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**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE  
13<sup>th</sup> OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

by

**H. E. Archbishop Giovanni LAJOLO  
Secretary for Relations with States**

**Ljubljana, 6 December 2005**

Mr Chairman,

1. I am honoured to present to this distinguished assembly the greetings and good wishes of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Sending me to represent him in Ljubljana, he expresses once again the appreciation and support of the Holy See for the work being done by the OSCE in the Euro-Atlantic area.

This Ministerial Council crowns a year of significant anniversaries: the 60<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the end of World War II, the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the final Act of Helsinki, and the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. This meeting likewise brings to a conclusion a year of intense activity under the competent guidance of the Slovenian Chairmanship.

With the passage of time changes have taken place in the political situation and in the perils we confront. These have become asymmetric and arise from phenomena such as terrorism, the proliferation of arms of mass destruction, trans-national criminal networks and human trafficking. Nevertheless the objective which the participating States pursue remains the same, and one of fundamental importance: the consolidation of peace by a simultaneous achievement of security, stability, development and respect for human rights.

2. It is therefore appropriate, rather than redefining the tasks of this Organization, to update them with particular attention to the three areas in which the OSCE has developed a comparative advantage. This is the spirit in which the Organization can be “revitalized, reformed and rebalanced”, while maintaining its cross-dimensional approach to problems. The political will, which remains the premise of such a commitment, should find concrete expression in the convergence of the legitimate political aims of participating States, thus preventing new and deeper rifts from emerging in the Euro-Atlantic area.

The Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons and the outcome of the successive High-level Consultations can pave the way forward for the coming year in this field. Particularly, the consolidation of the OSCE, in order to be true to itself, should not bring about a weakening of the human dimension, which is at core of the Organization. Human rights are not negotiable.

The Holy See considers its distinctive duty to insist on the continuing central importance of religious freedom for peaceful coexistence and for respect between different cultures in today’s multi-ethnic and multicultural societies.

Mr Chairman,

3. This year the Holy See has continued to take part with conviction in the work of the OSCE in the area of tolerance. As was evidenced in the Cordoba Conference, discrimination against Muslims and Christians has begun to receive a less unbalanced treatment in the work of the OSCE. Next year the Organization’s institutions and the

instances established to address intolerance and discrimination, in the context of their respective competence, should bring about effective corrections. A necessary sign in this direction from participating States, with the assistance of the ODIHR, should be the development of school curricula and other appropriate measures against prejudice, intolerance and discrimination.

40 years ago the Second Vatican Council promulgated its Declaration *Nostrae Aetatis*, which opened new perspectives in the relationship between Jews and Christians, inspired by dialogue and solidarity. This important document speaks likewise with great esteem of Muslims and members of other Religions. On the basis of their common human dignity, the Catholic Church *reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, colour, condition in life or religion* (n. 5). In this same spirit Pope Benedict XVI declared on 15 August 2005 in Cologne: *The Catholic Church is committed to tolerance, respect, friendship and peace among all peoples, cultures and religions*. This in no way means that she renounces her own identity or the freedom to express her convictions, indeed it supposes them and consolidates them.

4. The Holy See greatly appreciates the intention of the participating States to give closer attention to the scourge of human trafficking and supports the will to adopt a victim-centred approach.

As regards the question of migration, the OSCE can offer a valuable contribution so that the policies of participating States keep in mind the unity of the human family, and of the family of each migrant, and offer guarantees of prosperity with respect for all.

In the areas of human trafficking and migration, concrete measures of assistance are needed to alleviate the suffering of many women and men, and to re-establish respect for their human dignity.

5. Finally, I wish to renew to the Slovenian Chairmanship my gratitude for the effective leadership exercised during the present year and for the gracious hospitality offered to us in Ljubljana during these days. And to the coming Belgian Chairmanship I wish every success.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.