debate has been rejected on the grounds of it being more appropriately brought to the IWG, which has been tasked with resolving the fundamental issue of international legal personality. It has been argued that resolution of that issue would facilitate respect for the tax-exempt status of OSCE officials. In this regard it was noted that the 2007 Draft Convention provides for tax exemption and a staff assessment system or reimbursement by taxing States.

25. An update was provided by the Secretariat on the seven additional responses to the Legislation Survey and two additional responses to the Questionnaire on supporting security for local elections. The Chairmanship invited participating States that had not yet done so to submit their responses to the Secretariat.

26. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to an exchange of views on the four options, in particular Option 4. The Chairmanship informed the participants that an informal meeting on Option 4 would be convened later in October to assess interest in that Option being pursued.

27. Following the close of the meeting, the meeting documents were published as SEC.GAL/165/17, dated 15 November 2017.

Further developments of relevance

Agreement between the OSCE and Austria regarding the Headquarters of the OSCE

28. As the 1993 Rome Council Decision noted,¹⁷ the privileges and immunities of the OSCE have been regulated since 1993 by an Austrian federal law (“OSCE Law”), which refers to the Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations and grants application of the privileges and immunities provided in it to the OSCE and its officials.¹⁸ At that time Austria had determined that it was not possible to conclude a headquarters agreement with the CSCE because the CSCE was not an international organization within the meaning of international law.

29. However, although the CSCE/OSCE was not founded on the basis of an agreement under international law, Austria has noted that, through the creation and development of an institutional CSCE/OSCE structure including permanent institutions at and since the 1990 Paris Summit, the OSCE now has its own decision-making apparatus separate from the participating States and concludes legally binding agreements with participating States. In Austria’s view, this demonstrates that the OSCE has increasingly acquired the status of a legal entity under international law and that the participating States increasingly accept this.

16 OSCE Staff Regulation 5.02(c), Staff Regulation 5.05 and Staff Rule 5.05.1.

17 CSCE/4-C/Dec.2, paragraph 3.

18 Federal Law on the Legal Status of the OSCE Institutions in Austria, OSCE Law, Federal Gazette (BGBl.) No. 511/1993 as amended.

Austria has therefore now found itself in a position to recognize the OSCE as a legal entity under international law and hence to conclude a headquarters agreement with it – as with the other international organizations with headquarters in Vienna – to replace the OSCE Law. This is Austria’s prerogative, as the 1993 Rome Council Decision places the responsibility upon each participating State for deciding how to grant legal status, privileges and immunities to the OSCE, its officials and the representatives to it, in accordance with the State’s constitutional and related requirements, and the 1994 Budapest Summit declared that participating States would examine possible ways of concluding treaties.¹⁹

30. The existing privileges and immunities for the OSCE under the OSCE Law are maintained, except that they are now regulated by a headquarters agreement, as is customary for international organizations, rather than by a federal law. The Agreement, which was signed on 14 June 2017 and whose basic principles, in accordance with the OSCE Law, correspond to those found in the Headquarters Agreement with the United Nations in Vienna, therefore brings no change in the legal situation and practice concerning the status of the OSCE and its officials in Austria. However, the conclusion of a headquarters agreement with the OSCE represents an important contribution by the host State and the 2017 Austrian Chairmanship to consolidating the legal status of the Organization. At the time of writing the Agreement was pending submission for parliamentary approval.

Arrangement between the OSCE and Poland

31. On 28 June 2017, Poland concluded a new “Arrangement between the OSCE and the Republic of Poland regarding the Status of the OSCE in the Republic of Poland”, which provides for comprehensive treatment of the OSCE, its officials and the representatives to the OSCE, and contains additional provisions necessary to cover the hosting of the ODIHR’s headquarters in Warsaw. The negotiations were initiated in order to replace the earlier national measures of 1991 for the hosting of the CSCE Office of Free Elections in Warsaw and in 1992 for the hosting of the ODIHR. As referenced in the 1993 Rome Council Decision,²⁰ the treatment granted by Poland was comparable to that accorded to the United Nations and its personnel and representatives to it. The same level of treatment has been maintained in the new Arrangement, which at the time of writing is pending parliamentary approval.

Option 4

32. Given the increased interest in Option 4 that was articulated to the Austrian Chairmanship as the year progressed and specifically in the third meeting of the IWG, representatives of the participating States considering Option 4 were invited to an informal meeting convened on 18 October 2017 in the premises of the Permanent Mission of Austria to the OSCE. Twenty-nine participating States were present. Of those, nine indicated that they were seriously considering Option 4, fourteen that they were considering it, two that they were not considering it, and four that they had no instructions.

33. Option 4 would involve a group of participating States agreeing to amend slightly and conclude the 2007 Draft Convention and to bring it into force between themselves. In that

19 1994 Budapest Summit Decision I on strengthening the CSCE.

20 CSCE/4-C/Dec.2, paragraph 3.

way, the group would implement identical treatment of the OSCE, its officials and the representatives to it, rather than further fragmenting such treatment by each of them separately adopting national legislation or concluding bilateral agreements with the OSCE. All interested participating States could join the Draft Convention if they wished, leaving the participating States not interested in Option 4 free to meet their commitments pursuant to the 1993 Rome Council Decision in some other way.

Practice of other States

34. The most serious challenges facing the Austrian Chairmanship in 2017 concerned issues arising in the field operations, in particular the safety and security of OSCE officials in fluid environments. A landmine explosion which resulted in the death of a member of the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine and the injury of two other mission members on 23 April 2017 was a tragedy unparalleled in CSCE/OSCE history. From a legal point of view, it is notable that participating States turned to the OSCE – as an international organization – to manage the responses and subsequent measures, and not to the States of nationality of the victims. This is significant, as it is indicative of the recognition by the participating States that, consistent with its status and general principles of international civil service law, it is the OSCE which is under the primary obligation of duty of care in respect of OSCE officials. In other words, the OSCE has the capacity to protect an injured official and it is the OSCE which is accountable in the first place, not the State of nationality of the injured official or other State that may be entitled to bring a claim on his/her behalf. This was precisely the situation that led to the 1949 Advisory Opinion on “Reparation for Injuries Suffered in the Service of the United Nations”, in which the Court concluded that the United Nations enjoys international legal personality.

Practice of international organizations

35. In contrast to the ongoing internal debate on the legal status of the OSCE, other international organizations recognize the international legal personality of the OSCE by routinely concluding agreements with it on an equal basis.

36. This is most notably true of the United Nations.²¹ Building on the previously concluded 1993 “Framework for Co-operation and Co-ordination between the United Nations Secretariat and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe” (1993 Framework) and the observer status that the OSCE enjoys at the United Nations,²² the United Nations Secretariat and the OSCE Secretariat concluded Letters of Understanding on 20 September 2017. Pursuant to the Letters of Understanding, the United Nations and the OSCE will deepen their collaboration in the areas of OSCE’s access to the United Nations

21 The relationship between the OSCE and the United Nations was formalized during the period of transformation of the (then) CSCE from a periodic conference with merely deliberative functions to an international organization entrusted with operational activities. The CSCE 1992 Helsinki Summit solemnly declared its “understanding that the CSCE is a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. As such, it provides an important link between European and global security. The rights and responsibilities of the Security Council remain unaffected in their entirety. The CSCE will work together closely with the United Nations especially in preventing and settling conflicts.”

22 The United Nations General Assembly granted observer status to the CSCE as an international organization, UN Doc. A/RES/48/5, 13 October 1993.

Systems Contracts and technical training courses arranged by the Department of Field Support, and may expand the collaboration to other areas as defined by mutual agreement.

37. To respond to the above-mentioned landmine explosion of 23 April 2017, in May and June 2017 the OSCE concluded necessary legal arrangements with the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC), a body established under Article 90 of the Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, for the IHFFC to use its good offices to set up an independent forensic investigation (IFI) into the incident. The IHFFC and the OSCE concluded a series of agreements to establish the IFI, providing for, *inter alia*, absolute confidentiality requirements which will not expire upon completion of the IFI and specifying the OSCE as the sole possessor of the archives related to the IFI upon completion.

38. The actions taken independently by the OSCE as an international organization in respect of the tragedy were as follows: the Permanent Council adopted a “Declaration of Support for the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine”²³ and called for a swift, thorough and impartial investigation into the incident and accountability. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office tasked the Secretary General with forming and deploying an independent team of experts to conduct a forensic post-blast scene investigation and compile a report for the Secretary General, to be shared with the Chairmanship. For his part, the Secretary General had already immediately tasked the Office of Internal Oversight (OIO) with carrying out an internal investigation to determine whether regulations, rules, policies, procedures, instructions and best practices had been followed, in particular the applicable security procedures. This was the point at which the Secretary General, in response to the Chairmanship’s tasking, turned to the IHFFC. The IFI was independently composed by the IHFFC in June 2017. The IFI report was submitted to the Secretary General in August 2017 and presented to the Permanent Council in September 2017. The OIO report was distributed to participating States in October 2017. Throughout this period continuous contact was maintained by the OSCE with the injured officials and the family of the deceased, as well as the States of nationality of the victims, to keep them informed of the status of the investigation. At present, the Secretary General, in consultation with the Chairmanship, is considering, so as not to impede the course of justice, a (partial) waiver of immunity to allow co-operation with the criminal investigation opened by Ukraine into the incident.

39. In the past year, as was the case in previous years, the OSCE also concluded a number of agreements with the European Union for extrabudgetary financing of OSCE programmes and projects. INTERPOL and the OSCE concluded a joint action plan designed to facilitate closer co-operation between the two organizations.

Conclusion

40. While the IWG did not succeed in achieving consensus on the current four options for strengthening the legal framework of the OSCE, the level of participation in the meetings, including from capitals, and the depth and breadth of the discussion of all aspects of the legal framework demonstrate that active pursuit of this matter is a common goal. The consideration being given to Option 4 by over half of the participating States suggests that the time may be ripening for placing the OSCE on a firmer legal footing, at a minimum by consolidating a core group of participating States that agree on granting legal protection identical to that

23 PC.DOC/1/17, dated 27 April 2017.

conceptualized in the 2007 Draft Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE.

41. The recognition of the international legal personality of the OSCE through multilateral or bilateral treaties incontrovertibly establishes the OSCE as a subject of international law, a status which the Austrian Chairmanship has concluded the OSCE already enjoys on a *de facto* basis. Even if the original intention of the participating States was not to create an international legal person, the acts of the CSCE/OSCE decision-making bodies have had the consequence of creating one, as its operations and its treatment are otherwise not explicable in legal terms. In fact the mandates and tasks assigned by consensus to the OSCE have clear operational aspects which are manifest on the territories of OSCE participating States. The OSCE's operational dimension is at least as important as its deliberative dimension. That view is consistent with the unanimous recognition of the OSCE participating States that the strength of the OSCE lies in its field operations, which constitute its real added value in the European security architecture.

42. The Austrian Chairmanship, representing the OSCE's principal host State, has taken the step of recognizing the status of the OSCE as a subject of international law by concluding a headquarters agreement with the OSCE which, when it enters into force, will replace Austria's federal law on the OSCE. Austria will continue to foster the realization of Option 4, with a view to furthering the Organization's status through a multilateral treaty in which States Parties will adopt the provisions agreed at expert level in 2007; in so doing, it will contribute towards defragmenting and consolidating the status and treatment of the OSCE, its officials and the representatives to it, giving the OSCE the status it merits and needs in order to function.

43. In 2017, the Informal Working Group on Strengthening the Legal Framework has once again proven itself to be an appropriate mechanism and a valuable forum for dialogue where this core aspect of the OSCE's existence can be discussed, co-ordinated and addressed.