

PC.DEL/926/08
30 October 2008

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

Delegation of Switzerland

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

30 October 2008

**In response to Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, the new Director of the Office
for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairman,

We too should like to warmly welcome Ambassador Lenarčič to the Permanent Council and thank him most sincerely for his comprehensive and substantive report.

Switzerland agrees with Ambassador Lenarčič that the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), which was recently held for the 13th time, has once again demonstrated its significance as an important platform for human rights issues. The fact is that in Warsaw, as is rarely the case elsewhere, government and civil society representatives meet on an equal footing. It would, however, be most welcome if all the participants in the meeting were given more opportunities for open discussions than has so far been possible within the framework of the plenum. This could further motivate participating States to send their respective experts to Warsaw for the HDIM. In this context, the question arises as to whether it would be possible when organizing the 2009 meeting for the many side events to be further enhanced and focused.

Among the activities of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) listed by Ambassador Lenarčič, election observation is of particular political importance, as can be seen from the at times heated discussions regarding possible adjustments to the existing mechanisms. Switzerland's experiences during the observation of its national elections by the ODIHR in 2007 were positive ones. It would therefore like to encourage the ODIHR to retain the essence of its tried and tested methods without hindering their further development. One development to be contemplated, in Switzerland's opinion, concerns the thematic corpus of commitments involved in monitoring an election. In view of the conflicts as to how an election observation mission is to be carried out, the discussion of new commitments to supplement the old ones has come to a standstill. At the same time, the internal expert discussions on guidelines for monitoring electronic voting are advanced and could be exploited politically. Irrespective of these questions, we should like, at this point, to once again acknowledge the ODIHR's great achievements in the interests of younger States without a democratic tradition in supporting their efforts towards the desired goal of free and fair elections.

The controversy surrounding this “key task” should not distract us from other areas where the ODIHR has delivered real results. For example, in the area of trafficking in human beings and gender issues the ODIHR has presented innovative approaches on the basis of various studies and in close co-operation with non-governmental organizations, approaches which are also valued by other international actors and co-operation partners. This work benefits not only governments but also, above all, individuals within the OSCE, although naturally this presupposes that the participating States put the aforementioned approaches into practice.

In conclusion, I should like on behalf of Switzerland to sincerely thank Ambassador Lenarčič and his team for their work and to wish him every success in all that lies ahead of him.

Thank you for your attention.