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Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND
AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE OSCE ANNUAL SECURITY
REVIEW CONFERENCE**

Vienna, 23 June 2009

Madam Chairperson,

On behalf of the Swiss delegation, I should like to thank the Greek Chairmanship and the Conflict Prevention Centre for their excellent preparations for this year's Annual Security Review Conference. We should also like to thank His Excellency, Foreign Minister Lavrov, for the stimulating and informative introduction to our discussions.

This year's Conference deserves particular attention.

Since our last meeting there has been an increase in tensions within the OSCE area. These tensions escalated in August 2008 into an armed confrontation between two OSCE participating States. Not quite a year ago, in this same hall, we discussed the dangerous signs pointing to this conflict. Unfortunately, we were at that time unable to prevent the subsequent resort to arms. In the meantime, the consequences of that war weigh heavily on our Organization.

I should like to repeat in this context that Switzerland greatly regrets that it was not possible to reach a consensus on the extension of the OSCE presence in Georgia, considering that the potential for conflict in the region remains dangerously high. A major effort is needed to reduce this potential and promote reconstruction. The OSCE should have a very important role to play in this effort. We very much hope that the closure of the Mission to Georgia will not further destabilize the security situation there and will not impair too severely the OSCE's capacity to act in the area of security.

Madam Chairperson,

Our common priority today and tomorrow must be to strengthen and, where necessary, further develop the existing arms control and disarmament mechanisms along with confidence-and security-building measures.

In this context, neutral Switzerland is carefully following the growing interest over the last few months in a broad-based dialogue on European security policy. We welcome the Russian initiative, put forward over a year ago, calling for a new security architecture, an initiative that deserves credit for having triggered this dialogue. As a political platform for this dialogue the OSCE is, in our view, particularly well suited thanks to its geographical

coverage extending from Vancouver to Vladivostok, its multidimensional co-operative security concept and its *acquis* of confidence- and security-building measures.

Through a more vigorously pursued security dialogue within the OSCE, backed by a clear political will, we would also provide proof that, for all the justified criticism of certain shortcomings, we continue to think it important that we improve co-operation in our Organization. I should like to add here that the OSCE is important not only for neutral countries like Switzerland that do not belong to any alliances but also for all participating States because it provides the only forum in which every one can participate in discussions, negotiations and decision-making as partners with equal rights.

We shall soon be holding an informal meeting of our foreign ministers in Corfu, a meeting that is to take place at the end of this week at the invitation of the OSCE Chairmanship. We greatly welcome this initiative by Foreign Minister Bakoyannis, which has imparted a fresh impetus to our dialogue.

At the same time, we must keep in mind that there are still considerable divergences in the positions taken in this discussion and that accordingly we can hardly expect rapid and concrete results. We therefore think it important first of all that the foreign ministers in Corfu agree on the future setting and modalities for the continuation of this dialogue so as to produce a genuine process, of the kind with which we are well familiar from the past.

In this context, our Conference affords us a favourable opportunity to clarify certain questions and possibly even reach agreement on individual points by tomorrow evening. It may be that we shall be able to make a contribution leading to useful decisions.

There are indeed voices criticizing our Organization, justifying this by, among other things, referring to negative developments. We should not remain silent in the face of this criticism. It should rather become part of our dialogue in our common concern to improve the OSCE's ability to act. For the fact is that nowhere so much as in the observance of security-related commitments has our Organization set standards that, despite crises and a war, have by no means outlived their usefulness. The fact that the OSCE's security concept is comprehensive and based on a multidimensional approach that includes the key principles of democracy, the rule of law and protection of human rights remains for us a commitment and represents the strength of that OSCE for which we all stand.

Madam Chairperson,

Switzerland takes seriously its commitments in the OSCE's first dimension and applies them conscientiously and punctiliously. These commitments and provisions have thoroughly proved themselves. How the OSCE participating States deal with them is an important gauge for assessing the state of security-policy relations within our Organization.

We are looking forward to a lively and substantive discussion, a dynamic exchange of ideas, first tentative insights looking towards Corfu and agreement on important points.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.