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**STATEMENT BY
MR. DAVID ANGELL, ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF CANADA, AT THE THIRTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE
OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Malta, 5 December 2024

Allow me to begin by thanking Malta's Chair-in-Office, and his team, for all that they have done throughout this challenging year and for hosting this meeting. Malta has been steadfast in working towards ensuring a strong, principled and functional organization.

Mr. Chair,

Russia's unprovoked and unjustifiable war of aggression against Ukraine, conducted with Belarus' complicity, is now well past the 1000-day mark.

Despite continued efforts to shift the blame for this conflict, as we heard again today, the fact is that Russia's brutal conduct of this war shows its utter disregard for international law and for its OSCE commitments. Russian forces have targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure; used torture and sexual violence against POWs and civilian detainees; and unlawfully deported or transferred thousands of children, all in efforts to erase Ukraine's identity.

We count three SMM observers – Maksym Petrov, Dmytro Shabanov, and Vadym Golda – among those wrongly and arbitrarily detained. Canada calls for their immediate release.

Beyond Ukraine, Russia continues to undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia and Moldova and to engage in malicious hybrid activities aimed at weakening democracies in our region.

Until Russia ends its war of aggression and withdraws its troops from the internationally recognized territory of Ukraine, its policies will threaten European and global security as a whole.

We deplore the recent events in Georgia and condemn the excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators. We call for calm and restraint and constructive political dialogue in Georgia. We urge the Government to comply fully with its commitments to freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly. We agree with the comments by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg on the need to respect human rights, including those concerning sexual orientation.

Mr. Chairperson,

In 1975, a divided and polarized Europe came together to adopt the Helsinki Final Act, the founding document of our Organization. The principles and commitments that all participating States accepted

in Helsinki and in subsequent decisions have been and will once again be the basis for lasting peace and security.

The OSCE has a role to play in preventing conflicts, in managing tensions, in protecting and promoting human rights, fundamental freedom and democracy and in addressing security threats caused by climate change. It falls on participating states to enable the organisation to overcome these challenges, to continue to deliver results for the people of this region.

Its independent institutions and its field missions and programs continue to support participating states in meeting their commitments. We greatly appreciate this work and, furthermore, welcome the way it is being taken forward. Including the work by the conflict prevention center and other OSCE bodies to advance WPS objectives regarding the role of women in peace processes.

As we welcome Finland as the incoming chair-in-office, we thank them for their renewed emphasis on the OSCE toolbox. While security and confidence in the region have been ravaged, many of the tools for rebuilding them already exist. We should not underestimate the OSCE's flexibility and ability to deploy unique mechanisms, which, when fully utilized, will help us rebuild the European security architecture. The tools are at our disposal, and it is up to participating states to keep them relevant for when we will need to deploy them.

Thank you.