

Welcoming Remarks

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**2014 Chairmanship OSCE-wide Counter-Terrorism Conference
“THE ROLE OF THE OSCE IN ADDRESSING CURRENT TERRORIST
CHALLENGES”
28-29 April 2014, Interlaken, Switzerland**

Mr. President, Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary General, I am very pleased to greet and extend a warm welcome to you all, as we embark on two days of ground-breaking discussions on addressing current terrorist challenges.

First of all, I would like to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation H. E. Didier Burkhalter for your opening address and, as well as, the Swiss Chairmanship Task Force for their leadership in organising this conference. And, it is a pleasure to be followed by Ms. Snjezana Bokulic, Head of Human Rights Department in the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and by the UN Counter-terrorism Executive Director, Jean-Paul Laborde, who is a good friend and well-known to the OSCE family.

I am very glad that so many of you are taking part in this event, representing a number of OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation, willing to share your ideas on topics which are of great importance for all of us today. I am also delighted to see participants, who represent many international, regional and sub-regional organizations as well as the civil society and academia.

The diverse participants are our reality – challenges in the security area require such a comprehensive response and cross-dimensional approach.

This conference will address issues that are at the very heart of the OSCE's mandate such as the fundamental freedoms and rights of participating States and how they intersect with the evolving terrorist challenge.

As a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE actively contributes to the global fight against terrorism, remaining consistent with its Principles and Purposes to achieve international co-operation in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Further, with the recent adoption of the *OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism*, participating States re-emphasized the advantages of the comprehensive approach for countering the threat of terrorism within the OSCE region, highlighting the strategic focus areas for counter-terrorism activities.

Needless to say, that all participating States and partners stand united in considering terrorism to be one of the most significant threats to peace, security and stability in the OSCE area and beyond. Indisputably, terrorism seeks to undermine the values that unite OSCE countries and hinders the enjoyment of human rights and social and economic development.

In this context, the title of this conference – “The Role of the OSCE in Addressing Current Terrorist Challenges” – seems to fully reflect the reason of this high-level event.

Today’s conference provides an unique opportunity to leverage knowledge and experience of participating experts, policy makers and civil society actors to discuss best practices and possibly identify concrete suggestions on how the OSCE can contribute to international efforts while addressing the problem of kidnapping for ransom and the phenomenon of foreign terrorist fighters and, at the same time, on how to ensure legality, transparency and accountability in counter-terrorism.

In accordance with the mandates and tasks set by the relevant Ministerial and Permanent Council decisions, the Transnational Threats Department in close co-operation with the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights made a concerted effort to support the Swiss Chairmanship in the preparation of this conference. The interest that this event has generated gives a strong evidence of the need for a comprehensive political guidance on the OSCE response to emerging security challenges.

Therefore, at this point, I would like to extend my gratitude to our distinguished panel members – keynote speakers, discussants and moderators for agreeing to be here with us today. With their good guidance, I have every confidence that the upcoming three sessions will produce lively and insightful discussions and are important building blocks towards the development of strong recommendations for follow-up activities and reasoned deliverables for the OSCE Ministerial Conference in Basel.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that the OSCE has much to offer. The Organization contributes to building state capacity to implement and comply with international CT instruments and standards. With its shared, comprehensive, co-operative and indivisible approach to security that is mirrored by its executive structures including the field operations, the OSCE is a sought-after and reliable partner for many organizations represented in this room.

The evolving tactics and methods of terrorism, as well as its technical sophistication make it an ongoing challenge to the international community. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that every state seeks the highest standards and follows the best practice in the area of counter – terrorism.

For this reason, the initiative of holding this conference could not have come at a better time.

I wish you all a productive debate.

Thank you.