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Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE  
DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE OPENING SESSION OF  
THE 2008 ANNUAL SECURITY REVIEW CONFERENCE**

1 July 2008

Mr. Chairman,

The comprehensive, three-dimensional concept of security that characterizes the OSCE makes our Organization a unique forum and instrument for international co-operation. The OSCE's security concept can be seen most tangibly in its first, politico-military, dimension. The threats to our security today are varied and complex. They range from proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and illicit trafficking in arms, drugs and human beings in the world of organized crime all the way to international terrorism, where the necessary countermeasures may even on occasion jeopardize human rights.

As a response to these current dangers, the Ministerial Council meeting in Maastricht in 2003 adopted a document entitled the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century. Even today this document provides a comprehensive framework of reference for our Annual Security Review Conference (ASRC). The tasks of the ASRC include an analysis of the agreed instruments along with a review of the progress achieved in their application — in all military and non-military aspects of security and also considering regional security issues.

In his position paper issued in February of this year, the Finnish Chairman-in-Office rightly noted that the 2008 Review Conference should deal, among other things, with current dangers to our security. Switzerland shares this view and believes that it is precisely the current level of stability, which is by no means guaranteed over the long term in parts of the OSCE area, that must be the focus of the deliberations of this ASRC. As a security organization in the northern hemisphere, the OSCE is faced with the fact that some of its participating States are confronted with so-called frozen regional conflicts on their territories, conflicts that however remain unresolved and that have in some cases become re-inflamed. Switzerland is therefore of the opinion that the OSCE, with its entire range of instruments for conflict prevention and conflict resolution, must face up to the challenge of contributing to the settlement of these open questions — and must play this role not only in those areas where it has a field presence and a direct mandate to act in this fashion, but also in regions where the United Nations and other organizations are likewise active. For the fact is that the OSCE has at its disposal political instruments of a more far-reaching nature than other organizations when it comes to transborder confidence building or the securing of democratic institutions.

Its three-dimensional security concept means that the OSCE has co-responsibility not only for security and stability in its area; it is also called upon to play a role on its borders with the Partners for Co-operation in the Mediterranean area and in Asia. For example, the Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in 2007, as part of a more narrowly defined discussion of politico-military security issues, adopted, among other things, a far-reaching decision calling for an engagement on the part of the OSCE with respect to Afghanistan. Since then the first evidence of the concrete implementation of this Ministerial decision can be seen in the form of the package of 16 projects put forward by the Secretary General on 6 June. Switzerland welcomes this package. It also, however, shares the view of the Conflict Prevention Centre that co-ordination with other international organizations involved in securing the Afghan borders, namely the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is indispensable. Supporting Afghanistan means above all strengthening human security so as to enable national reconciliation and the development of the country. Switzerland takes its lead from the engagement agreed in the Pact for Afghanistan adopted in London in 2006. It has therefore decided to consolidate and strengthen its civilian commitment to Afghanistan over the long term.

The achievements of the OSCE in arms control, disarmament and confidence and security building continue to represent the military pillar of its security architecture. In the form of the normative arrangements set out in the Vienna Document 1999 the OSCE States have available to them tried and tested control instruments whose proper and complete application is of strategic significance. As the best practice guides on small arms and light weapons along with the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security are further developed, States are assuming additional commitments, all of which are aimed at ensuring comprehensive security. As far as permanent dialogue and a co-operative negotiation process involving security and military experts are concerned, the Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC) remains an indispensable platform and a hallmark of the OSCE.

In conclusion, I should like to say a few words about the employment of private military and security firms in conflict regions by national governments. This growing trend is a new development for the international community of States and a cause of concern for humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. In partnership with the latter Switzerland has already begun diplomatic efforts with a view to strengthening the existing obligations of private military and security firms under international law and agreeing on appropriate good practices. The most important stakeholders, a total of 18 countries, are already involved. The countries involved intend to adopt a document at an expert meeting in September outlining obligations under international law and recommendations for governments. The Swiss initiative is ultimately aimed at contributing to the observance of human rights and respect for international humanitarian law by private military and security firms. Any support in this endeavour from the OSCE, specifically within the FSC, will be most welcome.

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for your attention.