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

22 March 2012

### **Regarding la Francophonie**

Mr. Chairperson,

As they do every year, on 20 March francophones the world over celebrated the International Day of La Francophonie, to mark the founding of the Francophonie institution that has since become the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF). On the occasion of the 27th session of the Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie held in Paris on 1 and 2 December 2011, Switzerland handed over the presidency of the Conference to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is hosting the forthcoming Summit of La Francophonie in Kinshasa in October 2012. From then on Switzerland, in its dual capacity as chair of both the Summit and the policy committee, will continue to work alongside the Democratic Republic of the Congo within the decision-making bodies on the preparations for the Kinshasa Summit. The theme of the Summit will be “La Francophonie, environmental and economic issues in the face of global governance”, a very relevant one in this year of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The OIF organized a preparatory francophone forum in Lyon on 8 and 9 February 2012 to get the La Francophonie member States and Governments moving in the run-up to Rio+20.

Fifteen OSCE participating States are full members of the OIF while 15 others are observers. Several OSCE Partners are also members. This shows that the French language also has a strong presence in our Organization. Here, we should like to call to mind that both the OIF and the OSCE share the universal values of human rights and democracy. At the last Summit of La Francophonie held in Montreux, Switzerland in October 2010, the francophone countries noted that development, peace and security and human rights are inseparable and mutually reinforcing, a conviction shared by the OSCE through its three dimensions.

The countries with French in common also expressed strong support for the work of the OSCE.

This year, the Day of La Francophonie was dedicated to the theme “French is an opportunity”. We should like to stress how much we appreciate the use of the language of Molière and multilingualism in general within the OSCE. This is also the moment to say a special thank you to our translators and interpreters for their excellent work!

In conclusion, I should like to pay tribute to a great French-speaking man of letters, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in the year we are celebrating the tercentenary of his birth. The pursuit of the common good, so dear to Rousseau, is found in the values promoted by the OSCE.

Thank you for your attention.