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***“Principled and Pragmatic:  
Swiss Chairmanship Priorities to Revitalize the OSCE”***

**Hearing organized by the  
United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

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***Check against delivery***

*Chairman Cardin,  
Co-Chairman Smith,  
Commissioners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Thank you for the invitation to speak before your Commission. It is an honour and pleasure for me to address the issue of security – and of European security in particular – in front of members of the American Congress. Over the past 100 years, the United States has played a vital role in defending the values of liberty and security in Europe – and I wish to start by acknowledging this role.

The dramatic developments in Ukraine in recent weeks have been a sobering reminder that security in Europe cannot be taken for granted. These developments have also revealed the need to foster dialogue, rebuild trust, reaffirm shared norms, and consolidate bridges across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. It is my firm conviction that the OSCE has a major role to play in this regard.

The Swiss Chairmanship wishes to acknowledge the important role the Helsinki Commission plays within the OSCE. We also appreciate the close cooperation with the US Department of State on a wide range of OSCE issues. The United States is a crucial participant in the OSCE. It is the biggest contributor to its budget and in many ways indispensable to move the OSCE forward.

Switzerland has agreed to take the helm of the OSCE because the promotion of stability in Europe and beyond is a priority of our foreign policy. We also believe that we have something to offer as a neutral country with a tradition of good offices and mediation. A third reason is that the United States and a number of other partner countries asked us to take on this role. I therefore very much count on your valuable support.

I have listened to your introductory remarks very carefully and hope that we can discuss the issues raised in some detail today. But before we engage in this discussion, let me make some general remarks about the OSCE and the priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship.

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The fact that Switzerland is the first country to chair the OSCE for the second time (after 1996) indicates that we attach great importance to this organization. We value the OSCE as a forum for dialogue, a platform to generate and assist the implementation of common norms, and a field-based organization. We also acknowledge that the OSCE performs its many important tasks with a surprisingly low budget. Its annual budget is not much higher than the transfer fees paid for *one* top-class soccer player.

That said, the OSCE is currently not in a position to tap its full potential. The fact that its membership spans three continents is a key asset, but it is also a major challenge for decision-making. This is why as Chairperson-in-Office, I encourage all participating States to approach the OSCE in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.

If we want the OSCE to move forward, we need to be both principled and pragmatic.

- “Principled” in the sense that we should all stand up for our shared values and our OSCE commitments.
- “Pragmatic”, because no participating State will be able to see its objectives in the OSCE realized if it ignores the priorities and needs of others.

In the mid-1970s, the CSCE was a success because participants made compromises and trade-offs across the three “baskets”. Today, I strongly believe that if all participating States engage with a balanced approach among the OSCE’s three dimensions, we will find much common ground.

The OSCE’s comprehensive approach to security is a key asset of the organization and corresponds to today’s security needs. Making full use of this holistic model will make it possible to increase the level of security not just of states but also of citizens. As you are well aware as Senators and Members of Congress, our citizens are no longer primarily concerned about traditional military threats. The OSCE’s security approach is very much consistent with their security perceptions.

This is all the more important because the future relevance of the OSCE will much depend on its ability to produce tangible results for the individuals and communities of its participating States. Good politics, after all, is at the service of the people. This is why the leitmotiv of the Swiss Chairmanship is to create a security community for the benefit of everyone.

Calling for pragmatism does not mean that we should shy away from criticism in the OSCE. Recalling the OSCE's principles is more vital today than ever, especially when adherence to these principles is uncertain. I therefore encourage participating States to engage with each other in constructive ways to pave the way for shared solutions rather than alienation.

With its consensus-oriented political system and linguistic diversity, Switzerland is a kind of mini-OSCE. Based on our own experience, we seek to revitalize the OSCE's culture of dialogue by calling on all participating States to take a step towards one another. We encourage all States to make gestures of good will to rebuild trust and allow for progress within the OSCE.

*Ladies and gentlemen*

Since assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE at the beginning of 2014, my agenda has been dominated by the political crisis and recent escalation of violence in Ukraine. During the past weeks, I have repeatedly called on all sides to refrain from violence, resolve the crisis through dialogue and political means, and respect human rights. In a series of meetings, I have discussed options for OSCE assistance with the then-Ukrainian government as well as with members of the opposition.

The agreement reached on February 21 marked an important step towards ending the violence, and paved the way for a political solution of the crisis. I congratulate everyone involved who made this breakthrough possible, including the Polish, German and French Foreign Ministers and the Special Envoy of the Russian Federation.

With the appointment of an interim president by the Parliament, Ukraine has now entered a new phase of transition. Formidable challenges lie ahead. We should unite in our efforts to support Ukraine in these difficult times. A stable, democratic and united Ukraine is in the interest of us all.

Against this background, I proposed yesterday during my briefing at the UN Security Council to establish an International Contact Group on Ukraine. Ukraine should of course play a prominent role in the group and all international key actors should be included. We are currently consulting this idea with all actors concerned.

The main task of the proposed Contact Group would be to support Ukraine in its transition period. The Contact Group would serve as a platform for coordination and sharing

information on international assistance and project activities in Ukraine. The OSCE, through its impartiality and inclusivity, has the necessary attributes to host and moderate this group. Ukraine and all international actors involved in this crisis are in fact participating States of the OSCE.

I also announced yesterday my decision to appoint Ambassador Tim Guldemann as my Personal Envoy on Ukraine. He will coordinate all ongoing and planned activities of the OSCE in Ukraine on behalf of the Chairmanship. He will rapidly take up consultations with all sides and will cooperate closely with international partners.

A small OSCE core team has been sent to Ukraine to conduct a needs-assessment mission. There is an urgent need to rebuild trust among all parties involved. As I underlined yesterday at the UN, I encourage the new leaders of Ukraine to invite ODIHR to send a Human Rights Assessment Mission to the country to establish the facts and circumstances of the incidents that took place in Ukraine.

The Human Rights Assessment Mission would recommend measures to deal with serious violations of human rights allegedly committed during this crisis. Its findings would be presented in a report and would help advance national reconciliation in Ukraine.

Presidential elections will be a crucial moment in the current transition period. We expect the Ukrainian authorities to issue an early invitation for an ODIHR election observation mission. In view of the rapidly changing developments, we are also ready to review and further specify the activities of the OSCE's Project Coordinator's Office in Kiev.

We are currently witnessing a phase of de-escalation in Ukraine. It is essential to support a fair and inclusive process of transition which does not marginalize any part of Ukraine or any community. Ukraine deserves full international attention and support. I am convinced that the OSCE has the necessary tools to assist Ukraine in this difficult phase.

*Ladies and gentlemen*

Afghanistan – one of the OSCE's six Asian partners – is another hotspot where the OSCE can play a valuable role. While the international community develops its strategic vision for Afghanistan after 2014, the OSCE remains a good platform for practical, forward-looking regional co-operation and dialogue among all stakeholders. We continue to work closely with other international actors to ensure stability in Afghanistan and the wider region.

OSCE activities worth mentioning in this context are police training, borders and customs training, and counter narcotics. Our Central Asian field offices, the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and the Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, are building local capacities and expert networks linking Afghanistan and the Central Asian states.

We are also working towards establishing an OSCE Research Centre on Afghan-Central Asian issues. In addition, ODIHR will send an election support team to Afghanistan to assist with preparations for the Afghan elections this year.

With Switzerland chairing the Asian Partners for Cooperation next year, we are eager to discuss ideas of applying elements of the OSCE's cooperative security model to East Asia. Against the background of unresolved territorial disputes, rapidly rising defence budgets and growing risks of political polarization, East Asia could well benefit from the OSCE's experience in creating confidence and common norms through dialogue and transparency.

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Following these general observations, I will now outline the priorities of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship.

We have set three overall objectives. We seek to contribute to fostering security and stability, improving people's lives, and strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act. In a nutshell, our mission is to enhance security, freedom, and responsibility.

For each of our objectives, we have defined a number of priority areas. You have received a factsheet on these priorities. Let me just highlight a few points here.

### Fostering security and stability

With regard to our first objective of fostering security and stability, the Western Balkans figure prominently on our agenda. My Special Representative for the Western Balkans, Ambassador Stoudmann, has been tasked with facilitating regional cooperation and reconciliation. I plan to visit this region in the coming months.

The OSCE should play a supporting role in the implementation of the Belgrade-Pristina agreement. Indeed, the OSCE has recently facilitated local elections in northern Kosovo and will continue to monitor this year's electoral processes in South Eastern Europe.

I am also planning to travel to the South Caucasus. My Special Representative for this region, Ambassador Gnädinger, is co-chairing the Geneva International Discussions on the conflict in Georgia. These discussions are a unique, albeit fragile, platform to tackle the security and humanitarian aspects of the conflict. It is our hope that they will one day evolve into a forum that lays the ground for a settlement of the conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the most dangerous conflicts in Europe. One of my first meetings as Chairperson-in-Office was with the three co-chairs of the Minsk Group. I wish to emphasize at this point that both in Karabakh and in Georgia, United States involvement at the highest political level would be helpful for our efforts. I am convinced that the stalemate in these protracted conflicts can only be overcome with greater engagement and attention by international key players such as the United States. We very much appreciate the work of Ambassador Warlick, the US Co-Chair of the OSCE Minsk Group, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Rubin, the US Representative in the Geneva Discussions.

Conventional arms control and confidence- and security-building measures play a key role in joint efforts to strengthen military stability, transparency and predictability in the OSCE area. Yet while the need for conventional arms control remains undisputed, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe has reached an impasse.

Conventional arms control in Europe can likely only be re-launched on the basis of a new conceptual approach. This will require many countries to modify long-held positions. We should also seek ways to ensure that unresolved territorial conflicts do not block progress on pan-regional arms control. All this will require initiative and leadership by the United States. The Swiss Chairmanship regards the OSCE as a useful marketplace for ideas on conventional arms control and is ready to facilitate conceptual discussions in this respect.

### Improving people's lives

As for our second objective of improving people's lives, the implementation of all existing commitments in the Human Dimension is a key priority for us. We have defined and prepared our activities in this area on the basis of our two years' experience as Chair of the Human Dimension Committee. We aim to strengthen the implementation of commitments in full cooperation with the participating States, OSCE structures, and civil society.

Switzerland will host a chairmanship event on human rights defenders in Bern, Switzerland, in June. On this occasion, the director of ODIHR, Ambassador Lenarčič, will present guidelines prepared by ODIHR on the protection of human rights defenders. (I should add that I visited ODIHR at the end of January, and that recruiting a successor for Mr Lenarčič will be another major task in 2014).

The Swiss Chairmanship will also put the issue of torture back on the agenda of the OSCE. We are planning an event on torture prevention in Vienna at the beginning of April. Cooperation between national mechanisms, NGOs, ombudspersons, international organizations, the UN and the OSCE will be at the centre of the discussions at this event.

Another theme will be the fight against human trafficking. Hundreds of thousands of people, mainly women and children, are being forcefully trafficked in their own countries and across national borders. These victims are often sexually exploited or forced into slavery. This is a terrible crime. I wish to commend Co-Chair Smith for the three comprehensive bills you authored in the United States to combat trafficking and to help victims.

A week ago, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship – together with the Austrian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe – organized a Conference against trafficking in human beings. The goal was to discuss how legally binding standards, monitoring mechanisms, and political strategies can mutually reinforce each other and lead to effective action to counter trafficking in human beings.

As for the priority of a more reliable management of natural disasters, this is very much in the interest of the security and safety of our citizens. Disasters can hit anywhere at any time. The United States knows from its own experience that the scale, frequency, and severity of disasters triggered by natural hazards will continue to grow at an accelerating pace.

*Senator Cardin, Congressman Smith:* you witnessed with your own eyes the destructive force of tropical cyclone Sandy in October 2012. You visited the impacted areas on Maryland's Eastern Shore and New Jersey, where over 30 of your compatriots lost their lives and where 350'000 housing units were damaged, causing economic losses of well over 30 billion dollars.

Switzerland considers that disaster risk reduction should be firmly embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. Our aim must be to move from disaster response to disaster prevention and climate change mitigation. We will address this issue at the meetings of the 22<sup>nd</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum. In so doing, we seek to contribute to societies becoming resilient to climate change and disaster risk.

There is also a strong link between the human and the politico-military dimensions of the OSCE in combating transnational threats. For instance, this year we are tackling issues such as human rights in countering terrorism, kidnapping for ransom, and the return of foreign fighters. A major opportunity to discuss these issues will be the annual OSCE conference on counter-terrorism, which will take place in Interlaken, Switzerland. We are counting on the presence of American experts at the Interlaken Conference and on your continued support in tackling these issues.

In the area of cyber threats, the Swiss Chairmanship will focus on the implementation of the initial set of OSCE confidence-building measures agreed last year. I would like to acknowledge the successful work of the US Chair of the Informal Working Group. The

Swiss Chairmanship is grateful that the United States accepted to continue to chair this Working Group and will support its efforts to develop additional confidence-building measures.

### Strengthening the OSCE's Capacity to Act

Regarding our third objective of strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act, the "Helsinki+40" process is of particular importance. Adapting the OSCE to the security needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is both challenging and vital. This process is in itself an important confidence building measure as it helps address divergent security perspectives in a result-oriented manner. But it should be more than that. "Helsinki+40" is about defining the ways and means of the OSCE – and hence its future relevance.

There are now a roadmap and eight coordinators in place to structure these discussions in Vienna. Again, participating States will need to show a degree of flexibility for this process to translate into meaningful results. I also believe that we need ministerial-level debates to get a solid idea of where the OSCE should be heading.

Numerous issues are being addressed in the context of "Helsinki+40". Let me mention here one issue where the Swiss Chairmanship would particularly appreciate US support. I am referring to the need to improve the effectiveness of OSCE field operations.

These field operations have proven valuable in assisting host countries in implementing their commitments. But it is vital that we continuously evaluate such activities, with a view to maximizing their effectiveness and local acceptance. We are currently conceptualizing new types of field presences with a better balance of OSCE activities. US support for these discussions will help carry them forward.

As for other means of rendering the OSCE more effective, I would argue that the model of consecutive chairmanships, as carried out by Switzerland and Serbia, has already proven its merit. Bern and Belgrade have developed joint work and implementation plans. We have also agreed that our Special Representatives will be reappointed by the end of this year. Consecutive chairmanships can provide the OSCE with more continuity and are a model worth considering for the future.

Linked to the “Helsinki+40” debates is the Swiss priority of strengthening the OSCE’s role in mediation. The peaceful settlement of disputes that was included in the Helsinki Final Act remains one of the core tasks of the OSCE today. This is why we are contributing to the mediation-support capacity that is currently being built in the OSCE Secretariat. The aim is to capture knowledge about mediation processes and make sure that OSCE mediators are supported with training and thematic expertise. In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the important assistance provided by the the United States Institute of Peace and the Conflict Management Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

The Swiss Chairmanship attaches great importance to our final priority of enhancing involvement of civil society and in particular of young people.

We firmly believe that offering a platform for a dialogue with civil society contributes to assisting OSCE institutions and participating States in implementing commitments. It also provides an opportunity for our governments to listen and respond to the needs of our citizens.

Four regional workshops are being organized in four different regions of the OSCE in the coming months. The first workshop has recently taken place in Belgrade. The two topics identified by civil society as the most pressing issues were torture prevention and hate crime and hate speech, the latter with a particular focus on Roma and Sinti. It was an inspiring start to our workshop series – the next destinations being Austria, Tajikistan, and Georgia. The recommendations resulting from this process should feed into the final civil society conference that will be held in parallel to the Ministerial Council in Basel in December 2014.

Finally, there is our “*Youth for Security and Cooperation in Europe*” project, which brings together 57 young people from all OSCE participating States. This project is particularly dear to me, as our shared responsibility as politicians is to shape a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future for the generations to come.

In the course of this year, our Youth Ambassadors will simulate a whole OSCE negotiation cycle. Last month they simulated a Permanent Council meeting in Vienna. I also invited three of these Youth Ambassadors to address the “real” Permanent Council that met in the

Hofburg Palace in Vienna. In July, a Ministerial Council Meeting will be simulated in Belgrade.

The purpose of these meetings is to negotiate a Youth Action Plan with recommendations for the OSCE and its participating States. The Youth Ambassadors will present their Action Plan at the Ministerial Council in Basel, which I hope will serve as an inspiration for the OSCE to work out its own Youth Action Plan.

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*Chairman Cardin,  
Co-Chairman Smith,  
Commissioners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Let me conclude my statement by thanking the United States for its continued commitment to the OSCE. As an institution complementary to NATO, the OSCE constitutes America's second foothold in Europe. It is a bridge between the Euro-Atlantic and the Eurasian region. The stronger this bridge, the stronger our common security.

Thank you for your attention and support. I look forward to your questions and comments.