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**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR TAOUS FEROUKHI, PERMANENT
REPRESENTATIVE AND HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF
ALGERIA, AT THE EIGHTEENTH MEETING OF
THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Vilnius, 7 December 2011

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to express my deep gratitude to the Lithuanian authorities for the welcome we have received in Vilnius and for the excellent organization of the present session of the annual OSCE Ministerial Council.

Allow me to thank Ireland for its judicious chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group and to wish it every success for the future OSCE Chairmanship in 2012. Let me also assure the future chairmanship of the Contact Group, Ukraine, of our co-operation.

Algeria welcomes the adoption of the Vilnius Declaration on the Partnership, which comes in the wake of the Astana Declaration for “strengthening interaction with the Partners”, and the resurgence of interest in the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE in the light of the upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East.

We are entering into a new stage for the Mediterranean partnership, offering us an opportunity to pool our efforts to ensure that the framework of dialogue, consultation and co-operation is raised to the level of the challenges posed and opportunities offered by the globalization of our rapidly changing world, in an approach that is firmly focused on the future and puts priority on listening to one another and mutual understanding.

The Euro-Mediterranean relationship, which is based on the concept of the indivisibility of security, demands a rapprochement as to the way questions of common interest are perceived – be it the persistence of threats to security or the appearance of new ones including cybercrime, unresolved conflicts, in particular the conflict in the Middle East, or uncertainties fostered by the international economic and financial crisis and aggravated by the sovereign debt of the eurozone countries.

There is no doubt that the efforts to enhance the Mediterranean partnership will help to consolidate the progress achieved and ensure greater visibility and equal treatment of its members. This process requires the adaptation of the rules and procedures governing the partnership and the way it works (the Permanent Council, the Contact Group and the annual Mediterranean Conference). A number of specific proposals have been made by the

Mediterranean partners, including Algeria, to improve their interaction and involvement in the subjects that concern them.

The challenges are multidimensional. We are witnessing an unprecedented pace of change in our region, the most visible manifestations of which are the organization of democratic elections. The acceptance of the election results reflects the deep democratic aspiration of the people of the region, who long for more social justice and higher moral standards in the economic and political sphere.

However successful the elections may be, they should not eclipse the other essential aspects of democracy. Need I remind you that the upheavals in our region have been fuelled by the inadequacies of our institutions, which have weakened the rule of law and good governance, and by the vulnerabilities of an economy incapable of ensuring development able to satisfy socio-economic needs in a sustainable manner.

Algeria, which experienced in October 1988 the upheavals that the other countries of the region are experiencing today, is committed under President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to intensifying the large-scale programme of political and economic reforms to address the challenges of the democratic process.

The priorities of the reforms in progress concern the strengthening of the institutional and human capacities so as to consolidate the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and opinion, not to forget the promotion of the participation of women in public life by introducing a 30 per cent quota for elected posts.

In this context, Algeria reaffirms its interest in intensifying its co-operation with the OSCE in the three dimensions of security and in appropriating the instruments and know-how developed by the Organization. It will not hesitate to ask the OSCE for expert assistance if it needs it. The co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly/OSCE is a source of satisfaction in this respect. Algeria's involvement in monitoring the elections in Tunisia is evidence of this.

At the economic level, there is a need to work on socio-economic development with the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean on the basis of a mutually beneficial partnership aimed at significantly reducing the gulf that separates the two shores of the Mediterranean, which is a source of instability and insecurity.

Conservation of the environment offers a number of opportunities in such areas as the green economy, new and renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, not to forget energy security, with respect to which Algeria reaffirms its interest. Addressing the challenges of desertification, soil degradation and the growing scarcity of water resources, will help to check the illegal migration that these unresolved problems encourage.

The politico-military dimension is of interest to us, especially in the light of the changes taking place in North Africa, because of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and man-portable air defence systems. The unprecedented availability of large quantities of weapons, including anti-aircraft weapons, is a source of serious concern for the countries of the Sahel, given the risk that this arsenal may fall into the hands of terrorist groups, with the consequences that this would have for people and their property, not to mention air navigation security.

Algeria reaffirms its determination to resolutely combat terrorism and transnational organized crime, which pose a serious challenge to the security and stability of the region. It has worked to achieve a common perception of these two interconnected phenomena, which has permitted the institutionalization of the framework for consultation and co-operation, including in operational matters, as illustrated by the adoption of socio-economic development policies and projects of common interest.

At the same time, Algeria is continuing its awareness-raising efforts to complete the international legal structure aimed at putting a stop to all sources and forms of financing of terrorism, including the payment of ransoms to secure the liberation of hostages. Algeria encourages the OSCE to help with the adoption of an international legal instrument penalizing the payment of financial compensation to terrorists.

Algeria is also contributing to the African Union's efforts to turn the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), based in Algiers, into a centre of excellence. It also encourages the co-operation established with the OSCE Action against Terrorism Unit and the other United Nations and international bodies active in this area.

Madam Chairperson,

The fight against discrimination, including Islamophobia, contributes greatly to the peaceful coexistence of cultures and civilizations and to the promotion of relations based on co-operation and partnership, which are unfortunately impeded by an ideology that tends to equate Islam with terrorism and is fuelled by hate speech, especially by extreme right-wing political parties and certain media.

Besides the importance of working to curb this dangerous trend, we should also ensure the implementation of the recommendations made at the OSCE conferences on tolerance and increase the awareness-raising efforts in education systems so as to promote the emergence of an objective dialogue on cultural questions that enrich our diversity.

Furthermore, as a founding member of the Treaty of Pelindaba turning Africa into a nuclear-weapon-free zone, Algeria calls for the creation of such a zone in the Middle East as an essential confidence-building measure for regional security. It welcomes the appointment of the Secretary of State of Finland, Jaakko Laajava, as facilitator for the 2012 conference on the Middle East, which will take place in Helsinki.

In conclusion, allow me to mention the enlargement of the Mediterranean partnership, given the request made by the Palestinian National Authority in 2004. We urge the OSCE to take a favourable view of this request, which is in line with the two-State solution accepted by the international community.

Thank you.