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Delegation of Morocco

**STATEMENT BY  
THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF MOROCCO AT THE  
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

15 January 2009

Madam Chairperson,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me first of all to congratulate you on assuming the Chairmanship of this important organization and to wish you every success in your noble and challenging mission, considering the opportunities offered by the OSCE. This involves the promotion of dialogue in the interests of comprehensive security in the face of the great geopolitical challenges confronting us and the regions of disquiet both within the OSCE area and adjacent to it.

My delegation wishes to draw attention to the importance Morocco attaches to the Mediterranean dimension of the OSCE and to the priority areas of that partnership in the Organization's three dimensions and particularly with regard to migration, tolerance and the combating of all forms of discrimination, and with regard to questions of security, including counter-terrorism and the environmental and economic issues linked to security.

We are confident that under your guidance it will be possible to impart a strong political impetus to this partnership, and we are counting on the Greek Chairmanship in this regard.

Madam Chairperson,

One cannot make reference to the OSCE's Mediterranean partnership in the current international context without mentioning the dramatic situation in Gaza. I should like in this connection to reiterate the resolute and vigorous condemnation by the Kingdom of Morocco of the massive Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip and the disproportionate use of force there. I should also like to recall that at the start of the offensive His Majesty King Mohammed VI as Chairman of the Al-Quds Committee formally appealed to the United Nations Security Council and to the International Quartet to assume their responsibilities and ensure an immediate cessation of violence and the necessary dialogue and negotiations among all the parties concerned.

In spite of United Nations Security Council resolution 1860, in whose adoption my country was actively involved, Israel is continuing its offensive in the Gaza Strip, where at

least 1,054 Palestinians have been killed and more than 4,500 injured, half of them women and children. This resolution calls for unimpeded access to Gaza for the organizations providing food, medical equipment, medicines and fuel. What we can see happening is truly alarming: efforts to provide humanitarian assistance have largely been blocked and those seeking to provide such assistance have been threatened.

It should also be pointed out that on 12 January the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted by a large majority a strongly worded resolution condemning the actions committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Madam Chairperson,

Considering that the Helsinki Final Act proclaims the indivisibility of security in the OSCE area and in the Mediterranean region and recalling that for the participating States of the OSCE any new concept of security should be tailored to the times and specifically centred on the observance of human rights, the OSCE and its relevant institutions, above all the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, are called upon to play their role at this time.

However one views these tragic events, nothing can justify them, nor can anything justify the use by the Israeli army of white phosphorous artillery shells or an unprecedented aggression of this kind, which has struck everywhere and everything, including hospitals, schools, three of them belonging to the United Nations, and mosques, demonstrating a total disregard for the sacred nature of places of worship.

Given its mandate and in the context of its Mediterranean partnership, the OSCE should take a clear stand on the urgent need to stop this massive aggression against civilians and should denounce the human rights violations being perpetrated in Gaza by Israel. Further, it should do so by basing its position on the reports submitted by the international organizations active on the ground, specifically the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, among others.

My delegation therefore calls on the OSCE and the ODIHR, guided by the human rights norms established by the Organization as one of the pillars of its security concept, to condemn clearly and firmly the Israeli offensive in Gaza and the systematic violations of human rights and of international humanitarian conventions, including the Geneva Conventions and their additional protocols, which among other things require the protection of persons not involved in the hostilities (civilians, medical personnel and the personnel of humanitarian organizations) and of those no longer involved in combat (the injured, the sick, the stranded and prisoners of war). Morocco further urges the Organization to call for a stop to the Israeli war machine.

We further call on the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media to respond to the obstacles placed in the way of journalists wishing to enter Gaza and to the infringements of freedom of the press. In this context, I should like to point out that the Foreign Press Association in Israel, which represents more than 400 members of the world's main print and electronic media, has referred to the fact that journalists have been denied access to Gaza as an "unprecedented restriction of freedom of the press" on the part of Israel.

It is clear that if Israel had nothing to be ashamed of, it would have left the door wide open for the foreign press, especially the Western press.

We hope therefore that the Organization will break its silence on what is happening in Gaza, not only because it is a question of security in the Mediterranean region, which is inextricably linked with the security in the OSCE area, but also and mainly because what is happening represents a grave assault on international humanitarian law and because the Organization's silence in the face of this drama is seriously undermining the credibility of the OSCE's Mediterranean partnership in its entirety.