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**STATEMENT BY MR. FAMIANO CRUCIANELLI,  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE  
REPUBLIC OF ITALY, AT THE FIFTEENTH MEETING  
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Madrid, 29 and 30 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Ministers and dear Colleagues,

Italy fully supports the statement made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Luís Filipe Marques Amado, in his capacity as acting President of the European Union. I shall confine myself to sharing with you a number of thoughts prompted by our specific national perspective.

In the first place I should like to thank Spain, not only for the hospitality shown us but above all for the wisdom, energy and efficiency it has displayed in performing the duties of the Chairmanship during a year which was unquestionably not the easiest. This Ministerial Council meeting provided an excellent demonstration of the zeal displayed by our hosts in dealing with the questions to be handled in the three dimensions of the OSCE, and we earnestly hope and trust that it will be concluded with the adoption of a Ministerial Declaration.

The CSCE and then the OSCE have made an important contribution to European political affairs during some of the most critical periods traversed by our continent during the last fifty years, and we are deeply convinced that the Organization will continue to be a significant element of “added value” in the framework of international relations.

In the context of constructive dialogue on specific problems, we trust that the Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE will now be adopted without any artificial delays or conditions, as this would be in keeping with the need to overcome the distortions that weigh so negatively today on the operative capacity of the OSCE. Further strengthening of the Organization could be provided by a Statute setting out its basic shared principles and essential structures.

The institutions and missions are valuable instruments which confer on the OSCE that operative flexibility which constitutes its principal “comparative advantage”. We must continue to strengthen their effectiveness and flexibility when adapting them to changing requirements, at the same time avoiding everything that might weaken them.

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), above all, has managed to assume a prominent role thanks to the professional approach of its staff and its capacity to give specific application to the innovative approach of the OSCE in the area of human rights. The election observation activities, in particular, provide a model which is widely followed in the context of the United Nations and the European Union. While we may need a fresh approach by participating States aimed at securing better geographical balance in the observation teams, this remains a heritage of the OSCE which is worthy of being protected.

As far as the Organization's field missions are concerned, we must note that they have contributed decisively to the promotion of security on our continent and that they have offered an irreplaceable form of assistance to States in the building and strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law. In particular we believe that, in the matter of conflict prevention and post-conflict rehabilitation, the mission in Kosovo plays and can continue to play an irreplaceable role recognized by the relevant international organizations of the region and by various elements of the population. The best contribution this Ministerial Council meeting could make to stability in the Western Balkans would accordingly be a decision to maintain this presence in an operative state next year, whatever solution is adopted with regard to its political status.

Mr. Chairman,

Effective dialogue on the future of the OSCE cannot do without the necessary changes in geographical equilibrium because the persistent perception of a division between countries to the east and to the west of Vienna remains an obstacle to complete unity of purpose among the 56 participating States — unity which is essential if we are to give the Organization a fresh start. Aware as we are of this need, Italy is delighted by the forthcoming decision by which Kazakhstan is to be awarded the Chairmanship in the near future.

We also hope for unity and not division in the interests of finding a positive solution to the present impasse regarding the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, a Treaty which Italy regards as a basic element of security on our continent. At the same time we are aware that we must redouble our efforts in order to find innovative solutions acceptable to all which meet the requirements and the needs of all parties. I should like to launch an appeal that we make every effort to find these solutions and also that we avoid, at the same time, unilateral decisions which in any case would not be useful for our forthcoming discussions.

Collaboration with the countries of Central Asia — an important political priority for Italy and for the European Union — is supported in the OSCE by a variety of concrete instruments; ample use should be made of these, and they should be strengthened. In particular, strengthening of the capacity to control borders, which would facilitate legitimate commercial contacts and constitute an obstacle to illicit contacts — in the first place drug trafficking — is a key area in which the OSCE possesses relevant experience. We are therefore in favour of a decision which opens the way for an OSCE role in the training of border guards assigned to serve in the southern part of the OSCE area in Central Asia, an activity which is valuable for participating States and also for Afghanistan, a partner country whose stability is important to all of us.

In conclusion, I should like to extend our best wishes to Finland, the incoming Chairmanship, for every possible success, in the conviction that that country will know how to guide our Organization with wisdom and determination in a year which promises to be full of challenges and opportunities.