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**STATEMENT BY
THE SWISS DELEGATION AT THE OPENING SESSION OF THE
OSCE CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND ON OTHER
FORMS OF INTOLERANCE**

Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005

Mr. Chairman,

The OSCE has managed to establish itself within a short period of time as a central international forum for the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination. It recognized early on that racism and anti-Semitism represent a danger that strikes at the heart of our free and democratic society. We should like to thank our Spanish hosts for the opportunity, in this symbolic setting, to make an unequivocal stand once again against anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance.

Switzerland too is not immune to incidents motivated by racism or anti-Semitism. While there has been no marked increase recently at least in the number of cases coming before the courts, a latent breeding ground for hatred still appears to exist, which has led to attacks on or the desecration of Jewish institutions in particular. It behoves us to reiterate our condemnation of these incidents in the strongest terms.

Switzerland espouses a secular concept of society that is designed to be equally open to religious and non-religious members of society and must be capable of assimilating all religious communities without discrimination. The fact that immediately after the incidents mentioned the local population and representatives of all religious communities spontaneously united in expressing their sympathy for the victims and offering them their support could perhaps be seen as evidence of the success of the policy that Switzerland has pursued for many years. At the heart of this policy is the view that racism represents a problem for society and must be combated in a comprehensive manner. In doing so, it is important that all victims are treated equally. In order to protect the dignity of all potential victims and the foundations of our society, racial discrimination is punishable in Switzerland as an *Offizialdelikt* (an offence for which proceedings are brought directly by the public prosecutor's department).

Racism cannot be combated through the criminal justice system alone. Awareness-raising, prevention and intervention are the three pillars on which our long-term concept is based. In addition to the measures taken in the cantons, the Federal Commission against Racism ensures that the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination is observed at the national level and a special office for combating racism (*Fachstelle für Rassismussbekämpfung*) co-ordinates the measures and can also

provide financial support for civil society projects. In the area of education, we should also mention our membership of the Task Force for International Co-operation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF). We are pleased that thanks to close collaboration between this group and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the experience and expertise of the ITF can also be utilized in the wider OSCE context. Lastly, Switzerland welcomes the co-operation with the Council of Europe, which provides us with a useful view from the outside.

When implementing these measures, it is important at all times to keep in mind the terms of reference developed by the OSCE. The special programme developed by the ODIHR to promote tolerance deserves our particular attention. The initial budget for the programme is now available, and it is our responsibility to provide a stable financial basis for these important activities in the longer term. We welcome the appointment of the three special representatives of the Chairman-in-Office, who, although given differing tasks, must, in our opinion, endeavour to co-operate closely with a view to gradually incorporating the various efforts to combat intolerance and discrimination into an overall concept. This would give a clear profile to the role of the special representatives and increase the effectiveness of their office.

We have committed ourselves to exchanging reliable information on anti-Semitic incidents and other hate-motivated crimes with other participating States. This exchange of information supplements the various reporting responsibilities that many States have assumed within other international bodies or by way of treaties under international law. Co-ordination of these reports could only increase the effectiveness of these measures. We should therefore like once more to propose co-ordination with other international organizations with a view to harmonizing the reporting.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.