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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR BRUNO GEORGES,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BELGIUM IN VIENNA, ON  
BEHALF OF MR. DIDIER REYNDERS, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,  
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FOREIGN TRADE AND  
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF BELGIUM AT THE TWENTIETH  
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Kyiv, 5 and 6 December 2013

Mr. Chairperson,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

As many have done before me, I should like to thank you, and through you, the Ukrainian Chairmanship and all of those involved, for all of the work done over the course of the year and the welcome given to the members of my delegation. Ukraine and its people have a rich history and still have a great deal to contribute to a Europe that is resolutely turned towards the future and united by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic values and the rule of law.

It is fortunate, then, that our Ministerial Council meeting is being held in your beautiful capital, Kyiv, which, like the rest of Ukraine, has been the theatre of important events that call for our attention in many respects. We call on all of the parties in Ukraine to show restraint, to respect freedom of expression and assembly, and to seek through dialogue a political, peaceful solution to the current situation. We also call on them to complete the hard but necessary process of reforms that has been embarked upon, also in order to develop a prosperous economy for the benefit of the Ukrainian people. It is up to the people to freely determine their future.

We strongly condemn the use of force that we have borne witness to, and we welcome the announcement by the Ukrainian authorities of investigations and prosecutions of the perpetrators – a statement that must be translated into action.

Mr. Chairperson,

When they met in 2010 in Kazakhstan, our Heads of State or Government recommitted themselves to the vision of a free, democratic, common and indivisible Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian security community rooted in agreed principles, shared commitments and common goals, in line with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

The restatement of this commitment at the highest level remains more relevant than ever in a particularly complex international environment. Whatever the obstacles, we must prove that we are up to the task, as your Chairmanship has done so energetically. Our citizens, the ultimate beneficiaries of our efforts, expect nothing other than the swiftest possible realization of the goals that we have set ourselves.

Our Organization is a forum for dialogue and exchange and a proponent of global, multidimensional co-operation that has proven its worth over several decades, and it continues to occupy an important place on the world stage. It is no less fragile for this, and we must pay it the greatest attention in order that it retain its full relevance.

In this regard, Mr. Chairperson, my country welcomes the adoption of our declaration on Helsinki+40. We have invested a great deal of hope in it as a vehicle for reinforcing our Organization while respecting our commitments and sizable *acquis*, and it should allow the OSCE to rediscover more dynamism and better respond to the challenges of our century.

It was vital to start the exercise in Dublin and to ensure that it was launched in good conditions under your Chairmanship before passing the baton to future Chairmanships. The process we have begun remains highly complex and will require a great deal of commitment and political will from us, the key players.

My country fully subscribes to the views expressed by the representative of the European Union and will continue to support the work on Helsinki+40 to attain ambitious results in the hope of seeing the first tangible progress in the coming months. You will doubtless share my feeling that the absence, this year once again, of a general and substantive political declaration within our Organization only underscores the urgent need for an outcome.

Mr. Chairperson, the challenge is all the greater in view of the fact that our activities have a cost. Our States and our populations remain bound by considerable budgetary demands. It is, then, only logical that our Organization, like other multilateral arrangements, should also continue to control its expenditure and to manage its resources in the best possible way. We think it is essential that the OSCE concentrate more on its priority activities and devote itself to making a difference where it can contribute added value. We also hope that the Organization will actively pursue its efforts to collaborate and co-ordinate with other relevant actors to create even more synergies, and to ensure greater effectiveness and savings.

My country should also like to recall the importance that we attach to improved distribution of tasks within our Organization, more in line with the realities of our contemporary world. We strongly hope that work under way to update the scales of contributions for participating States will be completed in accordance with the agreed timescale by 2015. This would make it possible to ensure greater equality, transparency, flexibility and predictability for the smooth functioning of our Organization.

Our progress will, we hope, make it easier for us to find the long-awaited settlements to the protracted conflicts that our Organization continues to address. Like many others, I have paid the greatest attention to your efforts, alongside those of other actors, to improve the chances of peace and of finding a solution with regard to these dossiers, which are highly delicate and vital for the populations concerned and our OSCE area. Let us hope that all of

these efforts, and all those that preceded them, have not been in vain, and that they receive all of the political support they need in order to succeed.

Mr. Chairperson,

The OSCE must continue to support Afghanistan as it embarks on an important new phase in its development with a view to completing its transformation and integration into a region that can still make a great deal of progress, if it so wishes. The stability and prosperity of our partner are, indeed, important for everyone, and in particular for its Central Asian neighbours. The OSCE will once again need to work in perfect co-ordination with many other international actors.

This important example reminds us of the significance that we must attach to our relations with our neighbours, and, in particular, our Partners for Co-operation. In this regard, 2013 saw a Libyan request to join the Mediterranean Contact Group. My country joins those who support the rapid consideration of this application.

Mr. Chairperson,

Belgium has always attached the greatest importance to the global, co-operative and inclusive security approach of our Organization, which lends it a special status and added value in an arena already crowded with international organizations. It is important to maintain a good balance between the three dimensions of the OSCE, each providing mutual reinforcement to the others.

In this regard, my country commends the efforts of the Ukrainian Chairmanship to define and support such a balanced approach during the year and in its preparation of the final package for our Ministerial Council meeting.

We therefore welcome the decision establishing a first set of confidence-building measures to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies, followed by its endorsement by a declaration of our Council emphasizing the progress made in the domain of transnational threats. Our decision regarding cybersecurity should be welcomed as an important achievement by our Organization and a source of inspiration for the future.

We have paid close attention to the work that has taken place in the second and third dimensions, as well as to the negotiations on updating the important action plan for strengthening the response to trafficking in human beings in our OSCE area. This is an issue that has traditionally been the subject of the greatest vigilance on our part, and my country has done a great deal with regard to it under your Chairmanship.

Belgium's interest in the various domains and commitments of the human dimension is widely known – particularly in terms of freedom of expression and of opinion, freedom of association and of assembly, tolerance and non-discrimination, democratization and the electoral process, as well as promoting the autonomy of the three institutions of our Organization – and so I will not dwell on it here any further. Suffice to say, that it remains an absolutely essential dimension of our work in the interest of promoting durable security and stability in our OSCE area and of improving the well-being of our citizens.

We welcome the adoption in Kyiv of new decisions that will help us in our future endeavours and trust that our Organization will still be able to reach agreement on other important texts in areas of general interest for all of the participants.

Mr. Chairperson,

I must express our concerns regarding the scant progress, and even regression, in terms of our politico-military commitments. While we welcome the fact that the Open Skies Consultative Commission is functioning better again this year, we continue to deplore our inability to significantly adapt or improve our other instruments on Conventional Forces in Europe, the Vienna Document or other confidence-building measures, with a real risk that these will become obsolete and will no longer respond to the real needs that of our time.

We are also concerned by the ongoing differences of opinion within the Organization that prevent us from playing the leading role expected of a regional organization such as ours on certain important issues, complementing and supporting arrangements previously adopted on a global level.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to conclude by thanking you, as well as all of your colleagues and representatives, once again for your commitment in the service of our Organization and its objectives throughout the year. A Chairmanship such as that of the OSCE is always a great challenge, no matter what the circumstances. That a participating State such as Ukraine should have agreed to take up this challenge on behalf of our collective has been important and worthy of our appreciation.

Mr. Chairperson,

As Switzerland and then the Republic of Serbia prepare to take over the great responsibility of chairing our Organization, I should like to wish them all the best in fulfilling their important mission and assure them of Belgium's full support.