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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF AUSTRIA
AT THE NINETEENTH MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Dublin, 6 December 2012

Mr. Chairperson,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,

It gives me pleasure to represent Austria at this final conference of the Irish Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2012.

Mr. Chairperson, your selection of possible decisions could help in the further development of our Organization in essential areas. These proposals are fully supported by Austria. I should like to sincerely thank you, Mr. Chairperson, and your team in Vienna and Dublin for your commitment and hospitality.

I am particularly pleased to welcome Mongolia in our midst as a full member, which is a further achievement of the Irish Chairmanship. Austria supported Mongolia's application from the outset. This enlargement confirms the relevance of the OSCE and also the ability of the largest regional organization of the United Nations to make decisions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Needless to say, Austria fully supports the statement by the High Representative of the European Union.

We attach great importance to the adoption of the Helsinki+40 decision. We regard the willingness of the Ukrainian, Swiss and Serbian chairmanships to co-ordinate their work more intensively as a unique opportunity to achieve clear progress in the OSCE agendas by 2015. Civil society and academic think tanks should be involved in the process. As the headquarters of the OSCE, Austria attaches great importance to a lasting determination of the legal status of the OSCE, which is indispensable for the efficient functioning of the Organization.

The persisting conflicts remain the central challenge to our aim of establishing a security community. The endeavours to achieve a peaceful solution must be intensified. We regard specific confidence- and security-building measures such as the intensification of human contacts as an important factor in the achievement of this goal.

The resumption of formal “5+2” talks and the very judicious mediation of the Irish Chairmanship in connection with the Transdniestrian conflict have led to a rapprochement of the two sides. Austria continues to offer to host these talks on Minoritenplatz in Vienna.

We are particularly concerned at the increase in victims in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Violence is not the way to resolve this conflict. We therefore appeal to Armenia and Azerbaijan to intensify their efforts to settle the conflict within the Minsk process and to find compromises.

It is also vital to fully exhaust the potential of the Geneva Discussions under the co-chairmanship of the OSCE, the United Nations and the European Union. This is an important platform for bringing about a rapprochement between the different points of view so as to improve the situation of the civilian population.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are constant features of Austria’s foreign policy. My country is currently committed within the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the OSCE in particular to freedom of the media, the protection of journalists, free Internet access and the unrestricted applicability of freedom of assembly and expression. The two draft decisions presented by the Chairmanship – on safeguarding freedom of the media and combating racism and xenophobia – are fully supported by Austria.

A further core priority for Austria is the exercise of tolerance and non-discrimination, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and protection of religious minorities. I should like to draw attention to two events in Vienna. The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue opened in Vienna on 26 November. And from 26 to 28 February 2013 the 5th annual Alliance of Civilizations Forum on the subject of promoting responsible leadership in diversity and dialogue will also be taking place in Vienna.

Austria is particularly interested in a comprehensive conventional arms control regime in Europe and intends to be actively involved in its further development on the basis of the Astana decision. We call for a basic discussion on the purpose of modernization of arms control and confidence- and security-building measures. We are also in favour of substantive changes to the Vienna Document 2011, particularly an increase in transparency.

Transnational threats are something to which both large and small States are equally exposed. The OSCE also has a contribution to make here. Following the creation of the Transnational Threats Department, we must now intensify our efforts to combat terrorism, trafficking in drugs and human beings, organized crime and protection of cyberspace.

We are hoping that a decision will be adopted in Dublin to elaborate confidence-building measures in the area of cybersecurity through the creation of greater transparency and better networking of our national experts. The safeguarding of freedom of the Internet is a vital issue for us.

We must consistently develop the ability of our Organization to offer participating States effective support in all phases of the conflict cycle. In that regard we welcome the particular focus on conflict prevention, conflict settlement and reconciliation.

The full involvement of women in peace processes is above all a strategic question. Austria, together with Finland, Turkey and Kazakhstan, has proposed the elaboration of an OSCE-wide action plan for implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (Women, peace and security), with a view to working towards greater implementation of this resolution in the Organization's activities and in the individual participating States. The endorsement of this idea by the Dublin Ministerial Council would be a highly encouraging sign. Austria is willing to continue this work.

In 2011 important decisions were adopted to intensify collaboration with our Partners for Co-operation, particularly Afghanistan. We are now all called upon to provide tangible support to the stabilization and democratization of Afghanistan and the Mediterranean Partners – at their request. Women have an important role in these transformation processes. Austria has supported and will continue to support OSCE projects in partner countries with a particular focus on greater political and economic involvement of women.

In conclusion, I should like to express my thanks once again to Ireland for its committed Chairmanship and to wish the incoming Ukrainian Chairmanship every success. It is important for Austria that the OSCE has a balanced budget for 2013 that takes advantage of savings potential while allowing the Organization to effectively master all of the tasks that we mandate it to perform.

Thank you for your attention.