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***“Creating a security community for the benefit of everyone – Priorities of the
Swiss OSCE chairmanship in 2014”***

Special Permanent Council
of the OSCE
Vienna, 2 July 2013

Minister, dear colleague,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is something special for me to address you here at the Hofburg. For centuries, the history and security of Europe have been influenced by decisions made in these walls.

Almost 200 years ago, there was the Congress of Vienna, which combined intensive negotiations about a new European order with lavish evening balls at the Hofburg. For the Swiss, who were little familiar with monarchic glamour, the Congress of Vienna still became a memorable event. For the first time, the European powers recognized Switzerland's perpetual neutrality and declared it to be "in the true interests of Europe as a whole". To this day, neutrality has remained an important foundation of Swiss foreign policy.

The Hofburg is now also the home of the OSCE – which is a beacon of security and stability. Switzerland is strongly committed to this security organisation. One reason is the inclusive character of the OSCE, which unites Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian countries under one roof.

Another reason is its security approach, which reflects much of what Switzerland's foreign policy stands for.

"Cooperative security" *à la OSCE* emphasizes dialogue, engagement, and reassurance. It is not security *against* someone but security that is *jointly achieved*.

It is based on the premise that *no state can be secure* as long as *one state is insecure*. Switzerland could not agree more.

We live in a world marked by multipolarity, rapid change, and great uncertainty. The OSCE model of security is a timely answer to many of the challenges that we jointly face. It seeks to manage diversity constructively by encouraging participating states to identify common ground.

The OSCE model is about jointly defining and implementing norms. It is about increasing stability through confidence-building and conflict-resolution efforts. It is about both improving relations among states and advancing the well-being of individuals. And it is characterized by a comprehensive notion of security: it links politico-military security to economic and environmental cooperation as well as to human rights.

Collectively, these elements render the OSCE a *unique* and *highly relevant* organization. An organization with a human touch, an organization at the service of the people. And this is precisely what politics should be about: improving the prospects for people – for individuals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The OSCE no doubt faces major challenges. Building consensus among 57 states is time-consuming and complex. It is even more difficult when there are trust deficits.

Regional integration processes in the West and in the East raise questions as to the specific roles of the OSCE. Progress in the resolution of protracted conflicts is still measured in inches rather than miles. And the economic crisis has brought new hardship and uncertainty to some European countries. Too many young people lack socio-economic opportunities today.

But there is no point in lamenting about challenges. Rather, I encourage all participating states to make their own constructive contributions that enable the OSCE to fully tap its potential. An effective OSCE is to the benefit of each and every one of us.

Our common goal is to create a security community embracing the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian region. The best way forward is to approach this goal step by step. If we focus on the art of the possible, and if each of us is determined to search for those things that unite us rather than those things that may divide us, if we all try to *agree to agree*, even on limited progress, and if possible on bigger steps, I am convinced that the OSCE community can accomplish a lot together.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Switzerland is a dedicated participant of the OSCE. It is a privilege for us to chair this organization. By taking the helm next year, we wish to underline our engagement for security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond. And we seek to express our interest in a *strong OSCE* that enables its participating states to live up to common values and defend joint interests.

With its consensus-oriented and inclusive political system, which requires listening to all, Switzerland itself could be regarded as a “Mini-OSCE”. I am confident that our experience in taking into account multiple interests and hammering out compromises will help us build – with your support – some bridges in the OSCE too.

Switzerland was a bridge-builder already in the early days of the CSCE. Together with other neutral and non-aligned states, it played an important role on the road to the Helsinki Final Act. It has remained an active participant of the OSCE ever since and chaired the organization for the first time in 1996.

The fact that we will now have a consecutive chairmanship with Serbia speaks volumes as to how much Europe has changed since the mid-1990s! I am delighted that the joint bid by Serbia and Switzerland for a consecutive chairmanship has met your approval. And I am very happy that my colleague Ivan Mrkic of Serbia is present here today.

Our common preparations for the two consecutive chairmanships are well advanced – thank you, Ivan and your team, for your constructive cooperation!

Switzerland considers Serbia to be a key actor for regional cooperation and long term stability in the Western Balkans. We also regard Serbia as a major bridge-builder between countries of the eastern and the western parts of Europe. The EU's decision to start accession talks – for which we congratulate Serbia and the EU – indicates how much Serbia has transformed on its road to Europe.

Switzerland and Serbia will coordinate closely during our two chairmanships. Although each of us will be responsible for one year as chair alone, we want to maximize coordination so as to provide *more continuity* and *planning certainty* for the OSCE and its participating states. We see this as an opportunity – and we hope it may become a model for later chairmanships too.

Our two countries have agreed on a Biennial Joint Work Plan for the years 2014 and 2015. We have defined a number of priorities which we will pursue during these two years. You all have been consulted about this Work Plan. Your positive feedback has reassured us that we are on the right track.

There will also be close cooperation on *Personal* and *Special Representatives*. They will be appointed under the Swiss Chairmanship and then be re-appointed by my Serbian colleague, thus serving for two consecutive years. Their longer period in office should help increase their impact on the ground.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

“Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone.”

This is the essence of what the Swiss chairmanship will aspire to. It is our motto, which hopefully will inspire you as much as it will guide us in 2014 and beyond.

We have identified a series of objectives and priorities for the Swiss chairmanship. You find them displayed in a tableau that was distributed to you. These objectives and priorities are in line with the Joint Work Plan with Serbia.

Let me briefly outline them. Switzerland will pursue three objectives as chair. We seek

- to foster security and stability in Europe and beyond – this includes the Euro-Atlantic as well as the Eurasian region.
- to improve people's lives – (that is: to improve the conditions for people to prosper and live a life in dignity)
- and to strengthen the OSCE and increase its capacity to take action.

In three words: security, freedom, and responsibility. Three values that are very important for Switzerland and act as guiding principles for our foreign policy.

We will seek to advance these values and objectives by focusing on a number of priority issues.

Concerning security and stability, an obvious priority will be the Western Balkans. The agreements between Belgrade and Pristina imply major opportunities. They

have opened space for better regional cooperation, for reconciliation, and for a political normalisation in northern Kosovo. We would welcome if the OSCE could still expand its valuable contributions in Kosovo – and this beyond election day.

The OSCE must continue to play an important role in the Western Balkans. We intend to support respective initiatives. This includes a more effective horizontal cooperation between the six OSCE Missions in the region.

A second regional focus will be the Southern Caucasus. Supported by a Special Representative, the Swiss Chairmanship will do its best to advance political dialogue and confidence-building measures between all parties. We intend to continue the established formats of conflict resolution, such as the Geneva Talks and the Minsk Group. We will support them as much as possible while also encouraging them to think of new ideas.

A thematic security priority for Switzerland will be the modernization of the Vienna Document that covers confidence- and security-building measures between participating States. After the valuable technical updates in the Vienna Document 2011, we should now aim for substantial steps to bring the regime in line with today's security environment.

There is also need for new thinking on conventional arms control in Europe. Switzerland is ready to support the OSCE's role as a sort of market place to exchange views and ideas on this issue and stimulate debates in other fora.

Improving governance in the security sector belongs to the core competences of the OSCE. Switzerland will encourage the OSCE to advance its conceptual work in this field so as to remain a front runner.

As for the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, Switzerland stands ready to further promote this document, which sets valuable standards for the democratic control of armed and security forces.

Just as important as our security objective is our second objective of improving people's lives. The OSCE must be an organization for the benefit of everyone. From Vancouver to Vladivostok, men, women, and children must be able to live their lives in dignity. The OSCE has an important role to play in this.

Switzerland would like to advance the implementation of all commitments in the Human Dimension. Over the past forty years, the OSCE has developed a solid body of commitments to promote human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. At the Astana Summit in 2010, we all emphasized the necessity to fully implement these commitments.

It is our *duty* to live up to this pledge. The implementation of commitments must be improved, whether they concern combating torture, respecting human rights in the fight against terrorism, protecting human rights defenders, or respecting the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The link between security and responses to natural disasters could be an area for greater involvement of the OSCE – in cooperation with other organisations. Common work on better prevention and a more reliable management of natural disasters could be to the benefit of all participating states. At the same time, common action in this field may well develop into an effective tool of confidence-building.

We also seek to support OSCE efforts at combating transnational threats. Defining common responses to transnational threats such as terrorism or cyber attacks potentially constitutes a unifying project for the OSCE – and will be to the benefit of the people.

Responding to transnational threats is a global challenge. But it might have particular relevance in the Central Asia region, especially in the context of ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Fostering security in Central Asia is in the interest of all OSCE states.

As we indicate in our tableau, the priority of combating transnational threats is of a transversal nature that affects not just the value of freedom, but also the values of security and responsibility.

Switzerland will organize a conference on counterterrorism in 2014, in accordance with the Dublin Ministerial Decision of December 2012. One of the specific topics we would like to address during our Chairmanship is the policy of providing a disincentive to kidnapping by paying no ransom. Strong international cooperation is essential for such a policy to work. Perhaps the OSCE could play a role in this and develop further initiatives by the G8, the Global-Counterterrorism Forum, and the UN.

Switzerland will also examine, in accordance with the same Ministerial Decision, the possibilities of holding an event on combating the threat of illicit drugs.

As for our third objective of strengthening the OSCE, the "Helsinki plus forty"-agenda will be a major focus for the Swiss chairmanship. We are grateful to the Ukrainian chair and the Secretariat for their efforts to kick off and structure the process.

We particularly welcome the recent creation of an academic network in this context. We believe that academic institutions and think tanks can play a seminal role here.

Based on this work, we hope to identify elements of a reform of the OSCE which could meet consensus in 2014 already and pave the way for further developments. My colleague, Minister Mrkic, will elaborate on "Helsinki plus forty" in a minute.

One concrete step to increase the effectiveness of the OSCE is by strengthening its mediation capacities. We were pleased to note that a Swiss mediation expert was recruited for the new position of Mediation Support Officer in the OSCE's Conflict Prevention Centre. Next year we will see how these mediation capacities can be used and eventually reinforced.

For an organisation that deals with conflicts and conflict prevention, it is a major asset to have in-house expertise on mediation support. Switzerland will be happy to share its long-standing experience in this field.

Finally, we attach great importance to a regular and more systematic involvement of civil society. The OSCE is performing quite well in this regard already compared to other international organizations. But it *can* and *must* do even better.

Switzerland will establish a continuous dialogue with civil society throughout the year, and in all OSCE regions. NGOs have a *major role* to play in assisting the OSCE and participating States to ensure full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law.

The OSCE and its participating states need to listen and respond to the needs of the people. The best insurance against a new East-West divide in Europe is to give a voice to the young. Creating perspectives for young people is one of the most important tasks of politics. It is the more urgent today as youth unemployment in some countries is of magnitudes that are deeply worrying.

Switzerland's chairmanship will be accompanied by a "Model OSCE" consisting of one young representative of each participating state. We are confident that such a *youth forum* will help us better understand the hopes and expectations of young people throughout the OSCE area. And we hope that such a forum will enable us to render the OSCE values better known among the young generations in our countries.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

We will discuss Switzerland's priorities in more detail here at the Hofburg at the beginning of 2014. I would like to stress at this point that due to time constraints I have only highlighted our main priorities today. There are many other important issues that we will also pursue. They are included in our Joint Work Plan that you have received.

There is much that we can accomplish together, if we agree to build bridges. For us to successfully work in the directions that I have outlined, we will need your help, your trust, and your commitment.

I thank Secretary General Zannier for his commitment and inspiring enthusiasm to make the OSCE fit for the future.

I would also like to express my appreciation for the great efforts of the Ukrainian chairmanship.

Last but not least, my thanks go to my Serbian colleague and the Serbian delegation. There is an elegant and powerful river called the Inn that has its source in the Swiss Alps. It runs eastwards into Austria and at some stage enters the Danube – which carries the Inn waters through Vienna onto Belgrade.

This river is a symbol for our partnership as consecutive chairs of the OSCE. Serbia and Switzerland have embarked on a joint adventure and sit in the same boat – and I have every reason to believe that our common boat will run “full steam ahead”.

Switzerland is looking forward to working with all of you in 2014. I thank you all for your hard work to bring the OSCE area closer to a security community for the benefit of everyone. We will do our utmost to further a spirit of trust and cooperation and build bridges with our chairmanship.

You can count on us. We will also count on you!

Thank you for your attention.