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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALFREDO MANTICA,
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF ITALY,
AT THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Helsinki, 4 December 2008

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

I should like first of all to express my gratitude for the hospitality with which we have been received here in Helsinki. I should also like to express the high appreciation of the Government of Italy and myself for the excellent work of the Finnish Chairmanship, which has spared no effort to promote consensus between the States and ensure the success of this ministerial meeting.

Italy supports the strategy of the Finnish Chairmanship aimed at highlighting those aspects that unify the participating States, which are all members of the same community of values, and focusing attention on the common denominator, which will enable the Organization to strengthen its own role on the international scene and to identify the guiding principles that will help to effectively shape its work in the future, a process to which the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly can make a decisive contribution.

We have therefore lent our full support to a high-profile political declaration concentrating on the key questions and looking towards the future so that we can conclude our work, after a number of years in which it has been impossible to do so, with a consensus document on the course of action to be taken within the Organization.

The year coming to an end has seen events that have shaken our mutual confidence and demonstrated the need to identify a common vision of the rules that govern the coexistence of all countries, large and small, in the Euro-Atlantic region, which extends as far as Central Asia. There is certainly no need to rewrite the Helsinki Final Act or the Charter of Paris nor to revise the commitments undertaken in subsequent years. By contrast, there is a need to reach a full understanding on their implementation that is not conditioned by a re-emergence of the old mentality of blocs or spheres of influence. In short there is a need to strengthen respect for principles such as the territorial integrity of States and renunciation of the use of force to resolve conflicts.

We support the idea suggested by President Medvedev and the proposal formulated by President Sarkozy. We hope that multilateral discussion on the future of security in Europe can be initiated in the near future.

There is no doubt that the OSCE is the most suitable framework in this regard, given its geographical scope and its membership, its comprehensive idea of security and its set of shared values and commitments.

We believe that the proposal for convening a summit meeting of the 56 countries in due course with the participation of the main international organizations operating in the security field should be supported.

The initiation of dialogue on European security issues is designed to reverse the gradual erosion of confidence in the wake of the events in Kosovo and Georgia and will help to prevent dividing lines from forming again in Europe. The creation of a climate of confidence, as Minister Steinmeier noted, can be reached through joint efforts aimed at solving the long-standing conflicts in Transdniestria and Nagorno-Karabakh. There are encouraging signs that this is taking place, and the aforementioned creation of a climate of confidence will also, of course, contribute positively to the discussion in Geneva on a settlement of the crisis in Georgia.

The resumption of dialogue in the first place will make it possible to reach an understanding on the full implementation of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) and the rapid entry into force of the agreement on its adaptation. The initiative announced by Minister Steinmeier appears particularly useful in this regard.

This meeting will be completely successful if we managed after so many years to issue a political declaration approving lines of action for the future regarding the launch of discussions on consolidating security in Europe and on “frozen conflicts”.

We therefore hope for the emergence of a shared political determination that will give an impetus to the convention on the international legal personality and immunity of the OSCE and at the same time for the commencement of consultations on a charter that focuses on the essentials and is not weighed down by the inclusion of controversial elements.

In the same constructive spirit, we should be in a position today to agree on a declaration to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that would confirm the consensus of all States regarding the implementation of its main commitments.

Mr. Chairman,

The genius loci, the “spirit of Helsinki”, should inspire us to endeavour to reinvigorate this Organization which, thanks to its operative instruments — the institutions, missions, special representatives, election monitoring operations and capacity-building programmes — has made and will continue to make a great contribution to the implementation of the aims of the Charter of Paris for a new peaceful and democratic Europe.

I am confident that under the future Greek Chairmanship the OSCE will face up to the challenges awaiting it and will direct its energy towards the truly priority objectives shared by all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.