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**Statement by H.E. the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cyprus Mrs.
Erato Kozakou-Marcoullis at the 15th meeting of the
OSCE Ministerial Council,
Madrid, 29-30 November 2007**

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Secretary General, dear Colleagues,

At the outset, allow me to express our warmest thanks for the excellent Spanish hospitality and our great appreciation for the commitment and professional skill of the Chairmanship in preparing this Ministerial Council. Let me congratulate you, Minister Moratinos, for an outstanding leadership and for the hard work of your dedicated team throughout the year.

The OSCE is based upon a commitment to effective multilateralism - a concept of comprehensive security and an ambitious set of values with equal rights and responsibilities for all participating states. In order to achieve these goals, the OSCE participating states have created an extensive aquis of common norms, principles and commitments across all three dimensions. These politically binding rules apply to all OSCE participating states, and their preservation and strengthening must continue to be our common goal.

In this framework, we underscore the importance of the OSCE election commitments, and recognize the valuable role of ODIHR in election observation and in assisting participating states in implementing these commitments. We are confident that the implementation by ODIHR of the improvements and recommendations contained in the Ministerial Decision on Strengthening the Effectiveness of the OSCE, strengthens further its internationally acknowledged role in election observation.

Strengthening the performance of the OSCE is an essential and continuous process. The finalization of a draft Convention on the International Legal Personality, Legal Capacity, and Privileges and Immunities of the OSCE, is a significant step in this direction. We strongly support the adoption of the Convention and we remain open to further discussions in the course of next year, on the possibility of an OSCE Charter or a Statute.

Adopting the Convention will definitely facilitate the valuable work of the OSCE Field Missions. In this connection, we commend the success and remarkable progress achieved by the OSCE Mission in Croatia.

Regarding the future Chairmanships, Cyprus commends the constructive efforts of the Spanish Chairmanship in reaching a compromise solution that is acceptable to all. Cyprus fully supports the draft decision based on a sequence for 2009, 2010 and 2011.

Mr. Chairman,

As a Mediterranean country, Cyprus attaches great importance in strengthening dialogue and cooperation with our Mediterranean partners. We acknowledge the importance of working together towards increasing the level of involvement of our partners in the mainstream of OSCE activities. The adoption of the decision to establish a Partnership Fund will contribute in giving more impetus and concrete substance to our cooperation. Cyprus is particularly pleased to have the opportunity to host an OSCE regional seminar on money laundering, due to take place in May 2008.

We also had the privilege of chairing the Forum for Security and Cooperation (FSC) in the first session of 2007. Considerable progress was achieved on almost every priority we had set on our agenda. In particular, I wish to refer to the Special Meeting on Combating the Illicit trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons by Air, the first of its kind in the international security arena. In this regard, the promotion of the discussion aiming at the revitalization of the agenda and modalities of the Annual Implementation Assessment Meeting, which led to the introduction of a meeting between the Heads of Verification Centers, should also be mentioned.

Cyprus attaches great importance to the Treaty on Open Skies, as a confidence and security-building measure that provides enhanced transparency in military activities. We deeply regret that Cyprus is still blocked from joining the Treaty by one participating state of our Organization.

In concluding, Mr. Chairman, and while wishing the upcoming Finish Chairmanship every success, let me stress that we in Cyprus long for the day when all the important principles and values upon which our Organisation is founded, will be fully implemented throughout the OSCE region. Our vision is a peaceful and secure Europe without occupation armies, dividing lines, violation of human rights and policies based on discrimination and ethnic or religious separation. This is a vision we should spare no effort to make it a reality. Full respect to international law, the UN Charter and the principles of the OSCE should guide us in all our endeavours to find solutions to international problems in our continent.

Thank you Mr. Chairman