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**The Rt Hon William Hague MP**

**Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs**

**UK Intervention at the OSCE Ministerial Council, Dublin**

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2012**

Mr Chairman

It is a pleasure to be in Dublin. I thank our Irish hosts for their hospitality, and Foreign Minister Gilmore and his team for their skilful Chairmanship. I also warmly welcome Foreign Minister Bold of Mongolia, and congratulate his country on becoming the 57<sup>th</sup> participating state of the OSCE.

The OSCE's defining characteristic is its comprehensive approach to security, stability and conflict prevention, underpinned by a respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The UK is firmly committed to these ideals and to the OSCE contribution to the extension of freedom and the rule of law worldwide. But if this organisation is to set an example to the rest of the world by creating the secure and stable conditions in which trade and business can flourish, then we must all adhere to the commitments we have made to our own people and set an example to other nations.

The OSCE plays an important role in promoting good governance and strong civil societies around the globe. The facilitation of voting by dual nationals in Kosovo during the Serbian elections, and the observation this year of elections in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and the United States among other countries, is a clear example of the scope and relevance of the OSCE's work.

But our principles have to be implemented consistently, not picked up and dropped whenever we choose. We need to work together in an open and honest manner, seek and accept the assistance of others, and engage in a healthy dialogue with our own citizens.

Many states need to do more to fulfil these principles. For instance, in many areas of the OSCE region people cannot meet, speak or demonstrate about their human rights without fear of arbitrary arrest or detention.

However, if we pull together and live up to our common values, and if we focus on those areas where the OSCE can have a real impact, then we will be better

placed to create a more secure and prosperous region which sets an example to others.

We all know that in a challenging economic environment the OSCE, like all international organisations, will have to do more with less and concentrate on those areas where it can make a tangible difference. However there are four broad areas where I believe this organisation can concentrate its efforts and resources to maximum effect over the coming year.

First, the human dimension, especially the OSCE's work on election observation, which is a proven method through which we can all help support, strengthen and protect the democratic rights of people across the OSCE. We all stand to benefit from this activity, and the OSCE's report on the 2010 elections in the UK provided my government with valuable recommendations for improving our own electoral procedures. In my country we also greatly value the OSCE's role on media freedom. The advance of technology does not mean we have to work less hard to promote fundamental human rights; if anything we have a new and challenging task in hand, to ensure that freedom of expression and other human rights apply with equal force online as they do offline.

Second, the OSCE should renew its efforts to make progress in core areas of expertise, not least in the field of conflict prevention and resolution, which are a key part of the OSCE's mandate. We have common interests in seeing that progress is made in the protracted conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and Georgia.

I particularly want to flag up to colleagues the UK's new initiative on preventing sexual violence in conflict, and our hope that the OSCE can support our efforts. Many hundreds of thousands of women, children and men have endured the horrors of rape and sexual violence in conflict during our lifetime, but too often this has been treated as something that simply happens in the fog of war. We must shatter the culture of impunity for these crimes. As part of our initiative we have increased financial support for the Office of the UNSG Special Representative on Sexual Violence, and our voluntary contributions to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims, we have established a new team of legal, medical and forensic experts who can be deployed to conflict areas to help combat this problem. We will also use the UK's Presidency of the G8 next year to call for a new international protocol on the investigation and prosecution of these crimes. The international community has developed an array of mechanisms at the UN and national level, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325, and related resolutions, but we must do more. In particular an OSCE-wide Action Plan to implement UNSCR 1325 would help us all live up to our commitments under the women, peace and security agenda.

Third, we should make greater use of the OSCE's large membership to tackle trans-national threats such as cyber security, which are becoming increasingly prominent and require a distinct cross-border approach. That is why we hosted the London conference on cyberspace in 2011, calling for a new international

consensus on rules of the road to guide future behaviour in cyberspace, and to combat the worst abuses of it. I congratulate Hungary and South Korea for continuing this work and I encourage participating states to agree initial, achievable confidence building measures in the field of transparency and communications.

Finally, conventional arms control and confidence and security building measures have played an important role in maintaining security in Europe, encapsulating as they do, long standing commitments such as on openness and transparency. All three of the fundamental pillars of the OSCE's first dimension on politico-military matters are now beset by difficulties. We must work together, in the spirit of the original concepts on which this work was based, and demonstrate flexibility to prevent the current difficulties from having a wider, detrimental effect on European security.

It is clear that the OSCE plays a vital role in fostering free and fair societies built on the foundation of strong citizenship, human rights and good governance. But our impact will be greater if we stand together. The consensus principle can be an enormous strength when treated with the respect that it deserves, but it can also be a hindrance to progress when states pursue narrow national agendas and ignore the collective values on which the OSCE is built. Only by entrenching these values can we strengthen this organisation to deal with the current economic and political challenges and help create a more stable and prosperous region. On this the UK hopes to work collaboratively with Ukraine in 2013, including by engaging constructively on the future direction of this organisation, in the context of the Helsinki +40 process. I would like to extend our best wishes to our Ukrainian colleagues as they prepare to assume the Chairmanship in Office.