

**STATEMENT BY MR. BERNARD CAZENEUVE,
MINISTER DELEGATE FOR EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF FRANCE,
AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 December 2012

Mr. Chairperson,
Mr. Secretary General,
Ministers,

You have chosen for the theme of this meeting, Mr. Chairperson, the approaching 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act, which we shall be celebrating in three years. In doing so, you invite us to look resolutely towards the future of our Organization and of European security. France unreservedly supports the approach you suggest. Even if we have good reasons to be confident about the OSCE's future, we also have the duty in the years to come to address some very difficult issues which, it must be recognized, sometimes divide us. We need to approach this undertaking with determination and in a clear-headed fashion without ever forgetting the spirit of dialogue that governs our work.

I should like to state here the two fundamental reasons why France would like to see the future of our Organization assured.

The first concerns the fundamental values on which it rests and a vision of our common security that includes the politico-military, economic and human dimensions. The participating States have consistently reaffirmed their attachment to these values and this approach since the adoption in 1975 of the Helsinki Final Act. They did so in particular in Paris in 1990 with the Charter for a New Europe at a time when our continent was coming together again after decades of division, and once again in Astana in 2010. However varied the cultural heritages of our countries and the various paths they might take in the movement towards globalization, it is vital that this fundament, as a guarantee of our security community, be preserved and reinforced. This is the meaning of the Helsinki+40 process proposed by the Irish Chairmanship, in which we hope to see above all a demonstration of confidence by the participating States in the relevance of the OSCE and the shared principles on which it is based.

The second reason concerns the specific achievements of the OSCE and affiliated organizations and the outstanding results obtained by the men and women working in the field missions. Every day these activities allow our countries and our peoples to ensure that dialogue prevails over conflict, integration over exclusion, and transparency over opacity.

1 Incorporates a correction to the title of the statement.

They are too often unrecognized and underestimated but they are what has made the OSCE stand out as the only organization capable of intervening in some sensitive situations. Two recent examples illustrate this: the south of Kyrgyzstan where two years ago the OSCE was able to implement a community security initiative helping to reduce tensions between Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities; and the organization of Serbian elections in Kosovo facilitated this year by the OSCE.

The building of our common future, however, also demands that we address some very difficult issues in the years to come with determination and in a clear-headed fashion and a consistent spirit of dialogue.

I refer to the conflicts whose settlement, held in abeyance in some cases for over two decades, is a prerequisite for the building of a real security community. This is the case in particular of the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, which has seen an increase in tension on the ground during the last few months. As Co-Chair of the Minsk Group, France is more than ever committed, with the United States and Russia, to continue its efforts to foster dialogue between the parties following the growth in tensions this year. This was the thrust of the meetings that have taken place in Paris during the last few months and the visit made by the three Co-Chairs to the region at the end of November. As for Georgia, France fully supports the Geneva Discussions and the important role of the OSCE in this process alongside the European Union and the United Nations. It welcomes the continuation this year of the “5+2” discussions on the Transdniestrian conflict and calls for a consolidation of this progress through substantive gains. Conflict prevention must remain at the heart of the OSCE’s activities.

I also refer to the crucial question of the human dimension, without which the concept of comprehensive security would have little meaning. This human dimension gives the OSCE a unique status. Our activities in this regard are indispensable to the stabilization of our area in the long term. We are concerned at the reports of violations of commitments undertaken by participating States. France would like to express its particular concern on the subject of the exercise of freedom of the media, including the safety of journalists, and freedom of association and assembly. These fundamental freedoms should not be restricted in any way in violation of international norms. This also applies to their exercise on the Internet. France fully supports the adoption by the Ministerial Council of decisions on these subjects.

France solemnly appeals to all OSCE participating States that still practise the death penalty to refrain from doing so. This is one of the priorities of our diplomacy as illustrated by the campaign launched by Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister for Foreign Affairs, on 9 October to encourage its abolition. France stresses the importance of strengthening the democratic process and election observation. We know that every democracy is in need of continuous improvement. The work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is valid, albeit in varying degrees, just as much for recent democracies as it is for countries with an older democratic tradition. In this regard, France thanks the ODIHR for the recommendations it made following its observation of the recent elections in France. We also welcome the efforts by the Irish Chairmanship to foster dialogue with non-governmental organizations and trust that future chairmanships will continue this dialogue.

I refer also to the future of arms control within the OSCE. We must intensify discussion on the updating and modernization of the Vienna Document. This instrument for confidence-building, transparency and predictability must be brought into line with the

military realities of the twenty-first century. It is for that reason that France made a proposal in 2010 to lower the notification thresholds for military activities, which was supported by all of the members of the European Union and four fifths of the OSCE participating States. We urgently call for the adoption of this proposal in 2013. France also welcomes the continuation of the activities of the OSCE in the field of small arms and stockpiles of ammunition and its efforts to harmonize the OSCE's *acquis* in this area with the norms of the United Nations.

France also intends to make a constructive contribution to the resumption of discussions on strengthening and modernization of the conventional arms control regime in Europe and calls on the other concerned States to do the same. We also call for the resumption of the normal functioning of the Open Skies Consultative Commission.

I refer finally to the challenges to security in our common space. Our continued co-operation in combating transnational threats together is of major importance. The decisions adopted this year, which we would like to see supplemented in particular by the adoption of the draft decision on combating terrorism, have ushered in a new phase. It will be oriented towards their implementation and will demand both a strong commitment by the OSCE and great vigilance by the participating States. France also supports the adoption of confidence-building measures in the area of cybersecurity, which will allow the OSCE's recognized experience to be applied to the realities of the modern world.

In the same spirit we should not forget that the security of our area cannot be assured without taking account of the upheavals and security challenges in a region extending from the Sahel to Afghanistan. For that reason we should take advantage of our partnerships with Asian countries – in particular Afghanistan but also with those on the south shore of the Mediterranean. France, which has signed a treaty of friendship and co-operation with Afghanistan, pays particular attention to its links with the Mediterranean Partners and to the intensity of this relationship with partner countries, several of whom are also members of the Organisation de la Francophonie.

Mr. Chairperson,

I thank you for the welcome that Ireland has extended to us today and for the particular commitment this Chairmanship has shown throughout the year. I hope that the Irish Chairmanship will be a source of inspiration for future chairmanships starting with Ukraine, to which I wish every success.

Thank you for your attention.