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Joint statement on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Delivered by Ambassador René Rosager Dinesen, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the OSCE, at the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council, 3-4 December 2020

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the following 47 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America and my own country Denmark.

This year, we mark the 30th anniversary of the landmark Copenhagen Document, which contributed to shaping the democratic principles of the OSCE region as we know them today. This document not only captured the hopeful spirit of the time, the end of a divisive and oppressive era and the advent of freedom for tens of millions in our region. It also proved a steadfast commitment from all participating States to democracy based on the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We have made great strides in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms over the past 30 years. And yet, still today, we see that the fight for freedom, justice and democracy is not over. The space for civil society and independent media is rapidly shrinking. Discrimination excludes too many from full participation in our societies. And the headlines feature threats and violence against peaceful protesters.

At the same time, the world has never been more interconnected. People exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms online as well as off. Human rights violations and abuses in one part of our region can have a serious impact in another. As OSCE's comprehensive security concept provides, respect for human rights within states remains essential to lasting security and prosperity among states.

Mr. Chairperson,

We will continue to speak out when democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated or abused with impunity. Whether it is human rights defenders facing reprisals for their brave work, or violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters aspiring for democratic change. We will continue to defend free and fair elections. We will challenge stereotypes and prejudice, combat myths with facts, and promote a world where no individual is being targeted for who they are, for whom they love, for what they look like, or for what they believe or say.

Civil society is the conscience of our countries. It provides a source of ideas and is a key component of an open, inclusive and thriving democracy, where no one is above the law. We are therefore committed to a world where all are free to associate and peacefully assemble, speak their mind, believe or not believe and hold their governments to account without retribution. We pay tribute to the individuals and civil society organizations who work tirelessly

to defend our shared dedication to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. They deserve our recognition, protection and support.

We commend the work of the OSCE autonomous institutions – ODIHR, the RFOM and the HCNM – for their efforts to promote and protect human rights, as core components of peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the promotion and advancement of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms in our region.

Thirty years on, the Copenhagen Document remains a powerful source of inspiration and a guide in our efforts to advocate for and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all who call the OSCE region their home. We will continue to fight to ensure that the implementation of OSCE principles and commitments is at the forefront of our work in this organisation.

In closing, we also would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Albanian Chairmanship and the Czech chair of the Human Dimension Committee for their principled and tireless efforts to strengthen the Human Dimension throughout the past year.

I would be grateful if you could attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.