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Arab Republic of Egypt

**Statement by
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Head of Delegation
Permanent Representative of the
Arab Republic of Egypt
To the Organization for Security and
Cooperation in Europe
At The 14 th OSCE Ministerial Council
Brussels, December 5, 2006**

**Excellency Dr. Karel De Gucht,
Foreign Minister of Belgium,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset, I wish to express our sincere gratitude to you, Minister De Gucht, and to the Government of Belgium for its warm hospitality and for the excellent organization of this meeting.

I also wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Belgian Chairmanship for its wise and effective leadership in guiding the work of the organization over the past year. In particular we would like to acknowledge the emphasis the Chairman-in-Office has made on engagement with Mediterranean Partners.

I would like also to convey my country's sincere gratitude to Spain, Chairman of the Mediterranean Contact Group for its efforts in strengthening the relationship between Mediterranean Partners and Participating States. In this regard, we wish Spain a successful tenure as the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE for the coming year.

May I to seize this opportunity to assure Finland the incoming Chairmanship of the Mediterranean Contact Group, of our full support in furthering mutual cooperation, and pledge to work with it closely in fostering the relationship between the Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE Participating States.

A special thanks goes to Ambassador Brichambaut, Secretary General of the OSCE for his keen attention and valuable contribution to the promotion of the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE.

**Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Egypt has always attached the utmost importance to strengthen interdependence between the two shores of the Mediterranean. We have always maintained that, due to historical, cultural, economic and political factors, the Mediterranean has the potential to be the model of integration between developed and developing countries. Towards this end, we have emphasized the necessity to manage such interdependence in a manner that meets the mutual interests of both shores of the Mediterranean. We consider the OSCE an important instrument in realizing this objective. It is for this reason, that my country has hosted the OSCE Mediterranean Seminar for four times, the last of which was last November in Sharm El Sheikh.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In addition, Egyptian foreign policy has always emphasized the fundamental link between European and Mediterranean security. For this reason, we have always had a keen interest in participating in European security organizations. We have done so in the full conviction that European security and security in the Mediterranean and the Middle East are mutually reinforcing. Our active participation in the OSCE since 1995 stands as a testimony to this fundamental principle.

This year's Ministerial Council takes place amidst important regional and international developments, which underline the interdependence between the security of Europe and security in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. However to ensure that dialogue between the Participating States and the Mediterranean Partners is constructive, action-oriented and produces results that meet our mutual interests, it is necessary to focus on common threats, and address mutual concerns. In this regard, I wish to underscore that three areas deserve urgent attention.

First: Combating terrorism is one of the major areas of common interest between the OSCE and its Mediterranean Partners. To effectively address this scourge, it is essential to understand the causes of this threat. Terrorism feeds on feelings of frustration arising from foreign occupation, oppression and intolerance compounded by poverty, injustice and misperceptions of the other.

Second: The necessity of achieving just and peaceful solutions to existing regional conflicts. We would like to draw the attention that the U.N. High-Level group report on the Alliance of Civilizations released November, 2006 noted that the Arab-Israeli conflict remains the overwhelming source of tension and instability in the Middle East. The continued occupation of Arab territories as well as the policies of deprivation and humiliation directed against the Palestinian people cannot bring about security for Israel, let alone the Middle East. Only Israel's full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, living in dignity and security, alongside Israel, can bring about genuine and lasting peace. What is needed at this juncture are urgent steps to revive the peace process. Such an outcome would greatly contribute to security and stability in the Middle East, the Mediterranean region, Europe and the world.

In this regard, Egypt welcomes the Ceasefire Agreement in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. We hope this will be extended to the West Bank, and that it will be followed by further concrete steps to end the siege imposed on the Palestinian people.

Egypt is actively engaged with all concerned parties towards the resumption of the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

The situation in Iraq continues to be of concern to Egypt. It is our hope that the people of Iraq will overcome the burdens of the past, and find strength in their unity to build an Iraq strong and peaceful for its citizens regardless of ethnic origin or religious affiliation. Today, the Arab League is hosting in Cairo a meeting for the neighboring Countries of Iraq. We are hopeful that the meeting will make a positive contribution toward this goal.

Third: The elimination of the threat of weapons of mass destruction, primarily, nuclear weapons. The possession of nuclear weapons by one state in the Middle East, is a major threat to our region. While there is a universal acknowledgement that the proliferation of such weapons represents a threat to international peace, double standards are applied to the Middle East. This approach is not only counter-productive, but it serves against the OSCE Principles Governing Non-Proliferation (December 1994) in which Participating States affirmed their commitment to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and endorsed the universal adherence to the NPT. We therefore call upon Israel the only State in the Middle East that is not party to the NPT, to urgently join the NPT, and to place all her nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. In this context, I would like to reiterate Egypt's unwavering commitment to the creation of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. We look forward to the OSCE's active support and contribution in this regard.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Closely linked with the above mentioned common security threats are another set of closely interrelated issues that have and will continue for decades to come have a significant bearing on the future relations between the Mediterranean Partners and the OSCE Participating States, namely: **Migration, Integration and Tolerance.**

The OSCE area is experiencing what can be described as an increasing population deficit. Immigrants will have to come from the adjacent regions, including the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Without appropriate management, migration will impede the economic and social development of the Mediterranean partners and will produce undesired effects to the detriment of the well being of recipient societies. What is required, therefore, are policies that ensure a value-added for both sides. The OSCE can continue to provide an appropriate forum for the kind of deliberations that can result in such policies.

Migration perforce raises the issue of tolerance and integration. It is therefore, incumbent upon recipient governments to smooth the integration of the immigrants in their new societies, and at the same time educate and sensitize their societies to accept to live and interact in a positive manner with people from different backgrounds. It is a delicate and politically sensitive venture that requires foresightedness and carefully devised policies in the areas of education, security, housing, healthcare, employment, as well as security and public order .

At this juncture, I wish to register our satisfaction for the efforts exerted by the OSCE to move towards a more realistic and balanced approach to the issue of tolerance.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have laid before you what we perceive to be the pressing common security threats for both Europe and the Mediterranean. In addition, I tried to draw your attention to another set of issues, namely Migration, Integration and Tolerance that will probably have long-term implications for security for both shores of the Mediterranean. We have to move with urgency and determination to address both these sets of issues.

For the OSCE to be an active player in this complex and difficult venture, it has to chart it's own course. It has to select the areas where it can make an effective contribution. The OSCE significance to us lies in its ability to address the common, and I emphasis the common concerns of both sides of the Mediterranean. Only then, can it contribute to stable and balanced peace architecture in the Mediterranean.

Thank You