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**STATEMENT BY
MS. ANNALENA BAERBOCK, MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY, AT THE TWENTY-NINTH MEETING OF
THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Łódź, 1 December 2022

Mr. Chairperson,
Madam Secretary General,
Madam President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly,
Esteemed colleagues,

This Chairmanship year has been more than difficult – but it has also never been so necessary. Ukraine, your neighbouring country, dear Zbigniew Rau, was invaded on 24 February. Since then, we have been witnessing a brutal war of aggression in Ukraine. Not only on infrastructure, but also targeted at the civilian population.

More than 15 million people have fled Ukraine to date, most of them to or through Poland. And the scenario is clear: the aim is to destroy Ukraine as an independent State. But it is also about destroying the European peace order, international law and this common organization of ours, the OSCE.

Under these circumstances, you, dear Zbigniew Rau, and you, dear Helga Schmid, have led the OSCE – as the embodiment of co-operative, values-based security. You have defended the Helsinki and Paris commitments, upheld our values and kept the focus on the suffering of the people of Ukraine. I, as German Foreign Minister, my country and everyone in this room are very grateful to you for that.

Because, as we said yesterday evening, the Russian regime is intent on destroying our European peace order. Just as it wanted to take Kyiv in a few days – it wanted to destroy our Organization in a few days. The fact that we were able to prevent this together was not a foregone conclusion, in my view. But it was made possible by returning to our common values.

At the very moment when life, freedom and peace came under attack, we decided together to stand on the side of the victim and not on the side of the aggressor. We decided – despite all our differences – to go back to what is most important for this Organization and for the people of our common Europe. And that is peace, freedom and human rights. Fifty-five countries, as different as they are, as much as we argue about other issues, chose peace and freedom.

One president and his government decided to set Europe ablaze. And it is up to this one man, it is up to this one government, to finally extinguish this brutal fire, this attack on our common order.

I should like to thank the Secretary General and the Chairmanship for continuing their work in these moments when Ukraine and our peace order were under attack – also with the new Support Programme for Ukraine. We are more united now than ever before. Because we know what matters now – to support the people in Ukraine, but also those in neighbouring countries.

We have therefore jointly launched the Moldova Support Platform, which is also accompanied by the OSCE's work on the ground on good governance, combating corruption and curbing the proliferation of small arms.

We decided together – even though we have to defend our freedom and peace right now – not to lose sight of other countries, other regions.

Because it is now important that our work in Central Asia in particular is stepped up, that regional co-operation with the OSCE is expanded there – with a view to increasing border security, combating drug and arms trafficking and mitigating the climate crisis.

Because in the light of the complex threats of our age, it is precisely the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security that can bring real added value for people. With arms control, co-operation in the field of cybersecurity, the fight against terrorism, co-operation on the environment and climate – but also with women's rights, media freedom and security.

Because we have seen that attacks on women's rights and on civil society are an indicator and a red flag in societies. We already saw this years ago in Russia. It is therefore all the more important to expand this work together. Because we are seeing destabilization spread to other regions. And the best protection against disinformation, fake news and manipulation is trust in one's own government. And trust in one's own government is achieved through transparency, self-criticism and self-reflection.

With this in mind, there are many tasks ahead of us. The most important one is to get the people of Ukraine through this terrible winter. I not only wish us all the greatest success in this task, but I am convinced that together we are stronger than this war.

And so, dear Bujar Osmani, the next year will most likely be anything but easy – but we are already looking forward to the OSCE Ministerial Council organized by you and to seeing you again in Skopje.

Whether we will then be able to make it clear that we have won this war together, we do not know yet. But we already know today: we stand together on the side of the people of Ukraine – for peace and for freedom.

I should like to conclude by quoting a woman who is one of the greatest freedom fighters in our common Europe.

Maria Kolesnikova said: "Freedom is worth fighting for" – and that is why we in the OSCE fight together for peace.

Thank you.