



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE  
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY  
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

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16 January 2014

ENGLISH only

**STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE,  
AS DELIVERED BY MSGR. MARINKO ANTOLOVIĆ  
AT THE 980<sup>th</sup> (SPECIAL) MEETING OF THE  
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

**16 JANUARY 2014**

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON-IN-OFFICE OF THE OSCE,  
PRESIDENT OF SWISS CONFEDERATION AND  
HEAD OF THE SWISS FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
H.E. MR. DIDIER BURKHALTER**

Mr. Chairman,

The Holy See joins other Delegations in warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Didier Burkhalter, President of Swiss Confederation and Head of Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, to the Permanent Council, as well as in congratulating him on the assumption of his duties as 2014 Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE. Congratulations also to you, Ambassador Greminger, and to your co-workers!

In assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE, Switzerland surely offers much promise in times of social turmoil, economic and political uncertainties, environmental abuses, cultural and other contrapositions, for it is a symbol of peaceful coexistence in a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society, heir to centuries-old religious and cultural traditions, and an example of care for nature.

Mr. Chairman,

Many European countries have taken shape on the basis of the natural unity of their territory, their language, or religion. Switzerland, however, owes its origin, its development, and its duration much more to the common will and perseverance of its citizens, its sons and daughters. However, that would not have been possible had it not been founded from the very outset on a certain idea of man. Only by focusing and staying faithful to this idea,

Switzerland was able to pass through the vicissitudes of history and a very unstable environment.

The guiding star of freedom on the firmament of this fundamental vision of man has never ceased to shine, a priceless good but, at the same time, also a great risk for the human person. Hence, establishing the right balance has always been a challenging task. In order to develop all its potential for the benefit of individuals and communities alike, personal freedom needs to develop within societies, which are both free and in control of their destinies. This is the lesson that the Swiss Confederates have learned since their first alliance, which they have treasured preciously throughout their historic journey.

And yet, if history has brought them together, geography had been a constant threat to divide them. Located at the intersection of the crossroads of empires and civilizations, the Swiss have had to learn very early on to live with an ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity, without surrendering their particular identities. That is how they made the long apprenticeship of peaceful living together, in which they had been taught in a special way by St. Nicholas of Flüe, *Bruder Klaus*, patron of Switzerland.

Mr. Chairman,

Your history, your culture, and your political reality has been encouraging and stimulating you to take an active role in the community of nations, including, in particular, the community of the 57 participating States of the OSCE. Hence, it is our strong hope that the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship will do its best to intensify and strengthen friendly relations among the participating States and their citizens, beyond geographical or political boundaries and economic interests, assisting them in finding a common ground, because that is how they can better discover their bonds of unity and interdependence arising from their common aim of one security community.

In the face of the problems which beset the human family and its endless dramas, of which the OSCE area is not spared, it would be contrary to the sign that adorns the Swiss flag to remain just inert witnesses. You have proven many times throughout history that you simply cannot be by-standers but must be actively engaged in assisting and offering what you have to make the lives of others better to the greatest extent possible. Therefore, we are confident that as Chair in Office of the OSCE for the second time, Switzerland will once again respond to the call to operate, according to its capacities and resources, and in cooperation with others, for the common good of all OSCE participating States. That is the hope and wish that we have for you in 2014.

Mr. Chairman,

I am sure that the interest, engagement and contribution of the Holy See with regard to humanitarian issues, to the benefit of all men and women, whatever their race, ethnicity, language or religion, is well known to you. Human rights lie at the origin and basis of international life. The most fundamental of these is the right to life and to live in dignity; the right to a natural family, the primary cell of society and driving principle of public life; the

right freely to express ideas, opinions and beliefs, and the right to freedom of religion, to which the Holy See attaches great importance. Allow me, therefore, to use this opportunity to encourage you to ensure an adequate follow up on the decision adopted in Kiev on the subject of freedom of religion, which was the first decision in the human dimension since 2009.

Mr. Chairman,

We are confident and we hope that the Holy See and Switzerland can strengthen and enhance their cooperation, also within the OSCE, when it comes to solutions to advance peace and security, assist the poorest and guarantee respect for inherent dignity of all human beings, in particular victims of trafficking, those affected by the ongoing economic crisis, refugees, migrant workers and their families, and so many others, as was the case on various occasions throughout history. You can count on our assistance in searching for the best solutions that will satisfy the demands of justice, freedom and peace.

Mr. Burkhalter, as you assume your responsibilities as 2014 OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I offer you good wishes for the success of your mission. May it contribute to further promoting the good of all individuals, nations and peoples – “from Vancouver – via Bern/Basel – to Vladivostok”.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman!