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**STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY AMBASSADOR MOHAMED BENHOCINE,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ALGERIA IN VIENNA AND
HEAD OF THE ALGERIAN DELEGATION, AT THE TWENTIETH
MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Kyiv, 5 and 6 December 2013

Mr. Chairperson,

Allow me too to pay tribute to Nelson Mandela, a supreme campaigner for freedom, dignity and justice for all. “Madiba” was a committed democrat and unsurpassed statesman and he will remain an eternal source of pride for Africa and the world as a whole.

On behalf of the Algerian Government, I should like to express my gratitude to the Ukrainian Government for its hospitality and the excellent manner in which this meeting of the Ministerial Council in Kyiv has been organized. I should also like to congratulate it on the quality of its Chairmanship of the OSCE.

Mr. Chairperson,

The reasons for us, as a Mediterranean Partner, to step up political dialogue and co-operation with the OSCE in order to address the threats and challenges that we face are manifold.

One such reason is that there are continuing conflicts within and around the OSCE area, including in the Mediterranean region. If fair and lasting solutions are not found, these situations will continue to lead to considerable loss of life and will endanger international peace and security. In this context, we make particular reference to the pressing need to give a positive response to the legitimate claim of the Palestinian people to finally be able to live in freedom and independence.

The evolution of the regional situation caused, notably, by changes in Africa and the Middle East also requires our attention. Indeed, the hopes that these changes gave rise to were followed by doubts about the fates of some of these countries, including in terms of stability and security for their region. For this reason, it is important that these countries find the necessary support to ensure the promotion of the human and socio-economic rights of their people, and to contribute to establishing regional security and stability. This is something that Algeria is addressing.

Furthermore, the consequences of the international financial and economic crisis continue to make themselves felt, even in terms of intolerance and discrimination in countries that have welcomed communities stigmatized because of their ethnicity and/or religion. This trend is made all the more concerning by the fact that it is no longer the preserve of a few misfits and others hit by the crisis. Rather, it has become a hobbyhorse of political parties, politicians and media figures, thus trivializing and legitimizing the development of a discourse that is xenophobic, racist, and, more often than not, islamophobic. For this reason, we think it is also important that our Partnership address these issues.

Likewise, transnational threats to security are common challenges that warrant increased attention and continuing co-operation between the OSCE and its partners.

In this context, my country is pleased to note the development of practical co-operation, in the spirit of the Ministerial Council decision on Partners for Co-operation adopted in Vilnius in 2011, which addresses concerns related to the fight against organized crime, illicit drug trafficking, and border management and security.

The fight against terrorism also involves cutting off the supply of arms to terrorist groups and their financing. In this connection, we are pleased that the Swiss-chaired Mediterranean Contact Group and the 2013 Annual Mediterranean Conference in Monaco both examined the scourge of ransom payments to free hostages, which is, as we all know, a key form of financing for terrorism that greatly contributes to its perpetuation. Given the very indivisibility of security in the European-Mediterranean region, we feel that this is an issue of particular importance that should be addressed by the OSCE because of its political influence. We are convinced that the Organization would make a substantial contribution to the fight against this ill.

In this regard, I should like to emphasise the determined efforts made by Algeria to fight against these threats and challenges to security and its contribution on an international and regional level, including in the Sahel region, to the establishment of peace, security and stability. We are working to promote a rapprochement between the OSCE and the other regional organizations we are a member of.

Mr. Chairperson,

Given that the promotion of security and stability begin at home, allow me to recall that Algeria has committed itself to a wide-scale process of political and economic reform to consolidate democracy, the rule of law and good economic governance.

The results of this approach are already being felt. In social terms, there has been a clear improvement that can be seen through better access to housing, youth employment and quality of life in general, as well as the development of communications networks and basic infrastructure. In all of these areas, we have seen spectacular progress over the past decade under the leadership of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Unemployment, in particular, has fallen from 25 per cent to a current level of below 10 per cent. This has been possible thanks to an average growth rate of more than 4 per cent during this period. With regard to politics, I will make particular mention of the amendments to electoral law to ensure greater transparency in elections and the representation of women in politics. In this connection, I should like to recall that the general elections held on 10 May 2012 in an atmosphere of

transparency led to a significant increase in the number of women in the People's National Assembly. Women now hold 146 of the 462 seats, making up one third of the house.

Before closing, allow me to restate that for Algeria, the need to respond positively to the requests by Palestine and Libya to join the Mediterranean Partnership is still relevant.

Finally, allow me to wish every success to Switzerland, which will preside over the work of this Organization next year, and to Serbia, which will follow it.

Thank you.