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**STATEMENT BY
THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

14 January 2010

**On the occasion of the inauguration of the Kazakh Chairmanship of the
OSCE by President Nazarbayev and Foreign Minister Saudabayev**

Mr. Chairman,

Switzerland congratulates Kazakhstan, and the Secretary of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Saudabayev personally, on the assumption of the Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010. This is a historic moment since for the first time a Central Asian country holds the Chairmanship. We are convinced that the concerns of that region will, thanks to the Kazakh Chairmanship, find greater prominence in the OSCE's agenda. In addition we hope that this will also provide an opportunity for more intensive intra-regional co-operation among the Central Asian States.

Central Asia's importance within the OSCE has grown steadily in recent years. Not least of all given the security-policy challenges in the area bordering on Afghanistan, the OSCE's activities in this region must be further stepped up. It is not merely a question here of dealing with new threats but generally a matter of improving the basic principles for stability and security and promoting best practices in all three dimensions of the OSCE. The field missions represent an important instrument to this end, and we are pleased to note that Kazakhstan recognizes their significance.

Let me now say a few words about the programme outlined by the Chairmanship. We welcome the importance accorded to the politico-military dimension and to the issues of hard security in particular. We regard new impulses in the area of arms control as a priority need in this context, in the same way as an improvement of the mechanisms for conflict prevention and crisis management.

An overriding objective must be the renewed strengthening of confidence among the participating States, which is a goal of the Corfu Process. We hope that the Corfu Process will achieve greater momentum under the aegis of the Kazakh Chairmanship and that it will prove possible to make that Process result-oriented with the aid of clear priorities. Provided that the participating States show the necessary political will and willingness to compromise, there will be a chance to make greater use once again of the unique opportunities afforded by the OSCE as a platform for dialogue on security policy.

The convening of a summit meeting is in this connection an interesting option for pooling our efforts. In principle, therefore, we support the Kazakh plans for holding a summit meeting of this kind. We do, however, believe that there is much work to be done in terms of structure and substance if a summit is really to give a fresh impetus to the Organization.

For Switzerland the human dimension is of great importance because over the long term national and international stability is possible only on the basis of democratic institutions and respect for fundamental freedoms. What is more, the OSCE has here at its disposal excellent technical know-how within its specialized institutions such as the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which thanks to their independence are particularly effective in their work. In the current situation, election monitoring, freedom of the press and tolerance deserve special attention. In view of Kazakhstan's rich experience in intercultural dialogue, we welcome the plan to hold a conference on tolerance and non-discrimination in Astana at the end of June.

A topic to which the OSCE should devote even more attention is the way in which border-straddling national minorities are dealt with, something that in the past has often given rise to conflicts. The Bolzano Recommendations of the High Commissioner on National Minorities already provide us with a useful instrument for preventing future conflicts.

The OSCE participating States have undertaken political commitments in the area of human rights and the rule of law. Relevant legally-binding commitments also fall within the competence of another regional organization, of which most OSCE participating States are a member, namely the Council of Europe. On 18 November 2009, Switzerland assumed Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for six months. The Swiss Chairmanship will focus particular attention on the urgently needed reform of the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, so that in the future this court can continue to operate as a guarantor of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe.

The Swiss Chairmanship accords great importance to co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE. There is already close co-operation in five areas – election monitoring, combating terrorism, trafficking in human beings, national minorities, and tolerance and non-discrimination. Synergies have already been achieved in these areas, but they need to be improved even further. Co-operation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe will profit from the meeting between the Chairmen and Secretaries General of both organizations scheduled for 5 March in Geneva.

In conclusion, we should like to wish Kazakhstan every success in chairing our Organization and we are looking forward to good co-operation among the delegations here in Vienna.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.