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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR STEFANO BALDI,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY TO THE OSCE,
AT THE CONCLUDING MEETING OF THE 29th OSCE ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM**

Prague, 9 and 10 September 2021

**Promoting comprehensive security, stability and sustainable development in the
OSCE area through women's economic empowerment**

Opening session

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to add some observations in its national capacity.

We thank the Swedish Chairmanship for having placed the topic of women's empowerment at the forefront of the work of this 29th session of the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. This is an area of utmost importance, which sees Italy engaging in many initiatives at the international level and interacting with partner countries. Within the OSCE, too, we believe that, by fully harnessing the role of women in society, in the world of work and in conflict mediation and environmental protection activities, we can make a significant contribution to the full implementation of our common commitments.

Italy is honoured to have hosted, at the end of August, the first Conference on Women's Empowerment in the history of the G20. In this way, we aimed to lay the groundwork for a co-ordinated response by the international community at the G20 level to overcome the barriers and stereotypes that hamper the advancement and empowerment of women in society, including the digital gender gap and the difficulties faced when pursuing science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers and, more generally, when accessing the labour market, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Conference also paid particular attention to the recent events in Afghanistan, issuing an appeal to do everything possible to ensure that Afghan women and girls retain their fundamental freedoms and rights, and that the achievements made in the country in the last twenty years are preserved.

At the national level, last month, after an extensive and participatory consultation process, Italy adopted its first National Strategy for Gender Equality, which outlines five priority areas (work, income, skills, time and power) for enhancing women's rights, with detailed and measurable goals and targets to be achieved by 2026.

We are also following with great interest the vital contribution of women and young people to environmental protection and the fight against climate change. In this regard, I should like to recall that, in Milan at the end of the month, Italy will host some 400 young people from all over the world as part of the preparatory work for the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, co-chaired by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy, to discuss the main concerns and priorities for international climate action. We stand ready to work together in the coming months with all participating States ahead of the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm in order to strengthen our shared commitments in this area.

Thank you.