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**STATEMENT BY
MR. MASSIMO DREI, DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF
ITALY, AT THE 1422nd MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

11 May 2023

**On the report by the mission of independent experts under the Moscow Mechanism
invoked by 38 OSCE participating States**

Mr. Chairperson,

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the 26 Member States of the European Union and with the statement by Denmark on behalf of the 38 OSCE participating States that invoked the Moscow Mechanism in March, and would like to add a few remarks in a national capacity.

We should first like to thank Professor Ascensio for the excellent report presented today. It offers an accurate description of the “arsenal” of legislative and administrative measures adopted by the Belarusian authorities over the past two years to repress all forms of opposition and to ensure control over the whole of society.

The numerous waves of arrests, the increasing number of political prisoners, the forced or “voluntary” closure of civil society organizations, the extension of the use of the death penalty, and the restrictions on freedom of expression and information paint a dark picture of violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The escalation of repressive measures in connection with the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which Belarus actively supports, is a source of further serious concern.

Italy stands by the Belarusian people in asserting their legitimate demands. We express our deep admiration and respect for the courage and determination of those who – despite severe repression and intimidation – continue to pay the price for promoting human rights and the rule of law and for building a free and democratic society.

The report rightly notes that the continued “impunity and lack of effective remedies in Belarus pose a significant threat to the human dimension of the OSCE”. We call upon the Belarusian authorities to take on board the report’s recommendations, secure the immediate release of political prisoners and put an end to repression, ensuring full compliance with our shared commitments.

Mr. Chairperson,

While expressing profound regret over Belarus's lack of co-operation with the Moscow Mechanism, we reiterate our conviction about the effectiveness and enduring relevance of this important OSCE tool. In the Helsinki Final Act, all participating States of this Organization recognized that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms "is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States".

The many tools at the OSCE's disposal and the valuable work done by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and other autonomous institutions to encourage and support all participating States in promoting and protecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of their citizens are a unique asset of the OSCE and an essential pillar of our co-operation.

As reiterated at the highest level by our Heads of State or Government in the 2010 Astana Commemorative Declaration: "We regard these commitments as our common achievement, and therefore consider them to be matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States." To this end, we firmly reject the unjustified accusations about the politicization of the OSCE's human dimension and renew our call to respect the commitments that we freely entered into. The promotion of human rights, the protection of the rule of law and the strengthening of democratic institutions constitute the foundation of our common security.

Thank you.