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**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE
15th OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

by

H. E. Archbishop Dominique MAMBERTI
Secretary for Relations with States

Madrid, 29 November 2007

Mr. Chairman,

The Spanish Chairmanship has demonstrated committed leadership in the activities that have marked the “road to Madrid” throughout this year. However, the clock continues to tick, and we face imminent deadlines, including elections, and problematic issues with evident geo-political consequences and significant repercussions on security and democratisation. The situation in Kosovo and in the Caucasus, the new challenges to the military equilibrium and to the agreements concluded in the OSCE in this regard, require continued dialogue and cooperation. Moreover, persistent threats and unresolved conflicts are testimony to the fact that, unfortunately, stability and peace are still goals to be achieved.

As is known, it is not the place of the Holy See to enter into issues which are strictly political and neither does it wish to do so. However, the Holy See would like to encourage those around this table to continue to work for peace and justice, to implement the commitments that they have undertaken and not to violate the legitimate interests and just expectations of other participating States.

If a definitive agreement about the Chairmanships of the OSCE for the years 2009-2011 is to be reached, political good will and real respect for one another will be essential.

More generally, the eventual adoption of the *Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE* may strengthen the organisation and indirectly contribute to the security of those who may eventually be involved in its activities in Afghanistan.

As concerns the fight against terrorism, it is imperative to protect critical energy infrastructure from attack. It will also be important, on the issue of environmental protection, for the Organisation to support the various initiatives concerning water management, thus contributing to cooperation, stability and the equitable and sustainable development of each country. Obviously, water is necessary for health and for life, but it is also an indispensable resource in the production of wealth.

What I would like to stress the most is that, in the opinion of the Holy See, the vocation of the OSCE is to create an area of freedom and the rule of law. In order to achieve this end, the Organisation must ceaselessly promote the dignity of the human person and defend the intrinsic rights and values of all men and women. In this respect, I also believe that it is essential that we continue to oppose human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children. In particular, trafficking in human beings for labour exploitation must be clearly distinguished from irregular migration. We must ensure that victims have access to justice, social and legal assistance and compensation for damages that they have suffered. The Catholic Church is in the

forefront in the fight against these shameful crimes and through its institutions, at all levels, she has promoted numerous initiatives to address them.

Moreover, if the OSCE is to promote human dignity in an integral way, it must also effectively combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians, Jews, Muslims and members of other religions. In fact, this question has moved up to become an important political and security theme. Religious discrimination can only effectively be addressed if all religions are equally respected and protected. The European Parliament has recently adopted a resolution deploring various episodes which endanger the very existence of Christian and other religious communities. The OSCE can be rightly proud that it was one of the first Organisations to raise the alarm concerning discrimination against Christians, but it must remain alert. Christians continue to suffer from prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination and violence. Disengagement from these problems cannot be an option! We must not hide behind the principle of “consensus” in order to avoid effective action and neither should we be satisfied with blanket condemnations. Rather this consensus should be a catalyst for action to protect fundamental freedoms, and, above all, the religious freedom of every believer and of each religious community.

More in general, as far as the tolerance program is concerned, what is needed is the commitment of more focused energy and efforts to fulfil the agreed upon OSCE commitments, and to resist the unilateral expansion of the same. Undue attention to other concerns, serves only to distract the efforts of the OSCE and the ODIHR, as well as to forestall effective and timely measures to address the original commitments, many of which have yet to be implemented.

Finland cannot but play a special role in the implementation of the commitments that have been undertaken throughout the Helsinki process. To this end, the Holy See is pleased to assure its cooperation and support to the incoming Chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.