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STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
AT THE TWENTY-FOURTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL
OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)

DELIVERED BY
HIS EXCELLENCY
ARCHBISHOP PAUL RICHARD GALLAGHER
SECRETARY FOR THE HOLY SEE'S RELATIONS WITH STATES

Vienna (Austria)
7 – 8 December 2017

Mr Chairman,

I would like to begin by extending to this 24th meeting of the Ministerial Council the best wishes of His Holiness Pope Francis, who assures the entire OSCE family of his closeness and prayers.

Furthermore, I wish to express my gratitude and that of my Delegation to the Chairman-in-Office, His Excellency Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria, as well as to the entire 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship-in-Office, for its endeavours during the course of this year and its generous hospitality during these days in the city of Vienna. Let us hope that the “diplomatic spirit” that takes its name from this Capital guides our deliberations to a successful outcome.

Challenges and renewed opportunities

The current year has confirmed that the challenges to security and stability facing the OSCE participating States are numerous, including the protracted – “frozen” – conflicts dating back decades, the more recent – yet no less serious – conflicts, and terrorist attacks and other episodes of violence fuelled by VERLT.¹ The Holy See is concerned about what it sees as a hardening of hearts to “the stranger”,² notably towards migrants and refugees, but also towards those who because of “race, sex, language or religion”³ become victims of unjust discrimination.

It must also be recognised that there are challenges within our Organization. The arduous discussions on the appointment of the four senior officials, combined with the continued challenges to the timely adoption of the annual unified budget, and the necessary progress on the revision of the OSCE Scales of Contribution and the legal framework of the Organization, make it clear that all is not as it should be in the OSCE’s day-to-day work and activity.

However, even if the challenges are many, and the odds seem stacked against us, I am pleased to confirm once more that the Holy See believes in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. The OSCE can and should play a decisive role in providing security and stability in its area and beyond, true to its nature and mission as a regional security arrangement. Its extensive *acquis* of consensually-adopted commitments and its toolbox of conflict prevention and resolution that is second to none enable the 57 participating States, to analyse, debate and address challenges.

¹ “Violent Extremism and Radicalization that Lead to Terrorism”.

² Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 14 January 2018.

³ Helsinki Final Act.

Trust and dialogue

The Holy See's confidence in the OSCE is founded on its never-ending adherence to, and proclamation of, "the Gospel of peace" (*Eph 6:15*). This means that the Holy See stands ever ready to cooperate with all national and international authorities, as well as all other parties and stakeholders, in safeguarding the immense universal good that is peace. As Pope Paul VI affirmed, "peace is not built merely by means of politics and a balance of power and interests. It is built with the mind, with ideas, with the works of peace".⁴ In fact, the building and consolidating of peace is a moral obligation, an urgent responsibility that must be re-enforced by a culture of trust built on true dialogue.

As Pope Francis has noted, achieving peace requires something more fundamental than simply removing weapons: "Achieving the good of peace first calls for educating to peace, banishing a culture of conflict aimed at fear of others".⁵ Therefore, my Delegation maintains that security will only be effective and lasting if the initiatives of arms control and conflict prevention and resolution, which are proper to the OSCE, go hand in hand with the appropriate broader advancements in each of the three OSCE baskets.

Central to the advancement of peace is mutual understanding, which demands first and foremost a realistic appraisal of the current conditions of divergence or conflict, in order to entrust its solution to patient and constructive dialogue. This demands sacrifice on the part of the participants, to ensure the success of the best options. If dialogue seems less glorious than fighting on the battlefield, its result – a just and lasting peace – is far more beneficial to every single party concerned, including the thousands, even the millions, who could be affected, directly or indirectly, by any armed conflict.

The comprehensive approach to security and the inclusive, open and transparent dialogue that characterize the OSCE are vital to the Holy See and they remain one of the key reasons for our continuing engagement initially with the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and, subsequently, with the OSCE. The political nature of the Organization and its decision-making rules have proven to be a great strength and has allowed the 57 participating States to reach consensus on a great number of issues that otherwise would simply have been impossible to resolve. For the comprehensive security approach to become a reality, however, trust must be the key principle in the progress of relations between States, and most certainly among the OSCE participating States. My Delegation remains convinced that without an adequate understanding of this reality, our Organization will encounter great difficulty in finding necessary solutions and ways forward, given our many challenges.

⁴ Pope Paul VI, Address to the United Nations Organization, 4 October 1965.

⁵ Pope Francis, Address to the Council of Europe, 25 November 2014.

The human dimension of comprehensive security

Since the Helsinki Final Act (HFA), universal human rights and fundamental freedoms have been recognized as “an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States”.⁶ The ethical philosophy of the HFA is concerned and rightly preoccupied with the human element of peace and international relations. This is why the Holy See wishes to highlight again the centrality of the “third basket”, in order to develop friendly relations and co-operation among the participating States as among all States, reflecting the complementarity, interdependence and mutual reinforcement between human rights and fundamental freedoms on the one hand, and security on the other.

Security and cooperation among States can only be sustained if they are based not on political and strategic ability, but on justice, solidarity and respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms. If we want to seek true peace, the inherent dignity of every human person, from which derives his/her inalienable rights, must remain our starting point. Certainly, human rights and fundamental freedoms cannot be separated from the duty of each citizen to respect the rights of others and to cooperate in favour of the common good. Rights without corresponding obligations are not rights at all.

My Delegation wishes also to recall that all the signatories to the HFA have committed themselves to recognize the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and they are obliged to implement the relevant commitments, with the assistance of the OSCE structures, in line with their mandates. In this respect, the Holy See remains confident that the OSCE and its structures will focus their energies, efforts and resources on pursuing those commitments which have already been made, many of which have yet to be implemented, keeping in mind that unilateral or non-consensus-based “interpretation” cannot be used in a way that leads to a substantial amendment, overruling or transformation of the existing OSCE’s commitments. On the other hand, it would be advisable to recognize that calls to expand the OSCE’s commitments, without acknowledging the specific approach of the OSCE, may result in a dilution of the OSCE’s programs and projects, as well as in a possible duplication of activities of other organizations.

In conclusion, I wish to renew my gratitude to the Austrian Chairmanship for its leadership and the efforts made during this past year and I express my heartfelt wishes of success to the incoming Italian Chairmanship, while assuring the continued cooperation and support of the Holy See.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

⁶ Helsinki Final Act.