

PC.DEL/139/08
20 February 2008

ENGLISH
Original: GERMAN

Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND
AT THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

19 February 2008

Regarding the future of the OSCE in Kosovo

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Foreign Minister of the Republic of Serbia,

We would not be meeting here today if all the efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement of the question of the status of Kosovo, which Switzerland has supported, had had the desired success. We have taken note of the fact that the day before yesterday the authorities in Pristina reached a turning point. The political and legal assessment of this turning point may prove to be a divisive issue for the participating States. For the Swiss Government it is important that the OSCE does not allow itself to become paralysed as a result. The fact is that the work that needs to be accomplished in Kosovo has not changed. It is therefore of paramount importance to look to the future and to ensure that the OSCE can continue to support the people — all the people — who live there.

The OSCE has a good track record in Kosovo, particularly in the strengthening of democratic institutions and in the area of human rights. In this respect, it has been notable to a greater extent than other international players for its activity particularly at the local level and for offering tailor-made support in this area. This is precisely the added value of the OSCE Mission: its immediate presence in the field, its involvement in all the communities, and its direct contacts both with local authorities and with all population segments in Kosovo.

In the coming weeks and months in particular, the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OMiK) could well provide one of the few elements of continuity and stability. In the delicate phase in which we now find ourselves, this could prove decisive.

By offering protection to all the communities living in Kosovo, the OMiK mandate encompasses aspects that are more than ever vital to stability and security in Kosovo, and this will remain the case under the new conditions. Furthermore, thanks to its capabilities the OSCE is in a unique position to monitor and assess developments on the ground, especially when it comes to evaluating the human rights situation accurately and on an individual basis. Among the other international players already active in Kosovo and those set to join them, for example the European Union, the OSCE must be aware of its specific role and focus on it.

We — the 56 participating States of the OSCE — are in a position, with the support of our Organization, to reaffirm our will to continue to defend human rights and, in particular,

the rights of members of minority groups in Kosovo for the good of all the population groups living there.

Thank you for your attention.