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**STATEMENT BY
H.E. MR. ANTONIO TAJANI, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION OF ITALY, AT THE 1412th (REINFORCED) MEETING OF
THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

24 February 2023

Thank you, Minister Osmani,

Exactly one year ago, Russia invaded Ukraine and started a brutal, illegal and unjustified war of aggression – a war that has shaken the foundations of the rules-based international order and that continues to undermine peace and security in Europe and at the global level.

Russia bears full responsibility for it and will be held accountable for the atrocities committed.

Italy condemns this war in the strongest terms and once again calls upon Russia to end it immediately and to withdraw all its forces and military equipment beyond the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine. We likewise reiterate our appeal to the Belarusian authorities to stop supporting the Russian war of aggression.

Italy stands by Ukraine: we will continue to provide military and humanitarian assistance to the Ukrainian Government and people until a just peace has been achieved that respects the Charter of the United Nations and Ukrainian sovereignty. In December last year, I announced in Paris the allocation of an additional 10 million euros to be used to strengthen the resilience of Ukrainian infrastructure. Italy will also be in the vanguard when it comes to reconstruction, in which we want to involve our enterprises so that they can offer their expertise and good practices and bring Ukraine closer to Europe.

The war has had a negative impact on our Organization as well. It is unacceptable that the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the Office of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine should have been closed down on account of Russia's opposition. I renew the appeal to the Russian Government to release the three employees of the Mission who have been unjustly detained for far too long.

The Russian obstructionism notwithstanding, the OSCE has been able to support Ukraine through the activation of the Moscow Mechanism, the reports of its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, and the creation of the Support Programme for Ukraine. Russia finds itself isolated in the course of the regular meetings of the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Co-operation. The OSCE is the only multilateral forum in which Russia is systematically called to account for its conduct in the war.

The conflict in Ukraine has starkly reminded us of the crucial link between respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms on the one hand, and common security on the other. The activities carried out by

the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights to support democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights are essential and need to be safeguarded and promoted.

Moreover, the OSCE is the only regional organization that brings together North America, Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, maintaining field operations in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is vital to preserve the OSCE not least in view of the role that it can play in the reconstruction of the European security architecture, ensuring respect for the fundamental principles of the Helsinki Final Act that are at its core.

Italy will continue to do its bit to preserve this platform and its values. You can count on us.