



Arab Republic of Egypt

MC.DEL/79/09
3 December 2009

ENGLISH only

Statement by

H.E Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt

At

The OSCE Ministerial Council

Athens, 1-2 December 2009

Delivered on his behalf by

Ambassador Ehab Fawzy

**Permanent Representative of the
Arab Republic of Egypt
To the Organization for Security and
Cooperation in Europe**

Check against Delivery

Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor and pleasure to address this important meeting of the Ministerial Council on behalf of H.E. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

I would like to express Egypt's sincere gratitude to the Government of Greece for hosting this meeting, and for doing so with its customary and warm hospitality, and to express our appreciation to the Greek Chairmanship for the wise and competent manner with which it has guided the work of the Organization over the past year.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Kazakhstan for chairing the Mediterranean Contact Group throughout the past year, and for having been so instrumental in the promotion of the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE. We look forward to the continuation of these efforts during Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of the Organization in 2010.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Egypt has always believed that the Mediterranean has the potential to become a successful model of integration among States that co-exist in a region in which they all share Mediterranean shores. Managing such a relationship in a manner that serves the respective interests of all would indeed represent a model of equitable interdependence in the relationship between both shores of the Mediterranean.

Stemming from Egypt's readiness to observe the experiences of others with a view to benefiting its own region, Egypt believes that the OSCE's comprehensive approach to security, encompassing the politico-military dimension, the economic- environmental dimension, as well as the human dimension can serve as an important model for security in the Mediterranean as a whole.

In this context, let me note that Egypt has been following with great interest developments pertaining to the Corfu Process on current and future challenges and perspectives for European Security. Egypt believes that the concept of indivisible, comprehensive and cooperative security enshrined in

the Helsinki Final Act applies to the Mediterranean as well. In this regard it must be stressed that the concrete commitments of the OSCE for building a Europe that is whole, free and at peace, cannot ignore the reality that the security of both Europe and the Mediterranean is interdependent and therefore indivisible. As such, a Corfu Process that allows for open, extensive, and inclusive consultations with the Mediterranean Partners may prove indispensable during the Processes' coming phases.

In this vein, I wish to thank Malta for its proposal that the annual Mediterranean Conference in 2010 be devoted to the issue of dialogue on European Security from a Mediterranean Perspective and its offer to host the Conference.

Egypt welcomes and supports Malta's proposal. I wish to emphasize that this proposal is a testimony to the common responsibility that we have as Partners and Participating states to engage extensively on the issue of security in our region, and the challenges facing it.

Mr. Chairman,

In order to ensure that the dialogue between the Participating States and the Mediterranean Partners remains constructive, Egypt believes that there is a need to focus attention on the common threats and challenges that confront both sides of the Mediterranean.

While the majority of threats we all confront are global in nature, including intolerance and discrimination, terrorism, drugs, human trafficking, organized crime, environmental degradation, global financial crises, the impact of regional challenges facing the security of the Mediterranean and the wider Middle East region has a direct effect on the OSCE region.

Progress on these issues will be dependent upon our collective will to confront rather than circumvent them. There can be no doubt that the struggle to reach a just political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict remains the overarching source of tension and instability in the Middle East. Only Israel's full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state can bring about genuine and lasting peace, as well as security and stability to the broader Mediterranean region. Protracted conflicts on the southern shores of the Mediterranean pose a common threat to peace and security, and hinder the possibility of strengthening interdependence between both sides of the Mediterranean.

In this regard, I would like to reiterate Egypt's strong support to the request of the Palestinian National Authority to be granted the status of Mediterranean Partner for Cooperation. We urge all OSCE Member States to make their contribution towards an early resolution of this issue. Egypt is convinced that an enlarged Mediterranean Partnership including the Palestinian National Authority, as well as other states of the region, will enhance and strengthen relations with the Mediterranean Partners, thereby allowing the OSCE to contribute positively to the cause of peace in its immediate neighborhood.

Mr. Chairman,

Weapons of mass destruction, and foremost among them nuclear weapons, continue to pose an obstacle to peace and security in the Mediterranean. The failure to establish in the Middle East a nuclear weapons free zone, despite the consistent and tireless efforts that Egypt and others have made for nearly 40 years, is a source of great disappointment to us. Despite universal acknowledgement that nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction pose a threat to international peace and security, political realities have led a number of States to ignore dealing with this issue in a comprehensive manner in the Middle East. Such an approach is counter-productive and stands in stark contradiction with the principles and values that the OSCE champions.

We hope that recent positive signals in the areas of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation will be rapidly followed by concrete actions that will also impact positively on the Middle East. And once again, I call on Israel, the only state in the Middle East not to have done so, to accede to the NPT.

Mr. Chairman,

The seminar on Media Self-Regulation for the Mediterranean Partners that was proposed by Egypt, was held in Vienna in June 2009. This media-related event focused on the Mediterranean Partners and addressed the challenges of upholding freedom of expression without offending the fundamental and diverse beliefs of other communities.

While some argue that self-regulation by the media itself is a sufficient assurance, Egypt believes that in addition to the mechanisms of media self-regulation, governments have the responsibility and duty to play

their part by putting in place the appropriate legislative framework and by promoting cultural strategies that build upon the respect for different religions and beliefs and on the acceptance of cultural pluralism.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to stress Egypt's strong support for the work of the three Personal Representatives on combating intolerance, and the efforts of the OSCE to move towards a more holistic and balanced approach on the issue of tolerance; thereby emphasizing that there is no hierarchy of intolerance in the OSCE.

Numerous reports by the Personal Representatives as well as ODIHR stress the lack of reliable statistics on hate crimes, especially those motivated by anti-Muslim bias, as well as the worrisome trend of anti Muslim rhetoric in political and media discourse, which lead to reinforced stereotyping of Muslims.

Egypt therefore requests the OSCE Chairman-in-Office to intensify the efforts of the OCSE in the field of combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, especially in the areas of education and awareness raising, including an active role for ODIHR in data collection, analysis and reporting of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, and in awareness raising of tolerance and respect towards them, as well as in the development of educational curricula that promote tolerance. Egypt also supports the calls for the need to provide the three Personal Representatives with additional instruments and means in order to assist Participating States in the actual implementation of one of the most important human dimension commitments of the OSCE. We hope that the three Personal Representatives will participate in the OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Cairo, and feel confident that their presence will enrich the discussions.

In this regard, we wish to express our strong support for the initiative of Kazakhstan as the incoming Chairmanship of the Organization to organize a comprehensive conference on tolerance. We hope that the conference be held under the auspices of the OSCE and that it includes a follow up of the relevant OSCE and Chairmanship conferences regarding this issue, notably the Cordoba Chairmanship Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, held under the auspices of the Spanish Chairmanship in 2007.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the years, the framework of cooperation between the OSCE and its Partners for Cooperation has been developing. The establishment of a Partnership Fund in the Madrid Ministerial Conference was a very positive step in this regard.

As regards the work of the Mediterranean Contact Group this year, we appreciate the efforts of Kazakhstan, in promoting the work of the group and in implementing a number of concrete initiatives that are of particular interest to the Mediterranean Partners, thereby adding increased momentum to the relationship between the Organization and its Mediterranean Partners.

In this regard, Egypt welcomes the initiative by Kazakhstan to prioritize future proposals for the Partnership Fund emanating from the Mediterranean Partners, with a view to ensuring full ownership by the Partners of future projects.

While Egypt would have liked to see a number of other initiatives added to the list of priorities, we are glad to accept the Kazakh paper as a starting point, and are ready to assist the current and incoming Chairs of our Contact Group in realizing these initiatives in a mutually beneficial manner.

Mr. Chairman

By agreeing to host the 2009 OSCE Mediterranean Conference in Cairo on December 14 and 15 under the theme "The Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE: cooperation towards enhanced security and stability", after hosting it on four previous occasions, most recently in Sharm El Sheikh in 2006, Egypt demonstrates once again the importance it attaches to the Mediterranean Partnership. It has also given concrete form to its commitment to the security and stability of the Mediterranean region, demonstrating that it will spare no effort in the pursuit of these objectives. It is our hope that the discussions in the Conference will serve to consolidate and build upon the achievements of the OSCE Mediterranean Partnership, and advance in a coherent manner the Mediterranean dimension in the current discussions on the future of European Security.

Thank you.