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**Intervention by
H.E. Mr Halbe Zijlstra
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
OSCE Ministerial Council
Vienna, 7 – 8 December 2017**

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

This is my first OSCE Ministerial Council. So first let me say how pleased I am to be here in the magnificent Hofburg.

I fully support the statement pronounced earlier this morning on behalf of the European Union. I attach great importance to this organisation. It brings together North America, Europe and Central Asia. This makes it uniquely placed to strengthen the most vital ingredient of our international relations: trust. The OSCE has proven its worth to the world as a builder of trust. It can make a real difference, as long as we Participating States allow it to play that role.

The crisis in and around Ukraine is a case in point. The Special Monitoring Mission de-escalated tensions under very difficult circumstances. The SMM however is not a crisis resolution mechanism; the signatories to the Minsk agreements simply must step up their efforts to comply with their provisions.

There are many other issues where we need more trust. And where the OSCE can play a vital role in all its three dimensions – if we let it. Let me mention two areas where this is particularly relevant today: conventional arms control and cybersecurity.

Firstly, conventional arms control.

Last year in Hamburg we launched a 'Structured Dialogue' on European security. Its aim is to discuss mutual threat perceptions and military activities. And to inform this debate with objective data. I believe this dialogue is essential. In the short term it could yield more transparency and therefore more trust. In the longer term it could yield new ideas about conventional arms control. Meanwhile, we must continue working to improve existing instruments in this field. I strongly call on all states to adhere to our common rules of transparency. The Structured Dialogue is off to a good start, and I want to thank Germany for steering this process. I can assure you that the Netherlands will make an active and constructive contribution to this debate in 2018.

Secondly, cybersecurity.

These days, threats to international peace and stability are increasingly digital in nature. We believe that the existing body of international law, which underpins relations between states, applies equally in cyberspace. This provides the best guarantee for maintaining an open, free and secure cyberspace. Here, too, we need to work to achieve predictability and stability. The OSCE broke new ground by developing confidence-building measures on cybersecurity. We must press forward and set about putting them into practice. They remind us that the OSCE's vital role in fostering confidence also applies to new domains like cyberspace.

My country will continue to contribute actively to these efforts.

Mr Chairman, in closing I'd like to thank you for your leadership this year, and wish my Italian colleague every success in taking up this task. Please be assured of our ongoing commitment.

Thank you.