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

25 March 2010

**In response to the report by Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of the
Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights**

Mr. Chairperson,

Switzerland joins in welcoming Ambassador Janez Lenarčič, Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his informative report.

The ODIHR plays a leading role in the implementation of human dimension commitments. However, the ODIHR's institutional experience and know-how as regards methodology also constitute a comparative advantage for the OSCE as a whole. In this connection we should like to highlight just two points that affect current discussions and the near future: on the one hand, the promotion of free and fair elections and, on the other, the preservation of the *acquis* in the third dimension.

The dispatch of election observation missions, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Assembly, constitutes a core area of the ODIHR's activities. Switzerland regularly supports these election observation missions through the secondment of monitoring experts and is in favour of further developing the methods used in election monitoring. In this context, we welcome the fact that the ODIHR is currently preparing or revising various relevant guidelines and handbooks. Here we attach particular importance to electronic voting and voter registration. Furthermore, we are pleased to note that the ODIHR, partly in co-operation with the Council of Europe, intends to focus on the follow-up of election observation activities thereby implementing a long-standing recommendation on the part of the participating States. In view of the current circumstances, we also welcome the intention to observe the local elections in Georgia on 30 May 2010 and the useful co-operation between the ODIHR and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

After the Easter break, our attention will turn to the human dimension as part of the Corfu Process. Switzerland believes that the human dimension is of particular importance since long-term stability and security in the OSCE region can be guaranteed only if human rights, democracy and the rule of law are ensured. Accordingly, in order to meet the goals of the Corfu Process, the compendium of jointly agreed human dimension commitments that has taken shape over decades must be preserved and its implementation improved.

We note with concern the current tensions among the OSCE delegations regarding the human dimension. The controversy particularly concerns the package solution developed in the third committee for the dates and topics of the human dimension events in 2010, notably the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. We regard the annual implementation meeting in Warsaw as a unique opportunity for representatives of governments and civil society to take stock of the fundamental commitments in the human dimension, to expose shortcomings in their implementation and to exchange best practices. The package solution for the programme for the year, which in substantive terms is ready for adoption, should not be linked to new conditions or be made dependent on issues which for the moment are still open and which will have to be discussed within the special framework of the Corfu Process and decided upon in due course.

We wish Director Lenarčič and his team continued success and continuity in the demanding and important work of the ODIHR.

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for your attention.