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**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND AT THE
MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

13 November 2008

**In response to the statement by Mr. Joao Soares,
President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

Mr. Chairman,

We warmly welcome President Soares to the OSCE Permanent Council. We are very much in favour of exchanges between representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and of the Permanent Council. A good, intensively cultivated relationship between the OSCE government representatives and their parliament seems to us important, because the Parliamentary Assembly not only looks critically at the intergovernmental organization and its institutions and field operations, but also produces ideas, takes up pressing issues and seeks answers.

I should like now to limit myself to one point that was considered by the Parliamentary Assembly and is important for Switzerland and for the OSCE as a whole: the topic of private military and security firms.

Switzerland is highly appreciative of the fact that the Parliamentary Assembly concerned itself at an early stage with the role of private military and security firms in armed conflicts. We agree with the Parliamentary Assembly, which takes up this problem in Chapter I of the Astana Declaration of 3 July 2008, in regarding the observance of international humanitarian law and respect for human rights in this context as central.

In the Astana Declaration, the OSCE parliamentarians refer, *inter alia*, to the text which has since been adopted as the Montreux Document of 17 September 2008. This document seeks to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and respect for human rights in the operations of private military and security firms during armed conflicts. It draws attention to the responsibility of States for the observance of the relevant rules of international law.

Switzerland welcomes the support of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for the necessary efforts of the participating States in connection with the operations of private military and security firms, and its contribution to promoting the principles set forth in the Montreux Document.

The preparatory work done by the parliamentarians also facilitated the presentation of the Montreux Document in the Forum for Security Co-operation, on 22 October, by the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We are grateful for having been given that opportunity and we hope that, alongside the Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE government representatives will also now embark on an active discussion of this topic.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.