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EU opening statement at the 17th OSCE Ministerial Council, Athens, December 1, 2009

*Statement on behalf of the European Union by H.E. Mr. Carl Bildt,
Foreign Minister of Sweden, at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Athens,
December 1, 2009*

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Mr Chairman,
Mr Secretary-General,
Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to address the 17th OSCE Ministerial Council on behalf of the European Union. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Papandreou on the successful Greek Chairmanship and express our gratitude for the warm Greek hospitality here in Athens.

Before entering into the substance of this meeting, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the European Union has taken another historic step today and celebrates the entry into force of the **Lisbon Treaty**. The treaty contains important provisions that will strengthen the European Union's capabilities to act effectively on the international scene. We now have a President of the European Council and a High Representative who will represent the Union on foreign and security policy matters, to be supported by a European Diplomatic Service, the European External Action Service. Furthermore, the Common Security and Defence Policy, in close coordination with other EU instruments, plays a key role in EU's contribution to international peace and security.

Mr Chairman,

European security must be **comprehensive, inclusive and indivisible**.

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Our annual meeting affords an excellent opportunity to take stock of the state of the security of the OSCE area and give impetus to the ongoing work of the Organisation to promote peace and stability in our region.

Twenty years ago the map of Europe was changed dramatically when we witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dawn of a new future for Europe. What happened then, in so many places behind the iron curtain, was the European revolution for freedom, democracy and unification that continues to shape our part of the world and inspire so many others. Europe was transformed, but not as so often happened in the past by soldiers, weapons and war. It was transformed by the free choice of free nations to come together through structures and policies of integration which have no parallel in human history.

The **enlargement of the European Union** has in itself contributed positively to European security and stability. It is our clear ambition to promote continued progress in the process of EU-enlargement, as a contribution to peace and stability on the European continent, involving a number of our OSCE partners. The ongoing accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey are high on our agenda. The EU will, furthermore, continue to encourage and support the EU integration of the countries in the Western Balkans on the basis of the reform progress in each country. The EU highly appreciates the efforts of OSCE field missions, which play key roles in assisting the host nations in their reforms.

The momentous events of 1989 were also the starting point for the process that transformed the CSCE into the OSCE and the adoption of the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

However, history did not end there - new and old challenges to our common security require our constant attention. Challenges such as the protracted conflicts and the armed conflict between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, recurring human rights violations, energy security and the security implications of climate change continue to call for international and regional solutions.

The EU fully subscribes to the **comprehensive approach to security** championed by the OSCE. We are continuously reminded that security is not only the absence of armed conflict, but also depends on progress regarding human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The security of the individual is clearly linked to the security of the state. We need to remain vigilant in this regard.

The broad security concept is also fundamental to our ability to find appropriate international responses to complex transnational challenges – such as terrorism, climate change, human trafficking and organised crime – facing us in Europe today. Here too, the OSCE can offer a useful platform for our joint efforts.

Mr Chairman,

The EU remains firmly committed to the core values of this Organisation. We are concerned, however, that there is a clear lack of political trust and confidence between major stakeholders in European security, which also affects the ability of this Organisation to conduct its work and act in times of crisis and conflict. The EU is open to exploring ways to further strengthen and reinvigorate the existing structures.

Against this backdrop, the EU commends the Greek Chairmanship for its leadership on the **Corfu Process on the future of European security**. The dialogue on European security has great potential when based on our agreed OSCE principles and commitments. The Corfu Process can promote understanding, restore trust and strengthen our capacity to address challenges in all three OSCE dimensions. The EU wants the Corfu Process to lead to a stronger and revitalised OSCE that can better meet present and future challenges – an “OSCE Plus”.

Ever since the launch of the Corfu initiative, the EU has been fully committed to work constructively with all participating States to reach a substantive and well-balanced outcome here in Athens without compromising our guiding principles. We support the adoption of a declaration on the European Security Dialogue and a decision on furthering the Corfu Process.

A dialogue on the future of European security cannot take place in a vacuum. In order to be relevant, the Corfu process must address the real security threats and challenges facing us in Europe. Some of them lie outside the immediate remit of the OSCE. The agenda should be forward-looking, comprehensive, yet focused. In our view, the following themes would provide a solid strategic direction and are fully supported by the EU.

First: we should strengthen our work on conflict prevention and resolution.

Second: we should explore ways to strengthen our responses to transnational threats and challenges.

Third: we should address how we can improve the situation in the OSCE area for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and rule of law.

Fourth: the agenda should focus on better implementing the arms control regimes as well as confidence- and security-building measures, and updating them when necessary.

Fifth: we should address ways to improve the shortcomings in implementation of existing OSCE commitments in all three dimensions.

It is clear that the OSCE, with its broad participation and comprehensive approach to security, must be the anchor of the ongoing European security dialogue through the Corfu Process. The European Union wants to see a continued leading role for the Permanent Representatives, reflecting the strategic and comprehensive nature of the process. The Union sees it as necessary to have an “organisational engine” for the process.

The character of the process should be inclusive and transparent. Other sub-regional, regional and international organisations relevant to all three dimensions could be consulted on the basis of the Platform for Co-operative Security. Partners for co-operation could also usefully be consulted and the process could benefit from input from civil society and the academic world.

Let me also reiterate that the EU is open to a high-level meeting within the OSCE, provided that it is motivated by substance.

Mr Chairman,

The EU considers that **conflict prevention and conflict resolution** should be at the heart of the work of the OSCE. Over the years the OSCE has developed unique instruments to address these issues, prominently demonstrated by the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities and also the confidence and democracy building work carried out by the OSCE Field Missions. Such instruments and other mechanisms must be safeguarded and enhanced. I would in this regard particularly like to highlight the importance of the *Bolzano/Bozen Recommendations on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations*.

The EU reiterates its firm support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of **Georgia** within its internationally recognised borders. We remain fully convinced of the need for a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia and will continue to work actively towards that end. We regret that – despite the support of an overwhelming majority of participating States, including the EU Member States – no consensus for such a presence could be reached on the basis of the Chairmanship's status-neutral Draft Decision. We encourage, once again, the Russian Federation to reconsider its position for the sake of security and stability in the region.

The EU reiterates its full support for the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group towards a solution of the **Nagorno-Karabakh** conflict, based on an appropriate combination of support for the territorial integrity of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as expressed by the EU in its Partnership and Cooperation Agreements and in its Action Plans for these two countries, with other OSCE principles, notably the non-use of force or threat of its use and the equal right of peoples to self-determination. We welcome the intensified negotiations this year, including the bilateral meeting on November 22 between presidents Aliyev and Sargasian. We call again upon Armenia and Azerbaijan to take the necessary decisions to achieve a breakthrough with the endorsement of the Basic Principles proposed in Madrid on November 29, 2007.

We remain firmly determined to seek a settlement of the **Transnistrian** conflict on the basis of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. We call for the resumption, as soon as possible and without preconditions, of negotiations in the 5+2 format, the only forum capable of guaranteeing the transparency and legitimacy needed to achieve a lasting solution.

Let me underline the great importance the EU attaches to arms control. A functioning **Treaty of Conventional Armed Forces in Europe** (CFE) will provide transparency, predictability and confidence in Europe as a whole. The EU calls on the Russian Federation to immediately resume the application of the treaty. We hope that the stalemate on the way forward in ratification of the 1999 Agreement on adaptation can be overcome. This would also open the treaty for accession by new countries.

Mr Chairman,

The EU appreciates the cross-dimensional work of the OSCE and attaches great importance to **the human dimension**. We will continue to defend and strengthen

established institutions, commitments and practice in the field of the human dimension. We will pay particular attention to safeguarding the autonomous standing of the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), including in regard to its election observation. We also fully support the activities of the Representative for the Freedom of the Media (RFOM). We stress the need for the OSCE to strengthen and expand commitments related to freedom and pluralism of the media.

Mr Chairman,

Co-operation between the EU and OSCE has expanded considerably in recent years and covers a wide agenda of regional and thematic issues, including elections, border management, the fight against trafficking in human beings and the rule of law. The recently launched **Eastern Partnership** provides yet another platform to enhance cooperation between the EU and the OSCE. We welcome the contribution of the OSCE to the establishment and consolidation of the Partnership's multilateral track, as well as making progress in each partner country's bilateral relationship with the EU.

The EU also values the **cooperation between the OSCE and other international organisations** such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. The legal instruments provided by the Council of Europe, and in particular the European Convention on Human Rights, contribute to the fabric of the European security structure. We welcome the recent adoption by consensus of a United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Alliance of Civilizations.

The EU also fully supports the endeavours to strengthen the legal framework of the OSCE and stresses the need to provide the OSCE with an international legal personality as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman,

Let me conclude by welcoming Kazakhstan as the new Chair of our Organisation. The Kazakh Chairmanship will open a new chapter in the history of the OSCE, drawing particular attention to the Central Asian region from the international community, media and civil society. The EU looks forward to close and successful **cooperation with the incoming Chairman-in-Office**, Foreign Minister Saudabayev.

The candidate countries TURKEY, CROATIA and the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries ALBANIA, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, MONTENEGRO and SERBIA, as well as UKRAINE align themselves with this statement.

*Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.