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**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE  
16<sup>th</sup> OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

by

**H. E. Archbishop  
Dominique MAMBERTI  
Secretary for Relations with States**

**Oslo, 4 December 2008**

Mister Chairman!

1. I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, as well as the other Authorities of Finland, for the cordial invitation extended to all participating States of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to return to the cradle of our Organization. I also wish to manifest once again the strong support of the Holy See for the process which was set in motion in this very city on 1 August 1975 at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The Helsinki Final Act, signed by the nations of Europe, together with Canada and the United States, must be considered as one of the most significant of the instruments of international dialogue. On that occasion all of the thirty-five signatory countries came to an agreement on one basic fact, namely, that peace is not ensured when arms fall silent; rather, peace is the result of co-operation between both individuals on the one hand and societies themselves, and the result of respect for certain ethical imperatives.

The famous “ten principles” which preface the Helsinki Final Act constitute the basis upon which the peoples of Europe, having been the victims of so many wars and divisions, now wish to consolidate and preserve peace, so that future generations may be able to live in harmony and security – “from Vancouver to Vladivostok.”

Mister Chairman!

2. My Delegation follows with great attention the efforts undertaken by the OSCE to consolidate and preserve peace. Regarding the politico-military dimension, the Holy See shares the concerns expressed over the deterioration, in many sectors, of those conditions of trust and security that constituted the basis of relations and negotiations among participating States over the past years. At the same time, however, the dialogue on the aspects of security has never been interrupted, thus avoiding an exacerbation of already tense situations.

In this regard, it is also to be acknowledged that the current OSCE Chairmanship has initiated, in a timely fashion, responses that contributed to restore peace in recent crises. There is one point upon which the Holy See wishes to insist: the current crises in the OSCE area could inevitably result in the worsening of the quality of life and of legitimate expectations for the citizens of sovereign States. In Georgia the situation in and around the conflict areas remains unstable; the winter season has brought new challenges and the Holy See is particularly concerned for the return of internal displaced persons to their homes.

I wish to make a pressing appeal to all the participating States, who have solemnly subscribed to the Helsinki Final Act, to ensure that their actions be inspired by that Final Act and that they might find not a regression from, but rather a revitalization of those measures which, in the not so distant past, contributed to stability in the OSCE area.

Furthermore, the Holy See follows with great attention – obviously in consideration of its particular nature and function – the important activities of the OSCE in the elimination of the risks connected with excessive stockpiles of light arms and conventional weapons, the OSCE fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and, not least, its initiatives in the fight against terrorism.

I would also like to add that yesterday in Oslo, on behalf of the Holy See, I signed and ratified the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mister Chairman!

**3.** The economic and environmental dimension constitutes an integral part of the OSCE and of its universal approach to matters of security. The Holy See believes that this so-called “second basket” of the Organization can be further strengthened. The effectiveness, the putting into practice of the commitments assumed in years past, and the further development of experiences in the camps where the OSCE is truly competent can be listed as priorities for the future of this dimension.

I am pleased that the next Economic and Environmental Forum will deal with migration management. The Holy See, which through its various institutions and associations works in favour of migrants, will participate actively in the process of the Forum. I would like to stress that the family as institution, as well as the consequences of migration for family life, should be taken into account during the working sessions of the upcoming Forum.

Furthermore, the OSCE might consider devoting attention to the present economic and financial crisis, which is affecting the lives of all, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Mister Chairman!

4. Over the years the OSCE has carved out an impressive array of commitments in the human dimension. These commitments remain valid. In general, what is needed is the commitment of more focused energy and efforts to fulfilling the OSCE commitments agreed upon by all participating States, instead of a broadening of these commitments. Undue attention to other concerns, even if legitimate, serves only to distract the efforts of the OSCE, as well as to forestall effective and timely measures to address the original commitments, many of which have yet to be implemented.

5. The adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* sixty years ago was one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations. In every continent and country the Catholic Church strives to ensure that human rights are not only proclaimed but put into practice and she hopes that in this field the OSCE will be able to meet the great expectations generated by its creation.

6. One of the human rights recognized in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* is the right to religious freedom. In fact, it has become a common theme within the context of international affairs and the OSCE has adopted specific commitments in this regard. The Holy See promotes this right, demands that it be universally respected, and views with concern the increasing episodes of violence, as well as the ongoing acts of discrimination and intolerance against Christians and members of other religions. The idea that religion is a form of alienation is no longer fashionable and believers can rather constitute a powerful factor in favour of the common good.

Furthermore, hatred can find no justification among those who call God “our Father”. This is another reason why God can never be excluded from the horizon of the human person or of history. God’s name is a name of justice, it represents an urgent appeal for peace.

Mister Chairman!

7. The scourge of trafficking in human beings is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon of misery, poverty, greed, corruption, injustice and oppression which manifests itself in sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, and the recruitment of minors for armed conflict. We know well that the root causes of this phenomenon include economic factors, such as the imbalance between rural and urban wealth

levels and the desperate desire to escape poverty. Juridical and political factors also contribute to the problem, such as the absence of legislation, and the ignorance of parents and trafficked persons of their rights under the law. Mistrust of the law and open borders likewise play a part, as do socio-cultural factors, such as the social acceptability of putting children to work outside of the family, illiteracy or low education levels, acceptance of debt bondage and discrimination against girls. Globalization and the increased movement of people can also make vulnerable groups, such as women and girls, easier prey for traffickers, who clearly have no regard for the dignity of the human person, and who view people as mere commodities to be bought and sold, used and abused at will.

There is a further aspect which must be acknowledged and collectively addressed if this abhorrent human exploitation is to be effectively confronted. I am referring to the trivialization of sexuality in the media and entertainment industries which fuels a decline in moral values and leads to the degradation of men and women and even the abuse of children.

My Delegation would like to underscore the commitment of the Catholic Church to uphold the dignity of every human life, especially the most vulnerable and assure its full support in efforts of the OSCE to eliminate the scourge of trafficking, in particular of women and children, prostitution, and forced labour.

**8.** On the occasion of the return of the OSCE to Helsinki, I would like to express the hope that the participating States might be able to agree to the adoption of the Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE.

**9.** Finally, allow me to conclude, Mister Chairman, by quoting Pope John Paul II's reference to the Final Act of Helsinki, on the occasion of his Pastoral Visit to Finland in June 1989. *"The Catholic Church is convinced of the validity of the ideal embodied here in a document which for millions of Europeans is more than a Final Act: it is an act of hope!"*

Thank you, Mister Chairman