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**STATEMENT BY MS. PASCALE BAERISWYL,
STATE SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF SWITZERLAND,
AT THE TWENTY-SIXTH MEETING
OF THE OSCE MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

Bratislava, 5 and 6 December 2019

Mr. Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Dear colleagues,

On behalf of Switzerland, I should like to sincerely thank the Slovak Republic for its hospitality. It is an honour for me to address this Council.

In the eyes of Switzerland, the OSCE is and will remain a central pillar of European security in a comprehensive understanding incorporating all three dimensions. It is thus important for us to have a functioning organization with an adequate budget.

Next year we will be celebrating a double anniversary: the 45th anniversary of Helsinki and the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris. We find ourselves today at an important site of the Velvet Revolution. In 1990, we were convinced that the era of confrontation was over.

But many people in Europe today are not in the mood for celebrating. The implementation of the visions of that time remains a challenge.

A Swiss author wrote 170 years ago: “For the fainthearted nothing is worth anything; for the bold a little is worth a lot.”

Are we fainthearted? Do we underestimate what we have?

We must say no! Let us be bold and use and further develop what we have achieved.

The security situation in Europe has not improved in the past few years.

Switzerland condemns the annexation of Crimea by Russia as a violation of national and international law and as a serious violation of OSCE commitments.

The settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine remains one of the OSCE’s core tasks. We acknowledge the great commitment of the new Ukrainian government, which has led to marked progress. But the civilian population suffers every day from this conflict. We appeal to all sides to respect the agreements made. We support the central role of the Trilateral Contact Group. It is therefore an honour for

us that Ambassador Heidi Grau has been appointed Special Representative in Ukraine and in the Trilateral Contact Group. We are grateful for the confidence shown by all sides. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine also plays a central role in monitoring the security situation in the east of Ukraine. We hope that the upcoming Normandy summit will give further stimulus to the negotiations.

We support the OSCE's engagement in Georgia. We are concerned at the introduction by the authorities in Sukhumi on 1 October of entry restrictions. We condemn this step and call on the participants in the Geneva International Discussions to find a solution guaranteeing freedom of movement for all persons entering and leaving.

Progress in all these conflicts is modest. To achieve more we must have the political will and courage to really use the OSCE's instruments.

In conclusion, I should like to thank Foreign Minister Lajčák and his team for organizing this Ministerial Council meeting and for their outstanding commitment.

I should also like to thank Secretary General Thomas Greminger, Director Ingibjörg Gísladóttir, High Commissioner Lamberto Zannier and OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Harlem Désir for their work throughout the year. Switzerland wishes the Chairmanship country Albania every success for 2020. We are pleased to note that Sweden and Poland have declared their willingness to assume the Chairmanship in 2021 and 2022.

Thank you for your attention.