

28th OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting (2-3 December 2021, Stockholm)

Statement of H.E. Ambassador Ehab Badawy

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Esteemed Minister Anna Linde,
Esteemed Ministers,
Esteemed Secretary General Helga Schmid
Dear Excellencies,

At the outset, I would like to express my appreciation to the Swedish chairmanship for its wise and able leadership that has guided our work this year, and also the Polish Chairmanship of the Mediterranean partnership framework for its valuable contribution to promote the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE.

The world has experienced multidimensional challenges since the Covid-19 pandemic which is considered as one of the most significant challenges our world has faced in our lifetime. Several countries have witnessed economic decline, increase in unemployment, poverty, and security challenges. Moreover, the pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the world to organized crime in all its forms and manifestations; therefore, a collective response is required to counter these negative impacts. It is above all a multifaceted crisis that has highlighted the importance of intensifying multilateral mechanisms to ensure that international organizations can be resilient enough to confront current and future collective challenges.

With this spirit, Egypt constantly viewed the OSCE as a catalyst in contributing and strengthening stability, security and cooperation in the region, and additionally an important model for security in the Mediterranean region. Accordingly, the current challenges have underscored the irrevocable link between security and stability in both the OSCE and the Mediterranean regions as acknowledged in the Helsinki Final Act and the 2018 Milan declaration, which highlighted the imperative need to mitigate our efforts to enhance cooperation in fundamental challenges such as terrorism, organized crime, illegal human trafficking, and climate change.

Moving ahead, we need to put more emphasis to achieve the UN the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched 2030, as the global blueprint to end poverty, and ensure prosperity and security to our two regions. In this context, Egypt would like to highlight the importance of equitable vaccine distribution when addressing our security challenges and building resilient post –COVID economic recovery plans. Inequitable vaccine distributions have regrettably deepened inequality and exaggerated the gap between high income and low income countries. According to the UN, vaccine inequity will have a lasting impact on socio-economic recovery in low and lower-middle income

countries and set back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which in our view will have negative ramifications on the security of both regions.

In the same vein, climate change is considered one of the most complex issues that both our regions are currently facing, it affects nearly every aspect of our livelihood, from food security to transportation, infrastructure, health and other various sectors. It is therefore important that we underscore the implications of climate change and work on an enhanced cooperative approach on this issue to better prepare for the future.

Regionally, the significance of climate change on the Mediterranean region is becoming more pertinent than ever; recent studies have indicated that the effects of climate change observed in the region exceed most of the global average. This is due to rapid urbanization, agricultural intensification, increasing pollution, declining biodiversity and the negative implications of water droughts.

In this regard, Egypt has exerted efforts to foster climate change incentives, in light of the fact that there are alarming studies which highlight the ramifications caused by the practices of other countries in the region, many of which have negative environmental impacts on Egypt, namely, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Recent studies indicated that the loss of just one billion cubic meters in Egypt's annual water share will result in 290,000 Egyptians losing their jobs, as well as the loss of 130 hectares of cultivated land, which will consequently lead to a 150 million dollar increase in food imports, and a 430 million dollar decrease in agricultural production.

Accordingly, Egypt has sought to bring the international community's attention to this impending danger, speaking twice before the Security Council to caution against the costs of unilateral measures seeking to establish exclusive control over a river upon which our survival depends, which will inevitably also negatively affect the security of the entire Mediterranean region and Europe.

Mrs. Chair

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the world to organized crime. A collective response is required to counter this negative impact. As you are well aware, organized crime impacts the Mediterranean region in different forms, including migrant smuggling as well as trafficking in human beings, drugs, and cultural property.

It is also important to highlight the link between organized crime and terrorism. Organized crime continues to act as a fundamental mechanism in the operations of terrorist groups that resort to such activities as a primary source of funds and resources, as they coordinate closely with organized criminal groups to advance their mutual interests. Moreover, it is important to highlight also the importance of examining the increase in misuse of new technologies for illicit criminal activities.

In this regard, I would underscore the importance of Egypt's decision to end the state of emergency, which proves that the government has taken concrete steps to eliminate terrorism, even though Egypt is surrounded by a turbulent and unstable region. In this context, I would like to highlight the importance of achieving stability in Libya, which is crucial for the security of both regions. In this context Egypt underscores the importance of conducting the National elections in Libya, which is scheduled this December, and the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Libya.

Furthermore, Egypt believes that youth are the main driving force that societies need to empower to achieve development, progress and build peace. Hence, President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi placed youth empowerment on top of Egypt's priorities. Egypt has initiated the Youth Program to qualify Youth for Leadership, it has also established the National Academy for Youth Training and Qualification. In addition to convening conferences and forums since 2014 aimed exclusively at Youth empowerment on the National, Regional and International levels such as the National Egyptian Youth conferences, the Arab-African Youth Forum, and the Annual International "World Youth Forum".

In addition, Egypt strongly works to empower women by enabling their full and equal participation in our societies, as a means to ensure the achievement of sustainable development, peace and security. Egypt was one of the first countries to celebrate in 2020 the 20th anniversary of Resolution 1325, which represents the first step in the institutional and international legal framework of the agenda for Women, Peace and Security. Egypt is currently developing its first National Action Plan on the implementation of resolution 1325.

Furthermore, regarding combating sexual exploitation and abuse, President EL-Sisi was among the first to join the "Circle of Leadership" Initiative to combat crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers.

Mrs. Chair,

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that Egypt attaches utmost importance to cooperation between the OSCE and the Mediterranean partners. Egypt looks forward to further enhancing our cooperation during the upcoming Polish chairmanship of the OSCE and North Macedonian Chairmanship of the Mediterranean partners next year.

I wish to thank you all for your attention.