



Permanent Council of 7 March 2013

### **Meeting of the Mediterranean Contact Group on 1 March 2013**

On behalf of the Swiss Chair of the Mediterranean Contact Group, I would like to inform the Permanent Council about the meeting on 1 March 2013:

The main topic of the meeting was “Promoting Tolerance and Non-Discrimination by Strengthening Interfaith Dialogue”. This topic had been proposed by Jordan. One of the guest speakers was Father Nabil Haddad, the director of the Jordanian Interfaith Coexistence Center in Amman. During his presentation, Father Haddad described the rise of religious influence in the Middle East and in Northern Africa. According to him, the profound changes in the Arab world in the last few years have politicized religion, with political parties of a religious background gaining influence. Father Haddad presented the Jordanian model of co-existence between the different faiths and called for an alliance to support the moderate religious voices all over the region. Ms Hohenberg, the head of ODIHR’s department on tolerance and non-discrimination, informed about ODIHR’s activities to promote fundamental rights as well as tolerance and non-discrimination for an enabling environment for dialogue between the faiths. She also announced that the meeting of the European Council of Religious Leaders in May here at the Hofburg will be a next possibility to pursue the discussion on this topic. A third speaker, Imam Pallavicini, a representative of the European Council of Religious Leaders, unfortunately had to cancel last minute. In the lively debate that followed the two speakers the relevance of harmony between the different faiths for security was underlined. Participating States and partners highlighted the different initiatives to address these challenges, namely the UN Alliance of Civilizations.

The Contact Group Meeting was also an occasion for Germany, Switzerland, and the Secretary General of the OSCE to launch the translation of the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security into Arabic. As Secretary

General Zannier pointed out, such a translation had been suggested by the Arab League.

The next meeting of the Contact Group will take place on 19 April 2013 and will feature the subject Mediation in the Mediterranean Region, as well as CPC's activities with respect to mediation and mediation support. It will be co-organized with Morocco. At this stage, we would like to convey to the delegations how much our partners appreciate the participation at ambassador's level at the Contact Group Meetings.