

Delegation of Switzerland

**STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF SWITZERLAND
AT THE 949th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

25 April 2013

Regarding the agreement in the Belgrade-Priština dialogue

Mr. Chairperson,

Switzerland welcomes the agreement in the Belgrade-Priština dialogue negotiated by Ms. Catherine Ashton, European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs. The agreement makes an essential contribution to the normalization of relations between the two States. Belgrade and Priština have shown that they are willing to set aside their legacy issues and look to the future. We welcome the courage of their leaders to move forward so decisively. We also thank Ms. Ashton and her team for their untiring efforts to achieve this agreement, which permits a constructive and peaceful solution for northern Kosovo.

According to the information received, the parties expect the OSCE to help conduct local elections in the four municipalities of northern Kosovo. This is an opportunity once again to demonstrate the OSCE's capabilities in a sensitive environment. During the Serbian parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012 the OSCE played an important role in defusing the tense situation in the run-up to the elections. Thanks to its support all Serbian citizens, including those in Kosovo, were able to vote. The OSCE, in close collaboration with the Kosovan authorities and all members of the population in northern Kosovo, can now once again help to create an environment that will ensure fair and free elections.

A sustainable and enduring normalization of relations depends crucially on the implementation of the agreement without delay, particularly in the north of Kosovo. The OSCE is well placed to help in the successful implementation of the agreement. Democratic development, the rule of law, respect for human rights and economic prosperity are important pillars for lasting stability in the region. The new security structure to be set up is just one of the challenges where the OSCE can make an important contribution.

The OSCE is the only civilian international organization with an extensive field presence in Kosovo – also in the four municipalities north of the Ibar with a majority Serb population. It is therefore in a good position to foster participation by minorities in the political process and to make a contribution to the overall integration of the north in Kosovo's State institutions.