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Delegation of Switzerland

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

7 July 2011

Regarding the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture – 26 June 2011

Mr. Chairperson,

In order to eradicate torture and ensure the implementation of the Convention against Torture, the United Nations has proclaimed 26 June the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.

Despite the fact that the prohibition of torture is part of the peremptory norms of international law, acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment continue to exist everywhere. It is particularly worrying to note that both governments and populations increasingly see torture as a lesser evil. Switzerland is alarmed by this trend.

The question of impunity was already at the centre of our concerns in 1984 when the Convention against Torture was adopted. A total of 147 States are now party to that convention, and 57 to its optional protocol. While these figures are certainly encouraging, it is very disturbing to note that the States do not fully respect the commitments they have undertaken or fail to respect them at all. We also note that only 32 of the State Parties to the optional protocol have introduced a national prevention mechanism.

The prime reason for the use of torture in many countries is linked to problems within the judicial system, which creates major loopholes with respect to the criminalization of the practice of torture. Consequently, Switzerland supports a more systematic criminalization of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, in accordance with the relevant international conventions.

We are convinced that acts of torture are a tragic event having many profound physical and psychological consequences for the victims. It is therefore essential to honour the rights of the victims to compensation and rehabilitation and in so doing to place their point of view at the centre of our approach.

For Switzerland, the elimination of torture is a foreign policy priority. Together with civil society organizations and the various regional and international bodies, we are working to eradicate this scourge. There can be no justification for torture.