



**OSCE/1<sup>st</sup> Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association with emphasis on Freedom of Association**

**16 – 17 April 2015**

**Closing Statement Switzerland**

- Thank you Mr. Chairperson
- The supplementary human dimension meeting on the freedoms of assembly and association has offered a good opportunity for the OSCE participating States to hear expert opinions, exchange experiences and good practices and engage in dialogue with civil society representatives on how to better guarantee these two fundamental freedoms and human rights. We very much welcome these discussions as they have resonated with a number of priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship last year, in particular with regard to discussions on protecting human rights defenders and more closely engaging with civil society.
- We have heard a number of very useful recommendations on how to better implement OSCE human dimension commitments regarding the freedoms of assembly and association at the national level. And once again, we have seen room for improvement in all participating States; my country is no exception to that. Switzerland stays committed to further improving and perfecting the realization of these rights and freedoms at the national level. To that end, we have repeatedly cooperated with international organizations and continue to do so. Among other initiatives, Switzerland invited ODIHR to monitor peaceful assemblies in Switzerland in 2011 and 2012.
- In an effort to lead by example, during the 2014 Chairmanship, Switzerland initiated a self-evaluation on the level of implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments. Among the five areas covered was also the freedom of assembly, and indeed we have heard during this SHDM that there are concerns about the allegedly discouraging effect that some regulations at the cantonal level in Switzerland may have on assemblies by requiring authorizations rather than just notifications for public gatherings.
- Notwithstanding the legitimate concerns raised by civil society, organizers of unapproved but peaceful assemblies have traditionally NOT been penalized or reprimanded in any way. However, we have taken this concern very seriously and informed the respective authorities.
- In closing, I would like to recall once again the usefulness of the self-evaluation by the Chairmanship. Switzerland very much welcomes the Serbian Chairmanship's efforts to embark on a self-evaluation of their own and encourages all future Chairmanships to undergo the same process. In view of the tone of the discussions here, the naming and shaming that has been ongoing, as our rapporteur has noted, we may all benefit from a somewhat more self-reflective and self-critical approach in order to truly learn how we can improve the implementation of our commitments.
- I would also like to take this opportunity to thank once again all the panelists for their valuable contributions as well as the Serbian Chairmanship and ODIHR for organizing this very important meeting.
- Thank you.