



Swiss Delegation

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“Demographic Trends, Migration and Integrating Persons belonging to National Minorities: Ensuring Security and Sustainable Development in the OSCE area”

Swiss Intervention at the Opening Plenary

Mr Chairman,

The Swiss delegation would like to thank the Czech government for its warm welcome and for hosting the OSCE Economic Forum at Czernin Palace. We also would very much like to thank the Slovenian Chairmanship for its contribution to the preparation of this year's Forum.

Mr Chairman, Switzerland attaches great importance to the integration – whether political, social or economic - of persons belonging to national minorities. Without integration our country with its own minorities could hardly survive. In particular, the promotion of economic integration often requires positive measures in favour of persons belonging to national minorities. In order to identify and implement appropriate positive measures as well as to explain their need it is essential to have reliable and relevant statistical data on the economic exclusion of persons belonging to national minorities. Switzerland will therefore recommend in Session VIII that the OSCE uses synergies among its institutions in order to assist states by providing them with the necessary expert knowledge to collect relevant statistical data.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to stress the importance of the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSCE and the UNECE that was signed in Sofia last December. We are very grateful to the UNECE for its readiness to share its know-how for the review of the OSCE commitments in the economic and environmental dimension. Switzerland welcomes the sharing of tasks between the OSCE and UNECE that helps prevent redundancies and makes use of comparative advantages. The excellent current implementation review on the cluster “Integration, trade and transport” shows how important UNECE's contribution is to our organization.

Particularly the topic of transport, i.e. secure and efficient transport ways, is of essential importance for a sustainable development that promotes trade and security in the OSCE region. Switzerland therefore welcomes the proposal to focus on the theme “Transportation in the OSCE area” at the Economic Forum 2006. This even more so, as transport is also one of the main topics within the UNECE and the UNECE therefore has comprehensive and useful knowledge in this field.

Mr Chairman, Switzerland is still committed to find a more efficient format for the Economic Forum. We are open regarding the concrete structure of this reform. The proposal that was made already last year to reduce the duration of the forum is in our view an important step in the right direction towards higher efficiency, an aim that we all strive for. We welcome any suggestion that contributes to the discussion on a more efficient format of the Forum and hope that concrete results can be achieved by the next Forum.