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**ADDRESS BY THE OSCE CHAIRMAN-IN-OFFICE
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
H.E. MR. BUJAR OSMANI**

**CLOSING SESSION OF THE 30th MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
Skopje, 1 December 2023**

Dear colleagues, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you very much for your valuable views and insights.

This has been an eventful Ministerial Council following a year full of challenges. It has been my pleasure and my honor to host you here in Skopje and to chair this organization in 2023.

As this is the concluding session of the Ministerial Council, I hope you will allow me to speak a little longer than expected.

My team and I have endeavored to lead this organization in the face of unprecedented external and internal challenges.

I do not say this lightly.

Since Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and its continued aggression against its sovereign neighbor and fellow participating State, this organization has had to navigate uncharted waters. The OSCE has faced threats to the principles and values that form its very foundation. The security architecture on which we all rely to maintain stability and prevent conflict while also addressing its adverse effects has also been undermined.

Meanwhile, in Vienna, and here in Skopje, we have worked with all participating States to forge agreements and build consensus to ensure the OSCE has the leadership and financial predictability it needs to continue fulfilling its key objectives and delivering valuable results for the people of our common region.

Let me repeat: To continue building an OSCE for the future, we need strategic clarity, not strategic confusion.

This involves mid-to long-term predictability to avoid drastic deadlocks and continue delivering results across all the three dimensions. We cannot afford for this vital mission to be obstructed by conditionalities and impositions. Bona fide dialogue and cooperation are the OSCE's DNA. Should we strive to build a robust and effective Organization for the future, our overall engagement must be in good faith. There is no other way. Otherwise, we risk weakening the OSCE and tying its hands when its tools are needed most. This would be a failure for all.

I am pleased once again to note with gratitude that the Republic of Malta has seen the need for leadership and put itself forward to fill the role of 2024 Chairperson-in-Office.

Even so, ladies and gentlemen, our task is not yet finished, and neither North Macedonia, nor Malta, or any other Chair, can address these questions or resolve these difficulties alone.

All OSCE participating States have pledged to uphold the principles and values of the Helsinki Final Act and have taken upon themselves the responsibility for preserving this organization.

Dear colleagues:

I remain proud of all that we have accomplished this year with North Macedonia at the helm of the OSCE. By active engagement, flexible, innovative, but principled approaches we have managed to keep the OSCE relevant and visible, when some wanted to see it sidelined. I would like to once again express our gratitude to all those who helped us in that mission, tirelessly engaging in support of the Organization and its values and principles.

Although we managed to overcome the most critical challenges, we stand still at the precipice of greater success.

We must find ways to prevail over different hurdles to ensure that our organization continues to remain relevant and able to address the threats that lurk just over the horizon.

Building on this premise, North Macedonia will continue singing OSCE's praises and stands ready to work together with the next Chair Malta and reliable Troika Partner Finland to build a stronger OSCE for the future.

I have full confidence that Estonia, had it been allowed, would have been equally able to meet this challenge to lead this organization and address the challenges and threats we must address together. I hope, in the future, Estonia will be granted the privilege and the responsibility to take its place as Chairperson-in-Office, which it so richly deserves.

Building a strong OSCE is a shared investment; the dividends will bring peace, stability and dignity for all the people of the OSCE region, for years to come. This must simultaneously be the lighthouse that guides our engagement as well as and our final destination.

Therefore, I am also pleased to note the participating States have reached an agreement on the extension of the mandates for the leadership of the OSCE's executive structures. Our ability to come together now and forge consensus among all 57 participating States reveals, once more, the importance and efficacy of building agreement through negotiation and compromise on behalf of our common goals and objectives.

Despite our differences and disagreements, we have shown the strategic vision required to continue our constructive efforts toward implementing and applying the OSCE's competitive advantages through the work of its executive structures to the benefit of all our people.

I encourage this positive dynamic to continue. Because it must. We must continue to work together in good faith to resolve not only the complicated internal questions that face us in the OSCE but the greater threats and challenges to the security and stability of our region.

Let the spirit of Skopje and today's achievements stay with us as we encounter more serious matters that have even greater implications for the lives of our people.

On a personal note:

I am serious about the claim that if we did not have the OSCE, we would need to invent it. Throughout this year, the Organization has grown on me. From the get-go, I have remained driven and was not afraid to fail in order to find ways to create positive dynamics. We have left no stone unturned and bent over backwards to move forward.

It would have been wrong not to try. My team accepted the call boldly and without any hesitation. Winston Churchill's words clearly depict how we positioned ourselves in the face of recurring challenges: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." So here we are at the end, with a long, difficult, but rewarding year, now behind us.

In a hindsight, we will remember not for the final outcomes only, but for the processes we engaged in ardently and resolutely hoisting the "It's About People" flag as high, so everyone can see it, because the OSCE is about people and that is how it should be and where our joint priorities must remain.

In conclusion, before I close the meeting, allow me to dedicate few words of appreciation to "my people," the team in Skopje and Vienna and our international secondees for their genuine commitment, grit and tenacity. You showed that we can do it, so we did it. Kudos for that.

I would also like to pay tribute to all the diplomats from the MFA for their hard work and dedication to make this meeting not only possible, but successful.

My thanks also go to all my colleagues and friends from North Macedonia for their support.

On the OSCE side, I would like to take a moment expressing gratitude for the support and cooperation to my colleagues of the OSCE participating States, especially to my Troika colleagues, minister Valtonen and Rau, but also to:

- OSCE Secretary General Helga Schmidt and the able staff of the OSCE Secretariat;

- the President and the Secretary general of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Pia Kauma and Roberto Montella;
- The heads of OSCE's autonomous institutions: Theresa Ribeiro, Kairat Abdrakhmanov and Matteo Mecacci;
- My Personal and Special Representatives working determinedly on different portfolios, as well as to all Heads of the OSCE field operations, the "blue ribbon" of our engagement.

Lastly, a particular gratitude goes to the exceptional team Conference and Language Services.

I wish our friends from Malta every success and less challenging year. We are here to support in all your endeavors.

Thank you.