



## 2026 OSCE chairpersonship

### Presentation of Switzerland's priorities to the OSCE Permanent Council

# Preserving the Helsinki Spirit in a World in Crisis

Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Incoming Chairperson

Vienna, 18 September 2025

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Mr Chair,  
Mr Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Next year, for the third time in its history, Switzerland will chair the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

This is an honour for my country, and I thank you for your trust. But it is also a great **responsibility** in a world that is losing its bearings, where **mistrust** and **power politics** all too often prevail.

The end of the Cold War brought hope that the universal advent of **liberal democracy** would bring to a close thousands of years of military confrontation. This has, alas, turned out to be an **illusion**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

**50 years ago**, the Helsinki Final Act (1975) – signed by 35 states (within the framework of the CSCE) – set out ten fundamental principles known as the ***Helsinki Decalogue***. Allow me to list them:

1. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.
2. Refraining from the threat or use of force.
3. Inviolability of borders.
4. Territorial integrity of States.
5. Peaceful settlement of disputes.
6. Non-intervention in internal affairs.
7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.
8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples.
9. Cooperation among States.
10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.



Negotiated in **Geneva** and signed in **Helsinki** on 1 August 1975 – **the day of Switzerland's national holiday** – this act symbolises the **deep bond** between Finland and Switzerland, which are now succeeding one another in the chairpersonship.

The act was one of the **greatest** diplomatic successes of the Cold War. But these principles are now being put to the test. Russia's war against Ukraine – which Switzerland has condemned – seriously violates international law and jeopardises our common security. It is undermining consensus and limiting OSCE action.

However, despite these roadblocks, the OSCE remains **indispensable**:

- because it takes concrete action on the ground,
- because it brings all the actors to the same table, and
- because it remains the only forum where Europe, the **United States and Russia** still talk to each other about security.

## **Excellencies,**

**Consensus** is the bedrock of our organisation. But it also requires **responsibility** from each of us.

As my predecessor Didier Burkhalter pointed out in 2014, Switzerland is in itself a **mini-OSCE**: its political system is based on dialogue and listening to all parties.

**This is the spirit** in which we will chair the OSCE. With three watchwords: **dialogue, trust, and security.**

Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the participating states,

Switzerland proposes the following priorities:

### **1. Helsinki Principles – for lasting peace**

In the face of war in Europe, Switzerland is committed to a just peace in Ukraine, based on international law and the Helsinki principles. It will bring its mediation experience to the service of dialogue, trust and security.

### **2. Inclusive multilateral diplomacy**

In the only platform bringing together Europe, the United States, and Russia, Switzerland will foster an open dialogue on security. It will encourage cooperation on cybersecurity, politico-military instruments, and conflict prevention, relying on its neutrality and tradition of facilitation.

### **3. Anticipating technologies – for a safe and humane future**

Technologies are transforming our future. Switzerland will promote



governance centred on human needs, linking science and diplomacy, notably in water, energy, and digital security.

#### 4. **Democracy, rule of law, and human rights**

Switzerland will strengthen the role of democratic institutions and the protection of fundamental freedoms. It will support OSCE field missions and election observation, so that democracy and human rights remain at the heart of European security.

#### 5. **OSCE's ability to act**

Despite tensions, the OSCE remains indispensable. Each crisis underlines the need for reform. Switzerland will address this need to preserve the basic instruments – missions, election observation – and to ensure their financing.

These priorities will also take shape in Switzerland, through three international conferences: one in February on combating **antisemitism**, another in June on **anticipatory science diplomacy**, and the final one in September on **cybersecurity**.

I would like to thank the OSCE Secretariat, institutions and missions for the dedication they show in their daily work.

I would also like to thank the **Finnish** chairpersonship – and in particular my colleague **Elina Valtonen** – for their exemplary work, as well as my Maltese colleague **Ian Borg**, former chairperson and member of the OSCE Troika.

Finally, if I may make a nod to history: right here, in the **Hofburg Palace**, the 'Swiss Court' is a reminder that from the 15th century, **the Swiss guard** was already keeping watch over a fragile order.

Paul Éluard said: ***"There is no such thing as chance, only encounters."***

In that vein, I look forward to our next encounter in 2026!

Thank you.