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Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

JOINT STATEMENT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

OSCE Ministerial Council, 1-2 December 2022

Closing Session

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the following 43 participating States: Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States of America, and my own country Finland.

Thirty years ago, in Stockholm, OSCE Ministers emphasised that the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security relates peace, security and prosperity directly to the observance of human rights and democratic freedoms. Today, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine serves as a stark reminder of this – that respect for human rights *within* states, remains essential to lasting security *among* states.

We are appalled by the reports, inter alia under the OSCE's Moscow Mechanism, which have found serious violations of human rights and "clear patterns of violations of international humanitarian law by Russian forces" in Ukraine, including targeted killings of civilians, unlawful detentions, abductions and deportations as well as the use of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual violence. We strongly condemn these grave violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. All alleged war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations of the international humanitarian and human rights law must be duly and swiftly investigated. For our common commitments to regain their force, those responsible must be held to account.

Mr. Chair,

Over the past decades, we have made great strides in advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms. Yet, this year, it is more evident than ever that the fight for freedom, justice and democracy is far from over, and that their defence requires our ongoing vigilance and principled action. Across the region, the space for civil society and independent media is rapidly shrinking, online and offline. Discrimination still excludes many from full, equal and meaningful participation in our societies. And the headlines feature threats and violence against peaceful protesters.

We will continue to speak out when democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms are violated or abused. Whether it is human rights defenders, journalists and media actors facing reprisals for their brave work, or violent crackdowns on peaceful protesters aspiring for democratic change. We will keep pressing for the eradication of torture and other ill-treatment. We will continue

to defend free and fair elections. We will challenge stereotypes and prejudice, combat myths with facts, and promote a world where no individual is left behind or targeted for who they are, for whom they love, for what they look like, or for what they believe or say.

Mr. Chair,

Civil society is the conscience of our countries. It provides a source of ideas and is a key component of an open, inclusive and thriving democracy. We pay tribute to the individuals and civil society organisations that work tirelessly to defend our shared dedication to democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. They deserve our recognition, protection and support.

We highly value the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting as an important platform for the participating states and civil society to review together the implementation of the OSCE human dimension commitments. The Warsaw Human Dimension Conference proved a valuable opportunity for exchange of views with civil society in the regrettable absence of this year's Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. It is important that the HDIM is held next year, and we will support the efforts of the incoming chair to that end. We commend the OSCE autonomous institutions for their efforts to promote and protect human rights, as core components of peaceful, inclusive and democratic societies. Their work, mandates and institutional independence are essential to the promotion and advancement of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law in our region. As many of the conflicts in our region are linked to failures to observe commitments in the human dimension, these efforts are indispensable.

Mr. Chair,

All participating States have categorically declared that commitments in the human dimension are matters of direct and legitimate concern to *all* participating States and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned. We will continue to fight to place implementation of OSCE principles and commitments at the forefront of our work in this organisation for the benefit of all who call the OSCE region their home.

In closing, we would like to thank the OSCE Chairpersonship and the chair of the Human Dimension Committee who work on our behalf to strengthen the Human Dimension – despite challenging times.

I would be grateful if you would attach this statement to the journal of today's meeting.

Thank you.