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**Statement by H.E. Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs, Foreign Minister of
Latvia
OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting on 4 – 5 December 2014 in
Basel**

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the Swiss Chairmanship for its professional work and tireless efforts during the whole year in order to address the topical issues the OSCE deals with.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past several decades we have built an international system based on trust and principles respected by all countries. All OSCE participating states have agreed to be committed to the OSCE principles, among them sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia's aggression in Ukraine is one of the most serious breaches of the OSCE principles since the signing of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. The Basel Ministerial Council takes place in a situation when, for the first time since the end of the Second World War, one OSCE member has annexed and occupied a part of a territory of another OSCE member and tries to influence its democratic choice. We would like to reiterate Latvia's unwavering support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine. We do not recognize Russia's purported annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and we call on Russia to end the occupation.

Mr. Chairman,

The Russian Federation continues to violate Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russian armed forces are directly engaged in military operations in Ukraine and Russia continues to supply weapons and mercenaries to the so-called "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk. People are killed, unlawfully detained and tortured in Eastern Ukraine. Thousands of individuals remain missing. The human rights situation in Russia-occupied Crimea, Ukraine continues to deteriorate. We remain concerned by reports of violations of the rights of Tatars, Ukrainians and members of other minorities. There are alarming reports of cases of kidnapping, torture and killings of members of the Tatar community, as well as threats and violence against those who oppose the occupation.

Mr. Chairman,

The resolution or prevention of protracted conflicts in the OSCE area is a priority precondition for cooperative security. Development of a "frozen conflict" in the Eastern regions of Ukraine should be prevented. We realise the difficulty of this challenge since the

situation on the ground rather add to classical signs of a freeze of conflict. In order not to tolerate it, the OSCE along with other international organisations should continue to use the whole spectrum of their conflict settlement tools at its best.

Meanwhile, we should not forget about protracted conflicts in Moldova, Georgia and over Nagorno-Karabakh. Mediation and facilitation of dialogue play a fundamental role in conflict resolution. The OSCE should remain ever active in moving forward with peaceful and sustainable settlements of these conflicts.

Dear colleagues, finally let me welcome Serbia, as the incoming Chairmanship. I wish Serbia every success in tackling the tasks ahead. We look forward to work closely with you, including during the Latvian EU presidency in the first half of next year.

Thank you!