



Address by
Mr Didier Burkhalter
Vice President of the Swiss Federal
Council and Head of the Federal
Department of Foreign Affairs

“Common security delivered *by all*
and *for all*”

Statement for the Plenary Session

Ministerial Council
of the OSCE
Kiev, 5-6 December 2013

Mr Chairman, dear colleagues,

I thank Ukraine for its committed Chairmanship and for preparing this Ministerial Council so successfully.

Recent events in our host country have demonstrated why the purpose of the **OSCE is more relevant than ever** today. Neither Ukraine nor any other state should have to decide between East and West. And all states should protect the human rights of their citizens, including the right to peacefully protests. With its comprehensive security approach, the OSCE has an important role to play in both regards. Switzerland calls for dialogue and restraint from force.

It will be a privilege for Switzerland to take over the chairmanship of the OSCE. Our activities will be guided by the **three principles** of determination, humility, and persistence.

Switzerland is determined and highly motivated to take the helm because we value the OSCE as a **unique platform** to foster security and cooperation.

The OSCE is the **best insurance** we have against any new divisions between East and West. We should make use of this insurance as much as we can.

The OSCE can help improve our mutual understanding and identify common ground. It can be a vital catalyst for stronger bonds and higher levels of trust. And it facilitates the joint creation and implementation of norms, thereby strengthening our common security.

Contributing to security and stability in Europe and beyond is one of Switzerland's foreign policy priorities. Our decision to chair the OSCE in 2014 reflects this sense of **responsibility**. With its culture of dialogue, compromise, and inclusion, Switzerland will do its utmost to act as a reliable chair for all and to enable the OSCE to fully realise its potential.

Switzerland will do this with a good dose of humility. We are well aware that this is not the time for grand designs and bold leaps forward. As threat perceptions and security needs diverge, progress can only be made **step by step**. We will thus aim for limited but concrete and meaningful measures. And we will depend on all of you – on your sense of common responsibility – to shape these measures jointly and see them through.

The OSCE is not about winning or losing. It is about common **security delivered by all and for all** – by all countries and for all countries, by all people and for all people. We can make a difference if we all emphasise our commonalities rather than what sets us apart.

The Swiss chairmanship will be guided by the principle of persistence because we are well aware that much hard work will be required to bring the OSCE forward. There are no short cuts and few low-hanging fruits. This is also why we see much value in bringing more **continuity** to the chairmanship.

I very much hope that the Swiss-Serbian **consecutive chairmanship** will become a model for future chairmanships. Tools such as a joint work plan and two-year nominations for special representatives can provide the OSCE with more planning certainty and focus. As we have learned to our delight, they can also boost bilateral relations.

What then are our plans for 2014? **Here is our programme** in a nutshell. Our leitmotif is to “Create a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone”. The term “creating” implies that this is work in progress. Given Switzerland’s long tradition of mediation, we hope to be able to build a number of **bridges** in the OSCE, both in local conflict contexts and between the Eurasian and the Euro-Atlantic regions at large.

As for the “Security Community”, translating this vision into practice is obviously a challenging undertaking. But we need to be this ambitious. The old CSCE credo that the insecurity of one state negatively affects the security of all is more relevant than ever in our globalised world. And this Security Community must and will extend **far beyond Europe**, covering all participating States.

The OSCE is uniquely placed to tie together the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian area. It is up to us, dear colleagues, to provide the organisation with the means necessary to achieve this strategic task. The final element of our “leitmotiv”, the “Benefit of Everyone”, is of particular importance to Switzerland, but not only to us! Good politics is always at the **service of the people**. The OSCE must provide tangible results for the citizens of participating States. The OSCE is well positioned to deliver – if we allow it to deliver. Switzerland will work closely with both civil society representatives and young people during its chairmanship.

In the spirit of this “leitmotiv”, Switzerland will pursue three objectives during its chairmanship: to foster security and stability; to improve people’s lives; and to strengthen the OSCE’s capacity to take action. We will seek to advance these objectives by focusing on a number of priority issues for each objective. The priority issues are listed in this tableau, and I will discuss them in more detail at the closing session tomorrow.

Allow me to single out one priority that deserves particular ministerial attention here: the **Helsinki + 40 process**.

The issue of where the OSCE should be headed is of strategic importance. We commend the work that has been achieved this year under the Ukrainian chairmanship. We now have a roadmap that will provide us with a clear framework for the coming months.

But for the Helsinki+40 process to succeed, we will require high-level political engagement. From Switzerland's point of view, there are **three sets of questions that ministers should address**:

First, what are the major challenges and issues that the OSCE should deal with in the future? What is – or should be – the extra value that the OSCE can offer?

What should be the key pillars of a security community – in other words, what are the issues where cooperation is indispensable to safeguard the security of states and the well-being of its people?

From the perspective of Switzerland, strengthening the common roof over the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian regions is an obvious priority. We also propose to intensify OSCE work on non-traditional threats such as terrorism or environmental challenges, which affect the security of the people and can only be tackled through cooperative efforts by all participating States.

Second, how should the OSCE be adapted to be better able to deal with the relevant challenges and issues?

Switzerland is working on a number of ideas, such as institutionalising the consecutive chairmanship model, developing OSCE mediation capacities, involving ministers in more regular strategic dialogue, and having regular thematic summits, perhaps similar to the high-level debates at the opening of the UN General Assembly.

We would be keen to discuss these ideas with you and learn more about your own expectations for the OSCE.

Third, what about the “Helsinki + 40” process itself? Should we hold a summit in 2015? And would such a summit be a milestone or the endpoint of the process?

Switzerland will push the process forward as much as possible to get concrete results by 2015, and I propose that we decide next year, based on the progress achieved, whether to hold such a summit. But it seems clear to me already now that any meaningful reform process will not be completed within two years, which is why we need some mid-term planning for implementation beyond a potential anniversary summit in 2015.

If approached in a constructive manner, the Helsinki+40 process will in itself be an important **confidence-building** measure. I therefore invite you all to put forward your views on these three sets of questions – through direct contacts with the Swiss chairmanship, through an appearance in front of the Permanent Council in Vienna, or in any other context. Those of you who will participate at the World Economic Forum in January will be invited to a first informal debate on these issues in the framework of a Swiss-sponsored OSCE **Fondue event** in Davos.

Mr Chairman, dear colleagues

Uniting 57 participating States under one roof is a major strength of the OSCE. But it is also a challenge. Consensus decision-making ensures that everyone's concerns are being taken into account in the OSCE. This principle of inclusiveness is dear to Switzerland. But it comes with big responsibility, as every participating State is de facto a veto power.

The negotiations about the decisions and declarations for this ministerial meeting have indicated that small but concrete and meaningful progress is possible in the OSCE. But they have also shown that progress in the OSCE is dependent on political will.

It is **our responsibility**, dear colleagues, to make the OSCE work and provide our citizens with the kind of security that they need and deserve. So let us strive for security together rather than insecurity apart. The Swiss chairmanship is ready to work hard towards this goal – and, I trust, so are you!

Priorities of the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship: “Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone”

