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ENGLISH only

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE**

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE,
AS DELIVERED BY MSGR. MARINKO ANTOLOVIĆ
AT THE 982nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

30 JANUARY 2014

**RE: ADDRESS BY H.E. SEBASTIAN KURZ, AUSTRIAN FEDERAL MINISTER
FOR EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See willingly joins previous Delegations in warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs to the Permanent Council.

In recent decades, Austria has registered great advances in various areas which were almost unthinkable just few generations ago. It has not only experienced significant economic progress, but it has also developed a model of social coexistence known as “social solidarity”. Austrians have every reason to be grateful for this, and they have demonstrated it not only by opening their hearts to the poor and needy, but also by demonstrating generous solidarity when catastrophes and disasters occur in various parts of the world.

The efforts made by Austria in promoting and enhancing peace as the fruit of justice throughout the world, its engagement in the protection of human rights, its aid to refugees and its solidarity with the pressing problems of humanity in the developing countries have earned it internationally respect and admiration. Even if Austria, like many other European nations, is still facing economic problems, but also successfully tackling them, we are confident that it will not renounce its readiness to offer assistance to those who are suffering or forced to leave their homelands.

The Catholic Church in Austria, for her part, has always been active in supporting or initiating activities demonstrating great generosity and hospitality and is committed to continue doing so. Therefore, it would be an omission not to acknowledge that much of what Austria is and possesses, is owed to the Christian faith and its beneficial effects on individual men and women. That faith has profoundly shaped the character of the country and its people.

Mr. Chiarman,

Despite today's pluralism, and in connection with what was previously said, life in Austria is still fundamentally imbued with Christian values, including freedom. Freedom rightly understood does not mean the absence of constraints, but the capacity to do good. Justice and the common good are the key objectives which should be tirelessly pursued by all. If respect for human dignity, rights and freedoms is at the centre of our actions, then many disputes, misunderstandings and conflicts can be resolved in a fair and appropriate manner or even prevented from arising.

As often in the past, so also today, Austria has the task of building bridges between peoples. Its constant striving to contribute to securing peace and understanding between nations, including those of the OSCE, is widely recognized. Therefore, there is no need to stress that it will be necessary to continue on this path in the same, decisive manner.

Mr. Kurz,

We wish you every success in your ministerial work and wish to your country, so hospitable to all of us gathered here, a prosperous future for the benefit of all its citizens as well as those who will find a safe haven within its borders or in its friendship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!