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## OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2018

### Working Session 1

#### **Democratic Institutions**

Warsaw, 10 September 2018

#### Declaration of the Swiss delegation

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Thank you, Moderator.

Let me first thank you personally for your work as Head of the ODIHR Election Department and the two introducers of this session for their remarks, which remind us about the principles for conducting genuine elections, as well as show concretely how to bring positive change to a country is possible.

Moderator,

Across the OSCE area, citizens are losing faith in their government. We must hear these voices, understand the message and react to it. One of the consequences is the raise of populism. Populism may attract votes, however in the long-term it deceives expectations.

Switzerland is convinced that democratic institutions are the cornerstone of a thriving society and a lasting economic development. The critical thinking of every individual and the possibility to articulate opinions and ideas in the public sphere are needed, should be protected and encouraged.

Functioning democratic systems have some aspects in common. Let me briefly elaborate on three important points, which are to some extent our recommendations:

First, an election process needs to be *democratic*: meaning with equal, universal, transparent, free and fair elections. There should be no room for tailor-made election processes favoring only the ruling elite. In this regard, Switzerland underscores the importance of ODIHRs election observation mission in OSCE participating States. ODIHR methodology is fair, objective and transparent and one of the reasons why the OSCE is respected and sometimes feared by some.

Second, the political rights of the citizens need to be respected. Restrictions on the freedom of expression are not compatible with democratic values. Furthermore, state propaganda and Fake-News cripple the public debate and hinder critical thinking.

Third, checks and balances need to be effective. There is no room for judicial authorities under executive control or a legislative body without any real decision-making or oversight powers. Obstruction of justice is a very serious matter.

Only if these basic criterias are met, has a democracy the necessary legitimacy and the force to unleash its full potential. Democracy is not flawless and can produce undesired outcomes. However, the key strength of robust democratic systems is the ability to evolve and to rectify undesirable developments, which guarantees political, economic and social stability in the long term.

Thank you Moderator,