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**STATEMENT BY MR. JEAN ASSELBORN,
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE
GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG, AT THE TWENTY-THIRD
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Hamburg, 8 and 9 December 2016

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Esteemed colleagues,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Luxembourg associates itself fully with the statement made by the High Representative and Vice-President on behalf of the European Union.

I should like first of all to express my sincere thanks to our German hosts for their warm welcome here in this magnificent Hanseatic city.

I should like to congratulate Germany for having assumed the Chairmanship in this difficult year, which has been marked by the weakening of security and confidence in Europe. The German Chairmanship is to be commended for having stepped up efforts to invigorate dialogue and build up trust.

For example, the informal meeting in Potsdam enabled us to engage in frank and direct discussion of the grave security challenges we face at the moment. They remain considerable but they are not insurmountable.

Against the background of a worrying resumption of violence in Donbas, it is imperative that all parties implement the Minsk agreements in full. The OSCE will have to continue to play its leading role in the search for a sustainable settlement to the crisis. I also welcome the commitment of the Heads of State or Government in the Normandy format and their Ministers for Foreign Affairs.

In 2016, the first monitor from Luxembourg was made available to the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. I can assure you that my country will continue to support this Mission in 2017. In view of our experience on the ground, I believe that we should do everything possible to ensure access for OSCE monitors to Donbas.

Since the Kyiv Ministerial Council in 2013, held during Luxembourg's Chairmanship of the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC), decision-making has become extremely

complex. This year, 20 years after the adoption of the Framework for Arms Control at the Lisbon Ministerial Council, the German OSCE Chairmanship and the Portuguese Chairmanship of the FSC have made modernization of the Vienna Document one of their priorities. While numerous draft decisions have been submitted by several participating States, including Luxembourg, to increase military transparency and reduce the risk of conflicts, only one State has obstinately opposed the modernization of this Document, with the result that, although obsolete, the text adopted at the Vilnius Ministerial Council still remains in force.

Mr. Chairperson,

Other sizeable challenges give us great cause for concern. I should like here to mention the migration crisis but also the increased and pernicious violations of our commitments to the protection of human rights.

Most OSCE participating States are currently having to deal with the largest influx of refugees since the end of the Second World War. Europe must not put up barriers and abandon persons in crisis situations seeking protection and security.

It is thus clear to me that this migration crisis can be overcome only through a joint effort and with shared responsibility and solidarity.

We remain persuaded that the OSCE has a role to play in the context of the migration crisis. The geographical area of the OSCE and of its partners contains not only States of origin of migrants and refugees but also transit and receiving countries. For that reason, the refugee crisis is a phenomenon that concerns the entire OSCE area. We thus highly appreciate the tireless efforts of Switzerland to facilitate consensus on this issue, and we hope that this Council will be in a position to adopt a corresponding decision.

We continue to urge the Secretariat and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to elaborate projects to help participating States to meet their commitments to protect human rights in general and those of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in particular. Luxembourg will continue to support them in 2017 through extrabudgetary contributions.

Luxembourg's commitment to human rights and international order based on agreed and respected rules is well known. We are thus very concerned by the measures observed in several participating States to restrict civil society and independent media through laws designed to silence dissident voices. Human rights defenders are increasingly confronted by assaults on their freedom, physical integrity and even their lives. This is unacceptable.

Participating States are called on to meet their commitments to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, which are universal values that remain an essential pillar of the OSCE. Luxembourg cannot therefore but welcome the efforts by our German Chairmanship to adopt decisions in essential areas like protection of freedom of expression, countering propaganda and the prevention of torture.

Mr. Chairperson,

Luxembourg will spare no efforts to help establish a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community rooted in shared commitments, common goals and respect for the inherent dignity of each individual, as reaffirmed at the Astana Summit.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Chairperson-in-Office Frank Walter Steinmeier and all of his team for their commitment during this special and uncommonly difficult year. We welcome the incoming Austrian Chairmanship and assure it of our support in its important mission.

Thank you.