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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. BENEDETTO DELLA VEDOVA, UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY, AT THE TWENTY-EIGHTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Stockholm, 2 and 3 December 2021

Minister Linde,
Esteemed colleagues,

I should first of all like to congratulate the Swedish Chairmanship for its invaluable work and great dedication during a difficult year.

The hopes expressed in 2020 that the pandemic would serve as a catalyst of new incentives for collaboration and multilateralism have unfortunately not been borne out by the reality of international relations, even at the OSCE.

The failure to achieve consensus on the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting – the Swedish Chairmanship’s efforts notwithstanding – and the delay in adopting the Unified Budget are troubling signs of a gradual moving away from the Helsinki spirit, whose 50th anniversary we shall be celebrating in 2025.

And looking ahead to 2025, while congratulating Finland for its dedication in taking on the Chairmanship’s responsibilities, I cannot but note and agree as to the scale and complexity of the challenges lying before us.

Allow me also to express my regret over the failure to reach consensus on Estonia’s candidature for 2024.

Turning to the present and to Ukraine, the increase in ceasefire violations, the difficulties within the Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group, the growing constraints on the deployment of monitors and, last but not least, the failure to renew the mandate of the Observer Mission on the Russian-Ukrainian border – all these are evidence of a political stalemate that gives cause for concern and that is nullifying the participating States’ dedication and efforts, including financial efforts.

It is therefore essential to regain the conditions for a negotiated way out of the crisis, ensuring full implementation of the Minsk agreements by all the parties and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine while seeking to alleviate the tragic humanitarian situation.

Despite these difficulties, Italy believes that the OSCE should remain a key actor with regard to the conflict in and around Ukraine and in the promotion of political solutions to what are referred to as protracted conflicts.

We hope that the trilateral agreement of November 2020 on Nagorno-Karabakh can pave the way for the stabilization of the region and the building of peace there – a goal with regard to which we support the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group and the OSCE.

Moreover, Italy confirms its commitment to a negotiated settlement of the conflicts in Georgia and Transdnistria, hoping in the first case for a solution in the framework of the Geneva International Discussions that respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, and in the second case for the conditions to be created that would enable the Permanent Conference in the “5+2” format to be convened as soon as possible.

We remain deeply concerned about the ongoing clampdown on the opposition and civil society in Belarus and reiterate our support for the measures adopted so far at the OSCE to facilitate dialogue and a political solution to the crisis.

We cannot forget, though, about the migrant crisis on the Belarusian border – a tragedy that reminds us of how the topic of migration, in all its aspects, is calling for growing attention, also on the OSCE’s agenda.

The migration emergency, climate and sustainable development should be accorded ever greater space in the dialogue with our Mediterranean and Asian partners.

The crisis in Afghanistan has dramatically revived the need for co-operative responses to transnational threats. I take this opportunity to welcome the initiative promoted by the Chairmanship and the Secretary General for the launching of an OSCE Framework for Response in relation to Afghanistan.

The dramatic impact of security threats on the most vulnerable social groups, particularly on women – an impact that has been aggravated by the pandemic – should not be forgotten. The Swedish Chairmanship therefore should be applauded for having given due prominence to the need to promote gender perspectives in the three dimensions.

Among these, the human dimension remains an essential pillar of our security and a founding principle of the OSCE. The proficiency in election observation built up by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), as reflected in the fact that it recently conducted its 400th mission in 30 years, remains a valuable tool that needs to be protected as part of more general support for this institution’s autonomy. Italy avails itself of the ODIHR’s technical assistance, and we encourage all the participating States to view such assistance in a favourable light.

However, we harbour growing concerns about the continued erosion of the European security architecture, and for that reason we remain convinced of the need to ensure the full implementation of the agreements that form its bedrock, including the Treaty on Open Skies.

Given the profound transformation of the geostrategic context and the technological paradigm shift, we believe at the same time that there is an urgent need to update the verification and control instruments, starting with serious negotiations for modernization of the Vienna Document on the basis of the existing proposals.

Our ambitious goals require adequate resources. Allow me at this point to make a heartfelt appeal for the prompt adoption of the Organization’s budget, and also for a constructive discussion on the projects for reforming the financial cycle and revising the Scales of Contributions to make them fairer.

In closing, I take this opportunity to extend my best wishes for 2022 to the incoming Polish Chairmanship and to assure it of Italy's full co-operation going forward.

Thank you. I give the floor to the Chairmanship.