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**STATEMENT BY MR. HARLEM DESIR,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE,
AT THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Basel, 4 and 5 December 2014

Mr. Chairperson,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Secretary General,
Dear colleagues,

The year 2014 was marked by a shock to confidence and security in Europe. It is thus more necessary than ever to recall emphatically that nothing can justify the direct or indirect use of force outside international law, and much less the modification of borders by force. That is why we and all of our European Union partners condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea and the support given to the Donbass separatists. Our attachment to the founding principles of the OSCE is resolute and will not weaken.

The aim is not, however, to isolate Russia, which is an essential partner in Europe and on the international scene. We realize that Russia has security concerns, but if it wishes to remain a responsible partner for security in Europe these should not obstruct good-neighbourly relations with nearby countries. We therefore expect clear indications of its attachment to the principles that have been developed since the Helsinki Final Act and that unite us in the OSCE: respect for neighbours' territorial integrity, non-use of force and espousal of human rights. Only by reaffirming these shared principles will we be able to find lasting agreement. In this regard we welcome the establishment of the Panel of Eminent Persons.

Since the start of the Ukrainian crisis France has been at the forefront of diplomatic efforts, certain that a lasting solution can be achieved only through dialogue. It was this that prompted President Hollande to bring together President Putin and President Poroshenko in the "Normandy format" on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the allied landing in France. Six months later, the parameters are familiar to all of us: the Minsk agreements offer us a road map approved by all parties for putting an end to the crisis. It needs to be implemented in full; there is no other possible basis for ensuring stability and unity in Ukraine and for re-establishing good relations with Russia. The international community is facing too many challenges for it to be divided, be it terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change or human rights violations.

I should like to conclude by welcoming the indispensable role played by the OSCE in the conflict situation in Eastern Europe today. It is not only a unique platform for continental dialogue but also an organization that has proved its effectiveness in the field and affirmed its mediation capabilities, as its role in the Trilateral Contact Group, the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the Monitoring Mission on the Russian-Ukrainian border demonstrate on a daily basis. I should like to congratulate the Swiss Chairmanship for its noteworthy activities throughout this exceptional year and to assure the incoming Serbian Chairmanship of France's resolute support in helping to de-escalate the situation and in reaffirming our shared principles of security and the values on which our Organization is founded.

Thank you.