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**STATEMENT BY HER EXCELLENCY, MS. TAOUS FEROUKHI,
AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE OSCE
AND HEAD OF THE ALGERIAN DELEGATION, AT THE
FOURTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Brussels, 5 December 2006

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Algerian delegation, I should like to thank the Belgian authorities for the quality of their welcome and the excellent organization of this Fourteenth OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Brussels and to congratulate Mr. Karel De Gucht, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, on his Chairmanship in 2006 and his skilful guidance of this meeting.

We should also like to express our appreciation to Spain for chairing the Contact Group and to wish it every success for its future Chairmanship of the Organization in 2007. Allow me finally to congratulate Finland, which takes over the chair of the Contact Group in 2007, and to assure it of our support and co-operation.

This meeting of the Ministerial Council provides an opportunity to review the progress made and the difficulties encountered in carrying out the basic mission of the Organization, which is an instrument for promoting peace and stability in the OSCE area including the Mediterranean region.

As one of the Mediterranean Partners, Algeria reaffirms its interest in strengthening the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE as part of the vast geographical and cultural OSCE space and as a country concerned by the promotion of security and co-operation, economic progress, respect for human rights and the development of democratic institutions.

The challenges and threats of the twenty-first century identified by the Organization are also priorities for the Mediterranean Partners: combating terrorism, transnational organized crime, intolerance, pandemics, migration, global warming and energy security. The transnational nature of all these issues calls for concerted efforts, intensified dialogue and dynamic co-operation.

In keeping with previous reforms that have marked the OSCE's development and as proposed by the Mediterranean countries to the Permanent Council on the occasion of the presentation of the report by the Panel of Eminent Persons, the Mediterranean dimension established in the Helsinki Final Act should be given due consideration in the context of the reforms currently being implemented.

There is no shortage of concerns of common interests on the two sides of the Mediterranean. One example is migration, on the subject of which the Mediterranean Partners, including Algeria, have stated their willingness to attack the problem at its roots. The recent African/European Union (EU) summit on migration and development held in Tripoli, Libya, underlined the urgent need to support viable emerging economies and to promote respect for human dignity and the free movement of persons. This was also the substance of the message by His Excellency Mohamed Bedjaoui, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the recent EuroMed ministerial conference in Tempere, Finland.

A further outcome of the African/EU summit was that the countries of Africa have learnt their lesson from the repressive approach to security and its limitations and are now resolutely in favour of durable socio-economic development as a means of eliminating poverty and preventing populations from fleeing the misery of sub-Saharan Africa to seek refuge in Algeria and elsewhere in Europe.

Through its co-operation with international and regional organizations including the African Union and the EU, the OSCE can help to further consolidate the comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnership so strongly desired by the countries of the southern shore of the Mediterranean.

The other question of common interest to the participating States and Mediterranean Partners concerns intolerance and discrimination. Algeria has turned its back on terrorist violence and is beginning to address the far-reaching changes currently taking place within the country by implementing a policy of national reconciliation and a five-year economic development programme for the years 2005 to 2009. As far as foreign affairs are concerned, it is seeking to intensify friendly and co-operative relations with its partners, despite the difficult international context and the tensions between the West and the Muslim world that tend to give credence to the doom-laden notion of an inevitable conflict between Islam and the West.

Moreover, the links between terrorism and Islam, which have taken on worrying proportions, particularly since 11 September 2001, exacerbate fears and make a resolution of the problem all the more urgent.

While condemning excessive and unacceptable criticisms of Islam and Muslims, Algeria is aware that the violence committed in the name of Islam is harmful and primarily impinges on Muslims themselves, and that this crisis, which affects world peace and security at the highest level, is also a matter for the international community.

The OSCE, which has three personal representatives tasked with tracking down all manifestations of hate, racism, xenophobia and intolerance, remains an irreplaceable forum for dialogue and mutual understanding on complex issues. With that in mind, the Algerian delegation reiterates its offer to hold a high-level OSCE conference in 2007 to discuss the attacks made against Islam and Muslims in December 2005 in Ljubljana. By the same token, a meeting on the role of the media in dealing with these issues could be extremely useful.

On the bilateral front, Algeria has been co-operating in the three pillars on which the OSCE mandate is based, namely:

- Monitoring of the presidential elections in April 2004 by a delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR),
- Contacts established with the Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) and extended to include the African Centre for Study and Research on Terrorism in Algiers to consolidate joint efforts to combat terrorism and promote regional co-operation with the African Union,
- Participation by Algerian experts in seminars, workshops and visits to military bases and installations organized within the politico-military dimension in order to promote the establishment of confidence-building measures at the regional level,
- Participation by experts in the Economic Forum on transport and in workshops on border management, energy security and co-operation in the field of criminal justice.

Regarding the OSCE's working programme for 2007, the Algerian delegation reaffirms its attachment to strengthening the Mediterranean dimension as part of the reforms currently under way. In that respect, it offers to set up a working group to consider the specific proposals formulated on this subject in the document PC.DEL/873/05 of 14 September 2005 and in the summary of the Eighth Mediterranean Seminar of 6 November 2006.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.