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Delegation of Italy

**STATEMENT BY
AMBASSADOR STEFANO BALDI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY
TO THE OSCE, AT THE 1415th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

16 March 2023

**On the report by the Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and
Human Rights, Matteo Mecacci**

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Italy aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and wishes to add a few remarks in its national capacity.

First of all, I renew my warm welcome to Director Mecacci and thank him for presenting the annual report on the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It reveals a comprehensive and robust commitment to the promotion of our common principles of human dignity, democracy and inclusion. These play a key role in maintaining just and safe societies.

The Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine has been raging for more than a year, unleashing destruction, indiscriminate Russian attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure, and a multitude of heinous crimes. I should like to reiterate my appreciation for the ODIHR's efforts since the beginning of the conflict to monitor violations of international humanitarian and human rights law – summarized in the two reports published last year – including interviews with witnesses and victims. Those reports, as well as the ones published under the Moscow Mechanism, paid special attention to the plight of people in the most vulnerable situations, particularly women but most notably children who are paying a high price for this conflict. The monitoring work by the ODIHR – and it is worth remembering that it was the first on the ground in Ukraine – is making an essential contribution to international efforts to ensure accountability.

Italy has provided and continues to provide staunch support to Ukraine also by assisting the OSCE's work in the country. In this regard, I recall our contribution to the Support Programme for Ukraine and, in the field of promotion and protection of human rights, the recent funding we provided to the ODIHR programme for Ukraine entitled "Advancing the human dimension of security in Ukraine", which offers important help to civil society in the country.

Among the other projects we have financed, I want to mention the further funding we have also provided this year to the project in support of human rights defenders, who are committed to defending the

rule of law, democracy and human rights at a time when the spaces open to civil society in many countries of the OSCE area are increasingly limited, such as in Belarus.

I want to thank the ODIHR for its excellent co-operation during the election observation mission to Italy for the parliamentary elections on 25 September 2022, the final report of which was published in January.

Finally, I should like to reaffirm that Italy will continue to vigorously support the ODIHR's activities, mandate and autonomy, including its financial autonomy, for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.