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Delegation of Switzerland

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

10 January 2008

**In response to the statement by Mr. Ilkka Kanerva,
Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman-in-Office,
on the start of the OSCE Chairmanship for the year 2008**

Mr. Chairman,

Switzerland welcomes and congratulates Finland on its assumption of the Chairmanship of the OSCE in the new year. Our congratulations go above all to Foreign Minister Kanerva, the new Chairman-in-Office and guest of honour at today's meeting, but also to his representative and Chairman of the Permanent Council, Ambassador Turunen.

The Chairman-in-Office has provided the participating States with a comprehensive and detailed presentation of Finland's OSCE priorities for 2008 up to the Ministerial Council meeting in Helsinki. Switzerland fully supports this programme. Allow me to single out and emphasize three aspects:

1. Switzerland regards the field offices in the OSCE's new States as a central and essential added value of our Organization. Their specific mandates and programmes, tailored as they are to local needs, represent a fundamental precondition for enabling all the nations involved to pursue further our common values and to meet their obligations as adopted on a consensus basis. For us, and I believe for the entire OSCE, the further presence and work of our mission in Kosovo is currently of the highest priority. Accordingly, we would welcome, instead of the month-by-month extension of the mission's mandate for 2008, an early agreement to ensure, over the medium term as well, the continued existence of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo, regardless of how the status issue is resolved.

2. As regards the *human dimension*, Switzerland welcomes Finland's intention, within the context of tolerance and non-discrimination, to direct particular attention and initiatives at the situation of the Roma and Sinti people and at the implementation of the OSCE action plan. Further, Switzerland unequivocally endorses the mandate and autonomy of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). It supports the ODIHR specifically as it seeks to carry out its assigned task of monitoring elections in all participating States, free of nationally imposed conditions and in accordance with its methodology, which has been tried and tested over many years, is internationally recognized and has been further refined in recent times, and in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly. The selection and

appointment of a new ODIHR Director may well become a special challenge for the Finnish Chairmanship, and we wish it every success in dealing with it.

3. With respect to the *politico-military dimension*, Switzerland regards as fundamental for security and stability throughout Europe, in addition to the Treaties on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and on Open Skies, by which it is not bound, the security dialogue in the weekly meetings of the Forum for Security Co-operation, the Vienna Document of the Negotiations on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures and also the Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security. For this reason, we ascribe the highest priority to the implementation and further development of this *acquis*.

In the area of the *non-military aspects of security*, the countering of terrorism in co-operation with the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations continues to take pride of place. In this connection, one concern of the Finnish Chairmanship can count on particular support on the part of Switzerland: In combating international terrorism the aim must be to uphold human rights and the rule of law to the same degree that national armed forces are bound by fundamental rights and subject to democratic oversight.

Mr. Chairman,

The Swiss delegation hopes for and looks forward to a successful and fruitful year under the Finnish Chairmanship. We are convinced that Finland with its “*sisu*” — the legendary enthusiasm of its people — will deal thoughtfully, competently, and masterfully with the challenges facing the OSCE in 2008.

Thank you for your attention.