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**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR GIANFRANCO VARVESI,  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ITALY TO THE OSCE, AT THE  
SEVENTEENTH MEETING OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Athens, 2 December 2009

Mr. Chairman,

I should like to express the regret of Minister Frattini, who had wanted to take part in today's Ministerial Council meeting but is unable to do so because of an unforeseen commitment that arose a few days ago.

He has instructed me to present his regards to you, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, and to all the delegations present. On his behalf I should like to express the great appreciation of my government for the outstanding work of the Greek Chairmanship, whose efforts and application have not only enabled this meeting to be organized so successfully but have also brought to a conclusion a year full of commitments, challenges and significant progress.

Italy supports the strategy pursued by the Chairmanship of emphasizing the elements that unite the participating States, all of which belong to the same community of values, and of focusing attention on its common denominator, which will enable the Organization to reaffirm its role and identify the guidelines required for effective future action.

The process that we have embarked upon is particularly delicate, and it would be short-sighted to expect concrete results immediately. The participating States have begun wide-ranging dialogue on European security. We have reaffirmed the relevance of the OSCE principles and the need to implement them in their entirety in the awareness that the Organization's full potential has not yet been exploited. By anchoring security dialogue within the OSCE it has been possible to discuss even divisive issues openly and to dissipate the climate of suspicion, the legacy of a bygone era, and to seek cohesion and trust on the basis of common interests and values.

There is growing agreement on the basic objectives. We must now identify the most concrete way in which we can co-operate in areas of common interest. There is agreement on the areas in which co-operation needs to be strengthened. An important result of the Corfu Process is that due attention is being given to our ambitious agenda for dialogue. We all realize that our focus from now on must be to strengthen instruments for arms control, for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and for conflict prevention and management, and to enhance the capacity to respond to global threats such as organized crime, drug trafficking, terrorism and the question of energy security. We are in agreement as

to the need for a multidimensional approach and a balance between the three dimensions on which the Organization is based.

Italy has particularly emphasized the need to strengthen conflict prevention mechanisms with account taken of new instruments such as those related to early warning, which could be highly effective in dealing with new threats. We also believe that it is important for civil society to participate in the European security dialogue so as to make citizens aware of the efforts being undertaken to strengthen stability and peace in Europe.

Like many other participating States, we would welcome greater co-operation among regional organizations dealing with security in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region with a view to enhancing synergies. The need for greater interaction between international organizations is not new. The Platform for Co-operative Security adopted at the Istanbul Summit in 1999 has already drawn attention to need for organizations to co-ordinate their activities, giving greater definition to the role of each of them.

I should like to return to the great appreciation that my government has for the work of the Greek Chairmanship and to express the hope that its efforts will be rewarded. The adoption of a political declaration for the first time since the Ministerial Council meeting in Porto in 2002 would have been the best confirmation of the degree of consensus that we have managed to achieve. It will also be important to adopt a joint declaration expressing our commitment to security dialogue that seals the political will to achieve greater co-operation by all participating States. I believe, finally, that the procedural decision is of particular relevance as it will enable us to fix the orientations for 2010. It would be useful in this regard after Athens to identify a suitable method for achieving the specific results that we all hope for.

I should like, in conclusion, to welcome the incoming Chairmanship and wish it every success in the difficult task of taking our process into the second, more operative phase. We support the proposal by Astana to hold a summit meeting in 2010, regarding this initiative as being consistent with the desire shared by all of us to strengthen the OSCE. The Organization has not met at the level of Heads of State or Government since the Istanbul Summit in 1999. The process we have embarked upon is highly ambitious and is in need of a major political stimulus. We assure the Kazakh Chairmanship of our support together with the commitment of all participating States to arrive at the summit with a common agenda commensurate with our aspirations.