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Ambassador Carlos Sánchez de Boado y de la Válgoma,
President of the OSCE Permanent Council

The Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, has asked me to convey to you how much he would have liked to be here today. Most of you know him well and know of his dedication and interest to matters connected to the Mediterranean. So, on his behalf, let me first thank the Israeli government for their hospitality and continuous efforts on the Mediterranean dialog of the OSCE. At the same time, it is an honor for me to be here attending this Mediterranean Seminar eleven years since the first one took place in this same country.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Last year Spain had the Presidency of this Mediterranean Group, a prior step for the Chairmanship of the OSCE. The Spanish Chairmanship, closely linked to the whole Mediterranean region, managed to gather some ideas and outlined a few new ones. We managed to get a lot of input during our meeting in Sharm-El Sheik, because it was the result of what we had been working on for a long time: the growing interaction with the Partners for Co-operation.

The aspiration of Spain, and that of our Chairmanship, has been to highlight the level of relations and mutual interests that exist between these two shores. We are aware that the security of Europe is inseparable from that of the Mediterranean.

I would like to take a look back in time to when we encouraged the Palestinian Authority to join this organization. At that time it was not possible. Perhaps the circumstances were not ripe for that idea. We are still anxiously waiting for the day when those circumstances change so that the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians, Libyans and all the Mediterranean countries will join this Organization, to work in favor of a safer world. We have said time and again that the security, and in particular security in the Mare Nostrum, is in our hands, in the hands of all those who border this sea of union.

Although it is not the main priority of the OSCE, we have to fight peacefully in favor of the better conditions of the population. We must fight peacefully for a just world that allows us to live together, like we did centuries ago.

Spain, from its position in the OSCE, has put pressure on our meetings so that there aren't any differences between our Partners for Co-operation and the participating States. That everybody could attend as guest at the same table. For the time being, due to the rules of procedure of the Organization it only allows for our Partners to attend our sessions.

Building on the efforts from all the delegations, this year we have also advanced in subjects like the Translation into Arabic of the OSCE, IOM and ILO report on migration; we have consolidated the presence of the Partners for Co-operation in regular PC meetings; we have contributed to ENVSEC to carry out studies about environmental security; we have introduced the "Toledo guidelines" about education in public schools relating to religion and beliefs; we have facilitated help to the NGOs for the "Cordoba Conference on Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims"; we have also done, for the first time in the OSCE, a "Youth Forum", that also dealt with themes such as tolerance. We organized that forum because we believe that if we educate the youth we can take a further step in resolving the big issues that are still before us. UN, through the Alliance of Civilizations, understood the importance of that point and start building cultures in their efforts to build bridges and destroy the barriers of the misunderstanding. Furthermore, a Ministerial declaration about tolerance and non discrimination has been approved; it will be a guide for the upcoming years. This decision underlines the threats posed by the violent manifestation of extremism, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

We have approved in Madrid a declaration directed to the Partners of Co-operation and we have also created the Partnership Fund. Although this fund won't solve all problems, it will be a good starting point. Now we have to help and provide the necessary resources, we have to think of projects and we have to express our political will. Our personal determination is important, but if it doesn't have the political will, it is worth nothing. It is only good to show our own determination: it's like steam that can make us see a big cloud full of water and then disappears in thin air. We need political will, strong commitment, and ideas that can help us move forward in the OSCE with our Partners of Co-operation.

I made earlier a reference to a fair world. What is it that makes a world to be fair? During two days we are going to talk on subjects related to the fight against intolerance and discrimination, and the promotion of mutual respect. Two topics that are fundamentally related to the priorities of the Spanish chairmanship, and centered on the Mediterranean surrounding.

In 2005, and during the Spanish Chairmanship, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Spain, Mr. Miguel Angel Moratinos, had two important initiatives: the two Cordoba conferences, in 2005 and in 2007; both highly related to the subject of intolerance.

The OSCE, who has always been sensitive to these subjects, stirred up the Minister and made him act on these initiatives. Accordingly, the Minister thought of organizing a conference on anti-Semitism, a horrendous way to humiliate and subdue a human being. He had also the wish to make room for another form of discrimination that is more and more present in our societies, and that is the intolerance and discrimination towards Muslims.

Spain, a country that in the past was able to bring together and live in peace with the three most important monotheistic religions, accomplished to include for the first time in an OSCE conference against antisemitism the subject of discrimination against Muslims. The same thing happened a few months ago, in Cordoba in the OSCE Conference related to islamofobia where we included other forms of intolerance, including antisemitism.

It is important that we are all here today, together Jews, Arabs and Christians. We must help each other, to protect ourselves by denouncing the attacks against intimacy, intelligence and the spirit of the people; just like we must fight together against those who attack human beings based on the color of their skin, race, or other differentiating aspects that normally exist within the human race.

This fight can only be won if we work together in an orderly fashion without passion or violent reactions; guiding people by educating them on respecting their peers regardless of their beliefs and respecting the other. If we all unite in what it can be a true alliance of civilizations and cultures, in fight against the evil and the lack of understanding, we can win...

I would like to express my satisfaction for the presence of NGOs in this meeting. They met yesterday, and we will listen to the conclusions of their meeting later on today. We

believe that the participation of NGOs and the civil society is essential for the democratic development and the defense of the fundamental rights of individuals. I seize this opportunity to convey to the director of ODIHR my appreciation for the extraordinary work this office continues to develop in this field.

As Minister Moratinos said in Cordoba, the city of the three cultures, “*racism and discrimination impoverish and violate our democratic rights*”. The OSCE contributes to the promotion of meetings that help to avoid the erosion of the democratic legitimacy, plurality and cultural co-existence.

I don't want to end my intervention without thanking all of you for your presence, your interest and your support.