



Opening Address by

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2015 OSCE Asian Conference:

**The Changing Global Security Environment and
Visions of Multilateral Security Co-Operation in Asia**

**“The OSCE as a bridge between Europe and Asia
and an inspiration for cooperative security in the
Asia Pacific”**

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Ministers

Secretary General

Excellencies

Ladies and gentlemen

It is an honour and pleasure to welcome you all to this conference. As the former Chairmanship of the OSCE, Switzerland is chairing the Asian Contact Group of the OSCE this year and is delighted to co-host the 2015 OSCE Asian Conference.

We attach great importance to the OSCE's relations with its Asian partners (that is, with Afghanistan, Australia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, and Thailand). I particularly would like to welcome Mr Patimapragorn and the delegates from the other Partner States to this conference. And I wish to extend Switzerland's sincere gratitude to my colleague Yun Byung-se and his team for their excellent hospitality. Our appreciation also goes to the Serbian Chairmanship of the OSCE and to Secretary General Zannier and the OSCE Secretariat for their contributions to this important annual event.

It is a novelty that three ministers are participating together at this gathering. I take this as a sign of recognition of the growing importance of security dialogue and security cooperation between Europe and Asia.

Both in the Euro-Atlantic / Eurasian area and in the Asia Pacific, security issues have become more pressing lately.

The risk of political and military polarisation is growing in both regions. In addition, we are confronted with a multitude of crises around the globe and with challenges that no state can cope with on its own.

As the security environment is changing, efforts to strengthen cooperative security should be a priority. Our discussions in this format today can contribute to this.

As last year's Chairman of the OSCE, I gained first-hand experience of how useful cooperative security is to mitigate tensions.

The OSCE was – and still is – severely affected by the Ukraine crisis: as war returned to Europe and OSCE principles were violated, we had to recognise how fragile European security is and how far away from a security community we still are.

But the OSCE has also been able to demonstrate its value during this crisis. Its cooperative security approach has put the OSCE at the forefront of de-escalation efforts in Ukraine. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission and its participation in the Trilateral Contact Group's efforts to find a political solution are only the two most prominent of what is a broad range of OSCE measures in Ukraine.

Why was the OSCE able to take on a constructive role in the Ukraine crisis? Let me just mention a few characteristics of the cooperative security model that I believe made a positive difference: the OSCE is an

inclusive and consensus-based organisation; it provides a platform for permanent, structured dialogue; it applies a comprehensive approach to security; and it has developed tools for conflict prevention and resolution.

That is to say: cooperative security is about engagement and building bridges. It does not stand in the way of bilateral security ties or alliances but provides an extra layer of security. Cooperative security is a strategy of reassurance that seeks to increase predictability and mutual understanding, and enhance everyone's level of security.

This year, Switzerland remains heavily involved in the OSCE's crisis management in Ukraine. Together with our Troika colleagues from Serbia and Germany, we have also set up a Panel of Eminent Persons to foster debate on how to reconsolidate European security and strengthen the OSCE as an anchor of cooperative security.

But Switzerland is not only committed to strengthening cooperative security and building bridges with the OSCE area. We also seek to strengthen the OSCE as a bridge between Europe and Asia. And we seek to promote cooperative security in the Asia Pacific.

Allow me to make a few observations on these last two points:

First, the OSCE as a bridge between Europe and Asia.

Security in the OSCE region is inseparably linked to that of its neighbours. The same holds true for security in the Asia Pacific. This is why Switzerland believes that strengthening security dialogue and cooperation between Europe and Asia will be to the benefit of all. The OSCE should be a bridge not just between the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian area and but also between Europe and further parts of Asia. The Asian Contact Group has an important role to play in this regard.

The OSCE is about both dialogue and common action. The 57 participating States and the Asian Partner States should jointly advance on both accounts. This conference is a key venue for dialogue. We should also use it to discuss concrete ideas for further cooperation and joint actions.

A solid basis for cooperation has already been established: there has been much appreciated support by partners for the SMM. The OSCE Border Management Staff College in Tajikistan has also benefited from partner support lately. Asian Partner States have participated in election observation missions by the ODIHR. And there are cases of secondments by partners to the OSCE.

All this comes on the back of a tradition of sharing experiences within the Asian Contact Group on a range of issues that include responding to transnational threats, managing borders, combating trafficking in human beings, and building democratic institutions.

There are potential further issues for cooperation that we should explore at this conference:

Let me start with Disaster Risk Reduction. Last year, the Swiss Chairmanship firmly put this issue on the OSCE agenda. Disasters can affect the security of states and communities. Promoting OSCE cooperation in reducing disaster risks, through measures of prevention and the strengthening of respective national and local capacities, can build confidence and remains a priority of Switzerland. Asian Partners have much DRR expertise they could bring into the OSCE. With ASEAN's Committee on Disaster Management, there is scope for a rewarding exchange of views on this matter.

Another issue for cooperation concerns the cybersphere. The OSCE has been a pioneer in defining confidence-building measures for the cyber domain. It would be useful to have an exchange of views on regional approaches in the field of cyber CBMs between the OSCE and the ASEAN Regional Forum, which is covering this issue too.

Then there is the threat of terrorism, which concerns all our societies and which can only be addressed effectively through cooperation. Last year, Switzerland sought to increase coordinated efforts within the OSCE to address the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters.

Joint workshops with OSCE partners on issues such as countering violent extremism seem an idea worth

exploring. I may add that Switzerland will co-sponsor an ASEM symposium on Counter Radicalisation that will be organised by Malaysia in October. And I wish to encourage all countries present here to support the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, a recently launched Geneva-based public-private partnership that supports community-level initiatives to counter violent extremism. We should all work together to address the drivers of violent extremism with a long-term approach. On a different but related note, let me add that Switzerland will host an ASEM seminar on human rights and human trafficking later this year.

Ladies and gentlemen

There is potential for expanding cooperation in the framework of the OSCE Asian Contact Group. Switzerland would also welcome it if other Asian countries were to join this Group. And, as indicated in the examples I just mentioned, we believe that enhanced cooperation between the OSCE and multilateral security formats in the Asia Pacific would be beneficial to both regions. Dialogues between European and Asian security organizations should not only be held in the form of staff talks but also include the political level – for example in the form of Chairmanship dialogues.

This brings me to my final point: The OSCE is not only a bridge between Europe and Asia that can contribute to a strategic dialogue between the two regions – the OSCE

can also be a source of inspiration in efforts to strengthen cooperative security among countries in the Asia Pacific.

To be sure: the Helsinki Final Act and the OSCE model of regional security cannot simply be exported to other regions. And it is for the Asian countries themselves to decide whether and how to implement visions of multilateral security cooperation in their region.

But two things are clear to me: the Asia Pacific region can benefit from the extra layer of security that cooperative security approaches provide; and the OSCE cooperative security model does offer some insights that may be useful for Asian contexts too.

I addressed this issue at the Shangri-La security dialogue in Singapore two days ago. There, I pointed to the importance of inclusive and regular dialogue (at all levels), of confidence-building measures, and of comprehensive security cooperation. I also argued that cooperative security will be bolstered if common principles can be worked out, and if mechanisms for crisis prevention and crisis response can be put in place.

The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperative Initiative, which will be discussed at a side-event later today, is very much in line with the OSCE spirit. As Europe's own experience has shown, building trust by cultivating a habit of dialogue and cooperation takes time, vision and leadership. Switzerland stands ready to assist with

advancing NAPCI – or any other cooperative security initiative – whenever our support is requested.

The bottom line is this: Cooperative security should not be made dependent on the existence of trust; rather, cooperative security is a vehicle to create trust.