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***Empowering the OSCE to reconsolidate
European security as a common project***

**Opening Session of the OSCE Annual
Security Review Conference**

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, in June 2012, Donetsk and Kharkiv were all over the news. They were two of eight cities selected as venues for the 2012 UEFA European Championship jointly organised by Ukraine and Poland. Taken together, the Donbass Arena in Donetsk and the Metalist Stadium in Kharkiv hosted eight matches, featuring the national teams of Ukraine, France, England, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. Wayne Rooney, Cristiano Ronaldo, Mario Gomez, Xabi Alonso, and Robin van Persie ranked among the stars scoring in these two stadiums.

Today, Donetsk and Kharkiv are again making international headlines, but for very different reasons. Parts of Ukraine's eastern regions are being shaken by separatist efforts, unlawful activities by armed rebel and criminal groups, a spiral of violence with a growing number of casualties, and a deteriorating humanitarian situation. Donetsk airport, which in 2012 welcomed football fans from all over Europe, became the object of heavy fighting just a few weeks ago. There are international monitors in the country now and the OSCE is seeking to assist Ukraine in de-escalating the situation.

Ukraine faces a profound crisis today: its territorial integrity is being disrespected, economic and energy challenges are mounting; and relations with Russia are strained.

Related to these developments, European security has deteriorated too. Relations between Russia and the West have taken a negative turn. Sanctions, mutual accusations and threats, and mistrust point to the risk of polarisation and estrangement. European security as a common project has been put in doubt.

The dynamics of the Ukraine crisis have been a painful reminder that peace and security in Europe cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, these dynamics have demonstrated how important it is that we constantly rebuild and preserve peace through cooperative efforts. The past few months have underlined the fact that the OSCE has an important role to play in this regard.

Against this background, my main message to you today is that we should collectively work to do three things:

- assist Ukraine in peacefully resolving the crisis;
- reconsolidate European security as a common project; and
- strengthen the OSCE as an anchor of cooperative security

Let me address each of these three points in turn.

The Ukraine crisis and the OSCE: Cooperative security as the way forward

First, OSCE assistance to Ukraine.

The Ukraine crisis has dominated the Swiss Chairmanship from the start. 45 CiO Statements on Ukraine alone speak volumes in this regard. We have by no means neglected the other tasks and priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship. For example, I visited the Western Balkans to foster OSCE assistance in the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Priština and promote regional reconciliation and cooperation. Recently, I travelled to the South Caucasus to encourage intensified negotiations on Nagorno-Karabakh and discuss OSCE engagement in Georgia. We have also organised major conferences on Swiss priority issues such as counter-terrorism, the prevention of torture, and human rights defenders.

Still, Ukraine has topped the agenda since day one.

There are two reasons for this:

First, as a security organisation, the OSCE has been directly affected by the developments regarding Ukraine. Insecurity of one of the OSCE's participating States has rapidly become an issue for all – in line with the notion of security being indivisible across the OSCE area. OSCE principles, as defined in the Helsinki Final Act, have been put into question. These principles include respect for territorial integrity, the inviolability of borders, respect for human rights, and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Second, it became clear early on that the OSCE is in a good position to assist Ukraine in overcoming this crisis. The OSCE is no party to the conflict. It is an inclusive platform that brings together all major stakeholders of the crisis to define and implement cooperative solutions. And it is an impartial actor for stability in Ukraine. The OSCE is an organisation that can deliver on the ground.

The OSCE was present in Ukraine before the crisis began. As the crisis unfolded, we quickly realised the need to step up OSCE activities. We immediately discussed possibilities with the Ukrainian authorities. In February, I made some proposals at the UN Security Council, including for a Contact Group.

New measures have since been taken, new instruments applied. The OSCE has made full use of the tools at its disposal.¹ All of this against the background of a crisis that has considerably evolved in recent months – from the Maidan protests to the Crimean crisis and growing Ukrainian-Russian tensions to the destabilisation of eastern and southern parts of Ukraine and the peace plan of President Poroshenko.

¹ SMM, CiO Envoy, HCNM and RFoM visits, Human Rights Assessment Mission by ODIHR and HCNM, large full-scale election observation mission by ODIHR/OSCE PA.

At the heart of the OSCE engagement in Ukraine today lies the Special Monitoring Mission. It has been deployed following a request by Ukraine and a consensus decision by you – the 57 participating States. This consensus decision was a milestone for the OSCE. It indicated that you, the OSCE family, are ready to continue the dialogue and the search for compromise even under difficult circumstances – and that you entrusted the OSCE with a major role in stabilising the situation in Ukraine.

The SMM has been mandated to contribute to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stability and security in Ukraine. Our civilian monitors provide verified information on the security situation and on specific incidents. Their gathering of facts and regular reporting based on the principles of impartiality and transparency has proven invaluable in a conflict environment where distorted information, biased interpretations, and harsh language abound.

The SMM also seeks to facilitate dialogue on the ground. It engages with all levels of authorities as well as with civil society, ethnic and religious groups, and local communities. Following the Joint Geneva Statement, preparations have been made to assist Ukraine in disarming illegal armed groups and in vacating illegally occupied buildings and public places. The OSCE is still ready to do so provided that Ukraine wishes this kind of OSCE support.

SMM monitoring teams have been working in shifts to ensure cover on the ground around the clock. I wish to thank everyone involved in this mission, including its leadership, for their commitment to our common cause. I am also grateful to the more than 40 participating States and the two Asian partners for cooperation that have seconded monitors and provided the necessary funding for this important mission.

Four monitors of the Donetsk team and four monitors of the Luhansk team are still missing. Their detention is unacceptable and illegal. It sabotages the ongoing international efforts to overcome the crisis and binds a significant amount of SMM resources. These monitors came to Ukraine to help. Getting them home safely is a top priority for the SMM, the OSCE as a whole, and the Swiss Chairmanship. I call again for their immediate and unconditional release. And I call on all sides to work together towards this goal. I am grateful for the broad support that we have received in this matter.

A second important element of the OSCE's assistance to Ukraine concerns its supporting role in the Dialogue on National Unity. I consider these Ukraine-led and Ukraine-owned efforts to spur an inclusive national debate on the country's challenges and future to be of the utmost importance. The three round tables held prior to the elections demonstrated the potential of this approach. Some of the issues discussed – including decentralisation, language and minority rights, and constitutional reform – reverberate in the Memorandum of

Peace and Concord adopted by the Ukrainian Parliament, which provides a solid basis for further steps towards national unity.

I am grateful to Ambassador Ischinger for the excellent support he provided to the two co-moderators (former Ukrainian Presidents Kravchuk and Kuchma) during the first phase of this dialogue. I have already discussed with President Poroshenko possibilities of continuing this dialogue. I am ready to nominate a new CiO representative to support the Dialogue on National Unity as soon as Ukraine resumes this process.

The Swiss Chairmanship has argued from the beginning that resolving this crisis will require dialogue not just within Ukraine but also beyond. It is in this context that I, as Chairman, and my Personal Envoy Ambassador Guldemann have been engaged in bilateral consultations with all sides on how to de-escalate the crisis.

But of course the most important dialogue in this crisis is that between Kiev and Moscow. I consider it to be an encouraging and important sign that President Poroshenko talks directly to President Putin and has established a trilateral contact group with representatives of Ukraine, Russia, and the OSCE Chairmanship.

So where does this leave us today?

The early presidential elections that took place on 25 May were a milestone for Ukraine. (Let me repeat my gratitude to the election observation mission of the ODIHR and the observation delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly for their invaluable work.) The clear verdict of these elections has improved the prospects for peace.

I welcome President Poroshenko's initiative for a ceasefire and a peace plan. At his request, I asked Ambassador Tagliavini to represent the OSCE in the tripartite contact group. After a series of meetings, this group has reached a common understanding on how to enter a peaceful path to settle the situation in the eastern oblasts of Ukraine.

The peace plan presented by President Poroshenko builds on this common understanding. I am sure that you have all familiarised yourselves with the details of the plan by now. The OSCE has begun to assess possibilities for assisting Ukraine in implementing this plan and is working on concrete proposals. The SMM has established relations with many actors in the conflict-ridden areas and could assist with monitoring or even facilitating certain activities of the peace plan if wished. To name just a few possible OSCE support roles, it could provide neutral venues for dialogue, monitor the implementation of the amnesty, monitor withdrawals in the secure corridor, and provide expertise for disarmament. Many potential OSCE contributions depend however on an improved security situation.

For the peace plan to work, we first need the commitment of separatist groups to choose the path of dialogue. Yesterday, after talks with the tripartite contact group, separatist leaders in

Donetsk and Luhansk announced that they would observe a ceasefire too. I welcome this development. The OSCE is ready to monitor the ceasefire and to support any other steps towards a peaceful settlement of the crisis to the extent possible. I call upon all sides to exercise utmost restraint. And I encourage everyone involved to give peace a chance and resolve differences through dialogue rather than through further violence.

I am well aware that stability will not return to Ukraine overnight. For President Poroshenko's peace plan to work, all sides will have to make their contributions. Cooperative security is the only way forward. I have assured President Poroshenko that the OSCE stands ready to play its part.

Reconsolidate European security as a common project

Ladies and gentlemen

The Ukraine crisis has been preceded by a growing crisis of European security. It has not been caused solely by the developments regarding Ukraine. Rather, the Ukraine crisis has amplified fissures in Europe that could be observed beforehand.

There were disputes over NATO enlargement and strategic missile defence, the erosion of the conventional arms control regime in Europe, disagreements about the legitimacy of a series of military interventions, and controversies over declarations of political independence. There were also accusations of broken promises, and there was more and more finger-pointing instead of genuine dialogue. All this amounted to an erosion of trust and a weakening of pan-European security. It could be felt in our everyday work, here in the OSCE and elsewhere.

Does the consensus on European security, established with the Paris Charter of 1990 on the basis of the Helsinki Final Act, still hold? Or have we gone astray since the CSCE Heads of States in 1990 declared that the era of confrontation and division of Europe had ended and that henceforth relations among CSCE States would be founded on respect and co-operation?

How is it possible that today unilateral actions not compatible with international law are undertaken to change borders in Europe? Why do many countries in the OSCE area still face serious challenges when it comes to implementation of commitments? Why is there still talk of 'spheres of influence' and of 'buffer zones' in European security?

My view is this: If the consensus on European security is being questioned or eroding, it is our duty as members of the OSCE family to reconsolidate European security as our common project.

The Ukraine crisis should be a wake-up call for all of us. We should not go back to the inert routine of previous years. If we build security at the expense of each other or even against each other, we will all lose and end up with more insecurity.

I have no illusions that reconsolidating European security as a common project will take time. Much will depend on further developments in the Ukraine crisis. Still, the future of European security will need to be addressed. Dialogue is indispensable to resolving our differences, to engaging in a genuine debate on what our common foundations are, and to making sure that our relations are guided by a sense of partnership.

There are three levels of European security that ought to be addressed:

First, the normative level: If we assume that OSCE principles and norms are still guiding relations between States, as well as between governments and their citizens: how can we re-establish the confidence that we will deal with each other in the spirit of respect and cooperation that inspired the Paris Charter? And how can we ensure that States implement their commitments in all three dimensions of OSCE security with equal rigour?

The second level concerns Europe's security architecture. Recent developments have left little doubt that 25 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the strategic task of defining a stable pan-European security system remains a work in progress. I am not just talking about traditional security relations. Equally important, and particularly acute, is the question of trade relations across the OSCE area.

Post-Soviet countries seeking both an association agreement with the EU and access to the markets of countries that will form the Eurasian Union should be enabled to act as trade bridges rather than trade frontiers. Devising a European trade architecture that spares these countries from zero-sum choices must be an important component of European security.

The third level of European security that needs to be addressed concerns national threat perceptions across the OSCE area. Having a discussion and building a common understanding of threats is an important contribution to reconsolidating European security as a common project. A recent study on this issue by the OSCE academic network provides a solid basis for such a debate. The study maintains that while perceptions of external threats partly diverge in the OSCE area, perceptions of domestic and transnational threats largely converge.

I consider this last point particularly important. What it says is this: For all our differences over Ukraine and other major issues of European security, there remains a considerable amount of common interests to build upon. There are many threats and many challenges that we are all confronted with, whether in the Euro-Atlantic or the Eurasian region.

We should use this common ground to continue and enhance our cooperation wherever possible. The Ukraine crisis should not prompt us to withdraw from cooperation where common interests persist. Reconsolidating European security as a common project will not just require a genuine debate on those issues on which we disagree. It also depends on our political will to continue cooperating even in the absence of consensus on some of the strategic questions.

This, too, is what cooperative security is about. And this is how we approach the Swiss Chairmanship.

The case for continued and intensified cooperation is compelling. Just take the field of transnational threats, which figures high on the common worries list of the OSCE.

All countries share similar concerns about the evolving threat of terrorism. Current activities of terrorist groupings in Iraq, in Syria, or in Nigeria figure high on everyone's security briefings.

The OSCE has made some good progress in cooperating on counterterrorism. But there is still much untapped potential. The Swiss Chairmanship proposes, for instance, that OSCE participating States commit to denying terrorists the benefits of ransom and refrain from political concessions. We also see a role for the OSCE in fostering exchanges of information and cooperation on the growing challenge of 'foreign fighters' while respecting human rights and international humanitarian law. We covered these issues at a recent conference in Interlaken.

There is also a common interest in defining ways of preventing and managing threats related to cyberspace. The OSCE was the first organisation able to agree on a set of confidence-building measures in the field of cyber security. These include the exchange of information on national strategies, the establishment of national contact points to facilitate dialogue, and, particularly important, a voluntary consultation mechanism to reduce the risk of misperceptions. Let us be ambitious and strive for further measures. We should also share our know-how with other organisations and with countries outside the OSCE area. Cooperation should not be limited by institutional and geographical borders.

Afghanistan is another case for cooperation. There is a significant overlap of interests among OSCE countries. Within the limits of its mandate and its capacities, the OSCE should contribute to efforts to make Afghanistan stable, secure, and democratic. Training for Afghan border personnel by the Border Management Staff College is just one activity that comes to mind.

Strengthening the OSCE as an anchor of cooperative security

Ladies and gentlemen

We can reconsolidate European security as a common project if we embark on a genuine dialogue on those things on which we disagree and continue to cooperate on those things where there is common ground.

Reconsolidating European security as a common project in my opinion also requires strengthening the OSCE as an anchor of cooperative security.

Recent events have reminded us that there is still some hard work ahead if we are to accomplish our common goal of an OSCE security community. I remain convinced that the OSCE as an organisation can help us advance towards this goal. The more we empower the OSCE, the better it will be able to help us provide security.

The 'Helsinki+40' process has obviously not become easier in the light of the Ukraine crisis, but I do believe that there is still scope for progress. I see 'Helsinki+40' as a two-track approach:

First, it is about strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act: The OSCE demonstrated its conflict management capability during the Ukraine crisis. This expertise and the operational capacities in conflict resolution should be further strengthened and extended. We require institutions that are able to fully put in place the potential available to them.

Mediation is key to the OSCE's efforts to settle conflicts across the whole conflict cycle. As a country with much tradition and expertise in the field of mediation, Switzerland is committed to strengthening OSCE mediation capacities, in our Chairmanship year and beyond.

Some progress has been achieved on this already. Mediation-support capacities have been built up regarding training, knowledge management, operational support, and outreach and cooperation with other mediation actors. There is an OSCE handbook on mediation, there are tailor-made coaching-services for OSCE staff and missions, and there is now even an OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation (founded under the initiative of Finland, Turkey, and Switzerland).

The next step ahead is to alert participating States to the growing potential and capacities of the OSCE in the field of mediation. The mediation support team of the OSCE has been called to assist Ambassador Ischinger in his role in Ukraine's Dialogue on National Unity. It is ready to assist any successor in this process. Our goal is that it becomes a habit to look to OSCE mediation services whenever international assistance is required in resolving a conflict in the OSCE area.

The second track of 'Helsinki+40' is about using this process as a starting point for a discussion of the future of European security. The Astana summit has provided us with the vision of a security community. This could inspire an OSCE-wide attempt to take a fresh look at European security architecture.

'Helsinki+40' should become the starting point for reconsolidating European security as a common project and the OSCE as a hub for the discussion of all related issues. These deliberations must be conducted in an inclusive manner. The OSCE is an obvious platform to use for this purpose.

I am well aware that this is a longer-term engagement that would go beyond the Swiss-Serbian consecutive Chairmanship and require countries to chair the organisation in 2016 and beyond that are willing to take a lead role in raising such issues.

One more thought on this: Reconsolidating European security as a common project in my opinion also means reviving conventional arms control. No issue of European security is in more need of fresh thinking than conventional arms control.

It is high time that we work out ways of halting and reversing the trend of decreasing military predictability and transparency in the OSCE area. Success in building a verifiable new arms control regime and in agreeing on reciprocal strategic restraint would be a milestone and would help rebuild confidence elsewhere.

This may not be the time to discuss the precise role of the OSCE in any new conventional arms control regime. But it is definitely the time to use the OSCE as a market place for creative ideas on how to rebuild and reshape such a regime.

Conclusion

Let me conclude:

I thank all the speakers and panellists for contributing to this conference. I am especially grateful to my colleague Ivica Dacic for accepting our invitation to address you here. (Welcome to the OSCE!). We also thank the Secretariat for contributing to the organisation of this important event.

Thank you all for coming. I know that you expect a lot of us – as Swiss Chairperson- in-Office, I also expect a lot of you.

We are gathering here at a time marked by the Ukraine crisis and a wider crisis of European security. It is our common responsibility to do everything possible to resolve these crises.

The bottom-line of my message today is that the OSCE can play a constructive role in either case. The OSCE's recent activities in Ukraine have demonstrated the organization's potential to build bridges – both among participating States and on the ground.

The challenges we are facing are formidable. But there are also opportunities. I am convinced that if we manage to deal with these challenges in a spirit of cooperative security, we can emerge with enhanced security for all of us.

The next few weeks might be decisive for the future of Ukraine. The coming months and years will be essential for the future course of European security. This also touches upon the question of the future role of the OSCE.

I count on your commitment

- to help de-escalate the situation in Ukraine;
- to reconsolidate European security as a common project; and
- to strengthen the OSCE as an anchor of cooperative security.

All this means hard work for the OSCE. The Swiss-Serbian consecutive Chairmanships remain fully committed to the tasks. And we are confident that an equally dedicated country will take over in 2016.