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**STATEMENT BY MR. SEBASTIAN KURZ,
MINISTER FOR EUROPE, INTEGRATION AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF AUSTRIA, AT THE TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Basel, 4 December 2014

Mr. Chairperson, dear Didier,
Secretary General,
Dear colleagues,

I will attempt to say everything in three minutes and still leave myself enough time to pay tribute to the Swiss Chairmanship and thank it for its dedicated work in what has certainly been a very difficult year. I should also like to take this opportunity to wish the incoming Serbian Chairmanship all the best.

I believe that this year's Ministerial Council is particularly relevant because 2014 without a doubt marked a turning point in European security. The security system as we know it has been shaken by an escalation in the East with many fatalities. The shooting down of a passenger plane and the pictures and horrific reports we receive here continuously show not only that it is a dramatic development for Ukraine and the region but also that this conflict has ramifications far beyond the region.

I believe we are all agreed that there cannot and should not be a military solution and that everything should therefore be done to achieve a political solution.

In our view, the OSCE is the organization with the greatest leverage, because all sides and all parties sit at one table. We firmly believe that all parties must contribute to de-escalation and that in particular the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine must be safeguarded. The Minsk agreements remain the framework for a peaceful solution in Ukraine and they must therefore be implemented in full. There can be no doubt that Russia bears a particular responsibility for ensuring that these agreements are respected.

We fully support the Contact Group and OSCE Monitoring Mission. We currently provide 12 members and will, of course, also add further to it.

As someone who didn't experience the Cold War personally, I can still hope that we will manage in future once again to put the bloc mentality that we are currently experiencing back where it belongs, namely in history books. I very much hope that dialogue here, and also dialogue between the European Union and the Eurasian Customs Union and the many endeavours beyond them, will succeed in helping to bring about a peaceful solution in

Ukraine and at the same time making it possible to discuss the roots of the conflict, be they political, security-related or economic.

I should like once again to express my sincere gratitude to the Swiss Chairmanship and hope that, after Germany, the Austrian Chairmanship will be able to make its contribution to the Organization in 2017.

Thank you.