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**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY JEAN ASSELBORN,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION FOR LUXEMBOURG,
AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 December 2012

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The OSCE is an organization with 57 participating States, certainly, but it is also a family – in this case a Eurasian and Euro-Atlantic one. I should like to congratulate my friend Eamon Gilmore and his team for the collegial and sometimes informal manner in which they have conducted the work of the OSCE in 2012 and I am confident that our colleague Kostyantyn Hryshchenko will successfully meet the challenge in 2013.

Mr. Chairperson,

This meeting should not close without the adoption of ministerial decisions in the human dimension, the “third basket” perhaps, but of the first importance for our community and our societies – for it is individuals – men, women and children – who are the subjects and gauge of our efforts.

A society can exist only through the individuals that freely constitute it. I therefore reiterate my attachment to the inalienable right of every person to benefit from human rights and to enjoy fundamental freedoms without hindrance. Their protection and promotion are our prime responsibility on the way to co-operation and security.

The rise of electronic media has multiplied sources and allowed us to benefit from more diversified information while offering us the means to freely disseminate opinions. We are experiencing this phenomenon, which challenges traditional frontiers, on a daily basis. Information is not subject to any more obstacles than the rights or values that inspire us in this Organization. To oppose this flux is illusory and to attempt to manage citizen’s access fanciful. Censorship and filtering of information would not only obstruct the political, economic and social rights of citizens but would also solidify social positions and infrastructures, causing stagnation and a dangerous regression both domestically and in relations with other peoples and countries.

The best response is discussion, dialogue and democratic voting. We risk seriously undermining the solidity of our common future if we attempt to limit the circulation of ideas, which is so important for the development of our societies, for fear of offending established opinions and beliefs that are sometimes so ingrained as to be bent on preventing any evolution.

It is for this reason that we should adopt a decision worthy of the name in Dublin to strengthen freedom of the media. Luxembourg fully supports the draft decision by the Irish Chairmanship.

It is also for this reason that we should find compromises, in particular on the texts on fundamental freedoms in the digital age, freedom of assembly and association and on continuing to work to combat aggressive nationalism, to mention just those draft decisions.

Noting with interest the suggestions for reforming the OSCE human dimension, I should like to point out in particular that we should not restrict participation by civil society in our work.

Mr. Chairperson,

I should like to pay tribute to the essential role played by journalists, who still too often encounter difficulties in the exercise of their profession, whose dangers deserve to be recognized – even, unfortunately, in the OSCE region. In Hungary, for example, a member of the European Union, it is to be hoped that the democratic gains will not continue to be diminished.

It is up to our meeting to help strengthen the political and financial support offered to the three beacon OSCE institutions: the Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the High Commissioner for National Minorities. The autonomy and impartiality of these institutions are the guarantee of their credibility and authority and hence of their effectiveness.

Mr. Chairperson,

Giving new impetus to the peaceful settlement of frozen conflicts remains a priority. I welcome the holding of parliamentary elections in Georgia this year, observed by the OSCE. I note in particular that the Georgians respected the result of these elections and assured the transfer of power to a new government. This approach should be continued, and I hope that a rapprochement between Russia and Georgia can be achieved.

The activity in the case of Transdniestria seems promising. The formal negotiations in the “5+2” format have been resumed, putting the process of settlement of the Transdniestrian conflict back on track. I welcome the commitment of the Chairmanship, mediators, observers and parties, which has enabled this important result to be achieved, and hope that the resumption of formal negotiations will help advances to be made rapidly.

The significant changes in the Arab world have had a considerable impact on our Mediterranean partners. To enable the tree of democracy really to take root, I hope that the OSCE will be ready during this difficult transitional phase to respond to the requests of our

partners and that it will share its instruments and vast experience in particular of democratization and strengthening of the rule of law.

I am also in favour of stepping up projects and activities by our Organization in favour of another adjacent area, namely Afghanistan, so as to help this country and its neighbours to prepare for the 2014 deadline.

Last year a ministerial decision mandated the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) to strengthen the confidence- and security-building measures decided in Vilnius within the framework of the Vienna Document 2011. In an interpretative statement on this decision, 38 OSCE participating States, including Luxembourg, appealed for a continuation and completion of the efforts. Unfortunately all that came of this appeal in 2012 was a single decision on the annual notification of major military activities.

As the future Chairperson of the FSC in the last quarter of 2013, Luxembourg will support the efforts by participating States to improve co-ordination with the United Nations on small arms and light weapons and will urge them to closely follow the negotiations on the arms trade treaty.

It is a pity that neither the Open Skies Consultative Committee nor the Joint Consultative Group on the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe was able to make a significant contribution to the OSCE in 2012. This proves, if proof were necessary, that conventional arms control in Europe has reached an impasse. I therefore repeat the appeal made in the Astana Commemorative Declaration by the Heads of State or Government of the 56 OSCE participating States to relaunch negotiations from 2013 so as to obtain the highest degree of security with the lowest level of arms. There is an undoubted need for a new impetus here.

Our Organization still faces numerous and even growing challenges, which does not facilitate the work of our Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, who is nevertheless performing his task boldly and with perseverance.

Mr. Secretary General,

I should like to assure you of our full support in your efforts to make our Organization more effective and to position it within the international community and intergovernmental organizations so that it can contribute to cementing a secure future in our geographical region.

Thank you for your attention.