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**Ministerial Council 2011 of the
Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Vilnius, 6 – 7 December 2011**

**Speech by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Cyprus
Her Excellency Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start by expressing my gratitude to the Lithuanian Chairmanship-in-Office for its warm welcome and hospitality and congratulate it on a successful chairmanship.

A year after our pledges in the Astana Declaration we find ourselves in great need of restoring trust and confidence in the OSCE space. Clearly, this is partly a consequence of the lack of proper implementation of our commitments.

Not addressing the deficit in confidence is not an option. The OSCE has a role to play in today's world and we must all renew our endeavour to enhance the organization's effectiveness and relevance by better operationalizing its comprehensive concept of security. In the pursuit of pan-European security the OSCE must also co-operate more effectively with its sister organization, the Council of Europe.

The historical rationale behind the creation of the CSCE/OSCE – to bring into a single space all those actors who determine or impact broader European security – remains vital.

As a country that continues to suffer from the effects of the use of force, Cyprus is well aware that creating security and confidence is a painful and long process.

The OSCE's role does not pertain only to conflicts that the organization is already seized of. If the OSCE is to live up to our expectations as a conflict prevention and mediation tool, it must be provided with the necessary means and political will. We must also ensure that its involvement in the conflict cycle conforms to the norms and principles of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

One of the strongest potential of our organization is in the field of confidence- and security-building measures; this is why my country has submitted its application, pending for almost ten years now, to accede to the Open Skies Treaty.

The potential of the OSCE and the comprehensive concept of security cannot be fully realized if we do not adequately adapt to the new challenges posed by non-traditional threats or ensure respect for rights and freedoms in an evolving security environment.

We recognize the valuable contribution of OSCE field operations and independent institutions as tools of early warning and catalysts in the implementation of our commitments. We stress the importance of enabling them to maintain their unhindered and effective functioning. We are aware that our collective commitments remain unimplemented.

The adoption of decisions such as those relating to the freedom of expression and the media are paramount in this context and we continue to support their prioritization by both the Lithuanian and Irish chairmanships.

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE has proven its value over the years, especially in the Western Balkans. This year, the successful completion of the mandate of the Office in Zagreb has been a very welcome addition to our achievements and we congratulate the Croatian government on the progress achieved.

We also welcome the joint offer by Switzerland and Serbia to assume the chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014 and 2015, respectively, and would welcome a decision to that effect at this Ministerial Council.

We support the application of Mongolia to become a participating State and would welcome Libya as a partner State, if it wishes to become one. The interest of new States to join the OSCE could only reinforce the relevance of our organization and help us to better address threats emanating from outside the OSCE space.

Our collective security is intimately linked to that in adjacent regions of the OSCE. We have followed very closely the unfolding monumental developments in the Southern Mediterranean and the Middle East. As a participating State neighbouring these regions, Cyprus is committed to supporting democratic transition and overall stability both bilaterally and through the coordinated efforts of the international community under the leadership of the United Nations. The contribution of the OSCE, where it has added value, must come as a response to the wishes of our partners.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I wish all of us a successful outcome of this Ministerial Council and I thank you for the floor.