



*Check against Delivery*

## **Statement by**

**Didier Burkhalter**

**Head of the Swiss Federal  
Department of Foreign Affairs**

**“As Switzerland’s Troika membership ends, our  
strong support for the OSCE will continue”**

**22nd OSCE Ministerial Council**

**Belgrade, 3 December 2015**

Mr Chairman  
Dear friends and colleagues  
Ladies and gentlemen

As we gather here 40 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, there are two things to note, one challenging and one positive:

First, the challenging: European security is not in good shape today. The European order we have built together is being questioned; common commitments are being violated. The Ukraine crisis is not settled, and the issue of Crimea remains to be solved. Rebuilding trust is a difficult but essential task that requires much political will, patience and perseverance.

Second, and on a positive note: three years of close involvement in OSCE work through the Troika have given me ample evidence of just how useful our organisation is. With its cooperative and comprehensive security model, the OSCE is an indispensable instrument for addressing the common challenges we are facing. The OSCE has proven invaluable both as a platform for dialogue and as an operational facilitator in the Ukraine crisis.

Strengthening the OSCE is our best chance to enhance security for all in the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region.

In the Ukraine crisis, some progress has been achieved. The situation has been gradually de-escalated, resulting in a relatively stable ceasefire. The field presences and political formats that were set up during the Swiss Chairmanship have matured.

The Special Monitoring Mission has become a robust civilian ceasefire monitoring mission which is continuing to do a tremendous job. The Trilateral Contact Group and its Working Groups, cooperating closely with the Normandy Format, have been instrumental in addressing difficult questions (for example on local elections) and in keeping the Minsk process going.

But let's be clear: there are still many hurdles ahead. The ceasefire is still too frequently violated and needs to be further consolidated. The withdrawal of weapons has been incomplete. The political process is moving forward less quickly than we hoped. And there is a constant risk of renewed escalation. Switzerland calls on all sides to adhere to the Minsk arrangements and to implement all provisions in good faith.

The Ukraine crisis and the crisis of European security are interlinked and must be addressed in parallel. This is why Switzerland, together with our Troika partners, set up the Panel of Eminent Persons (PEP). We commend Ambassador Ischinger and his co-panellists for their important reports on how to reconsolidate European security as a common project.

I look forward to discussing their findings during our lunch session today. And I encourage all of you to support a continuation of such a dialogue on European security within the OSCE structures. While the Panel has generated valuable ideas, it is up to us to now set in motion a political and diplomatic process to overcome the present crisis, as recommended by the Panel. The OSCE is the best platform to discuss our common way forward.

Based on Switzerland's experience of its Troika membership years, let me mention two ways we could and should strengthen the OSCE: First: taking into account the lessons of the Special Monitoring Mission, we should seek to strengthen OSCE field mission capabilities. While the civilian nature of these field missions is an asset that must be preserved, we should provide for the possibility of including more robust elements such as drones or search and rescue capabilities, and the related planning capacities in Vienna. This is why we have proposed a review of OSCE peace operations. We need to enhance the OSCE toolkit in line with the complex nature of today's conflicts and new technological possibilities.

Second, we should pay more attention to the second dimension of the OSCE. Strengthening economic connectivity is an effective way of reducing tensions and fostering convergence, both between economic blocs and within countries affected by conflict.

Dear colleagues

The world has become ever more crisis-ridden this year. While resolving the Ukraine crisis must remain a priority for the OSCE, there are other pressing issues we must address too.

Transnational jihadist terrorism is a threat that concerns all OSCE participating and partner States. During the Swiss chairmanship, we took decisions on foreign fighters and kidnapping for ransom in the OSCE. This year, it is essential that we make progress on preventing violent extremism. I commend the Serbian chair for pushing this issue and for including youth ambassadors in the work. Preventing violent extremism is a priority of Swiss foreign policy. We stand ready to support cooperative measures in the OSCE and beyond.

The refugee crisis is another transnational challenge that must be discussed in the OSCE. The way forward is through cooperative migration governance that includes countries of origin, transit and destination.

Both the refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism also illustrate the importance of the OSCE's partnerships with Mediterranean and Asia countries. The inclusion of a ministerial segment in the successful OSCE conferences in Jordan and South Korea this year was an important step in strengthening these partnerships.

To conclude, let me say this:

Switzerland will remain a strong supporter of the OSCE. As we are about to leave the Troika, I wish to thank the Secretary-General and all OSCE staff most warmly for their important contributions to security and cooperation in Europe. I am also grateful to Serbia for the hospitality extended to us here in Belgrade, and to Serbia and Germany for our close cooperation in the Troika. I would like to suggest that our consecutive chairmanships and our Troika cooperation should become a model for the future. With this in mind, I wish our next chairs, Germany and Austria, best of luck.