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CIO.GAL/30/14
25 February 2014



ENGLISH only

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Speech by

Mr Didier Burkhalter

Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE

**Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs,
Switzerland**

Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE:

Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone

Briefing to the UN Security Council

New York, 24 February 2014

Madam President,

It is an honour for me to address you in my capacity as current Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and I would like to thank you for the invitation.

Switzerland accepted the Chairmanship of the OSCE because promoting stability in Europe, in the whole OSCE-area and in fragile regions of the world is one of the main priorities of our foreign policy. Furthermore, we are convinced that our tradition of providing good offices and mediation can make a valuable contribution to the OSCE's work.

Responsibility and solidarity are two of the basic principles of Switzerland's policy of peace and security. This is made evident by the policy we are pursuing within the UN, in our decision to apply for a seat on the UN Security Council (2023/24), and in our taking up again the helm of the OSCE. Switzerland is the first country to chair the organization for a second time (the first Swiss Chairmanship being in 1996).

It is also the first time in the history of the OSCE that two countries, namely Switzerland and Serbia, form a consecutive Chairmanship for two years. Together, we have elaborated a joint action plan, and we expect more continuity in the work of the organization will be achieved with this modality.

It is therefore with particular pleasure that I address the Council under the Lithuanian presidency since this innovative form of the Chairmanship was facilitated by your government at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vilnius in 2011.

Today, I will outline our priorities for the chairmanship while taking into account some reflections on the cooperation between the OSCE and the UN. In my capacity as Chairperson-in-Office, I am seeking to strengthen this cooperation. Furthermore, I will talk about the role the OSCE is playing in international efforts to manage the crisis in Ukraine. This issue has been a significant factor in shaping the initial phase of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship.

The OSCE is the largest regional security organization in the world; it covers both the Euro-Atlantic and Euro-Asian regions, bringing together 57 (fifty-seven) countries from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It makes its decisions by consensus and must therefore constantly seek compromise to be able to act. A spirit of cooperation thus lies at the very heart of all the OSCE's activities.

This spirit of cooperation is also visible in its external relations. As a regional organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE contributes to the efforts of the UN to maintain or re-establish peace, security and stability at the international level.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has recently placed renewed focus on the need to revive the role of regional organizations under Chapter VIII. We are organizing a conference on this very topic in Vienna on 27 and 28 May 2014. Representatives of the UN and several regional organizations will be participating.

The concept of multi-dimensional security that the OSCE has developed could serve as an inspiration for other regional players. In the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, it was recognized for the first time that threats to stability and security do not only originate from troops and weapons but also from economic crises, environmental degradation and human rights violations. This model of comprehensive security is more relevant than ever today.

In this sense, we hope to increase cooperation between the OSCE, other regional security organizations and the UN, all from the perspective of Chapter VIII of the Charter.

Cooperation between the OSCE and the Council of Europe is one example at regional level. A week ago, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship together with the Austrian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe jointly organized a conference on combating trafficking in human beings whose goal was increased institutional cooperation between the two organizations in this field. The conference was a success, and an action plan was elaborated that identifies specific measures such as the development of joint training sessions to improve legal proceedings.

Concerning the relationship between the OSCE and the UN, closer cooperation on the ground should be considered. A successful example is undoubtedly the work performed in Kosovo by the UN Interim Administration Mission and the OSCE field operation.

Within the OSCE, we have launched a review process aimed at improving the effectiveness of our field operations. We would like to set up a new generation of field presences, which would better meet the specific needs of each host country. At the same time, the prevention

capacity of our missions remains crucial. We want to maintain the OSCE as a field-based organization that supports the host country in implementing the commitments it has made within the OSCE.

As OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I am interested in discussing opportunities for close cooperation on the ground between the field presences of the UN and the OSCE.

Also under Chapter VIII of the Charter, we could envisage other joint activities, for example in training. Two years ago, we jointly organized a course on conflict prevention for UN, EU and OSCE staff. This format should be reactivated and serve as a model.

In the field of elections, cooperation between the UN and regional organizations is complementary, as seen for example in Georgia or in Afghanistan. In the latter context, the OSCE will be monitoring the presidential elections in April 2014. Afghanistan is one of the six Asian Partners for Cooperation and this will be the fifth time that the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights observes elections there.

With Switzerland chairing the Asian Partners for Cooperation next year, we are eager to discuss ideas of applying elements of the OSCE's cooperative security model to East Asia. Against the background of unresolved territorial disputes, rapidly rising defence budgets and growing risks of political tensions, East Asia could well benefit from the OSCE's experience in building confidence and establishing common norms through dialogue and transparency.

Madam President,

Since assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE at the beginning of 2014, my agenda has been dominated by the political crisis and recent escalation of violence in Ukraine. The outbreaks of violence in the context of the struggle about the future course of Ukraine and the high degree of instability this country has recently been facing are a sobering reminder that security in Europe cannot be taken for granted. These developments have revealed the need to foster dialogue, re-establish trust, and rebuild bridges both within Ukraine and across the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian region. It is my firm conviction that the OSCE has a major role to play on both counts.

During the past weeks, I have repeatedly called on all sides to refrain from violence, resolve the crisis through dialogue and political means, and respect human rights. In a series of meetings, I have discussed options for OSCE assistance with the then-Ukrainian government as well as with members of the opposition.

The agreement reached on February 21 marked an important step towards ending the violence, and paved the way for a political solution of the crisis. I congratulate everyone involved who made this breakthrough possible, including the Polish, German and French Foreign Ministers and the Special Envoy of the Russian Federation.

With the appointment of an interim president by the Parliament, Ukraine has now entered a new phase of transition. Formidable challenges lie ahead. We should unite in our efforts to support Ukraine in these difficult times. A stable, democratic and united Ukraine is in the interest of us all.

I therefore propose establishing an International Contact Group on Ukraine. Ukraine should of course play a prominent role in the group and the international key actors should be included. We are currently consulting this idea with all actors involved.

The main task of the proposed Contact Group would be the support of Ukraine in its transition period. The Contact Group would serve as a platform for coordination and sharing information on international assistance and project activities in Ukraine. The OSCE, through its impartiality and inclusivity, has the necessary attributes to host and moderate this group. Ukraine and all international actors involved in this crisis are in fact participating States of the OSCE.

I have decided today to appoint Ambassador Tim Guldemann as my Personal Envoy on Ukraine. He will coordinate all ongoing and planned activities of the OSCE in Ukraine on

behalf of the Chairmanship. He will rapidly take up consultations with all sides and will cooperate closely with international partners.

A small OSCE core team has been sent to Ukraine to conduct a needs-assessment mission in the next few days. There is an urgent need to rebuild trust among all parties involved. I encourage the new leaders of Ukraine to invite ODIHR to send a Human Rights Assessment Mission to the country to establish the facts and circumstances of the incidents that took place in Ukraine.

The Human Rights Assessment Mission would recommend measures to deal with serious violations of human rights allegedly committed during that period. Its findings would be presented in a report and would help advance national reconciliation in Ukraine.

Presidential elections will be a crucial moment in the current transition period. We expect the Ukrainian authorities to issue an early invitation for an ODIHR election observation mission. In view of the rapidly changing developments, we are also ready to review and further specify the activities of the OSCE's Project Coordinator's Office in Kiev.

Madam President

We are currently witnessing a phase of de-escalation in Ukraine. It is essential to support a fair and inclusive process of transition which does not marginalize any part of Ukraine or any community. Ukraine deserves full international attention and support. I am convinced that the OSCE has the necessary tools to assist Ukraine in this difficult phase.

The priorities of the Swiss Chairmanship

I will now turn to the priorities of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship. As you can see on the tableau in front of you, Switzerland aims to contribute to:

1. fostering security and stability;
2. improving people's lives;
3. and strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act.

These three objectives embody the values of security, freedom and responsibility. For each of these objectives, we have defined three to four priority areas. You will find information on these priority areas in the factsheet provided. Time constraints prevent me from going into each priority in detail here, but I would be happy to provide further information on these areas after your comments and questions.

1. Fostering security and stability

With regard to our first objective of fostering security and stability, I will limit myself to our *geographical* priorities which are the Western Balkans and the Southern Caucasus. I will also briefly mention the situation in Transdniestria.

In the Western Balkans, we aim to make progress on regional cooperation and assist the people in dealing with the past. A specific field of cooperation we want to support concerns the issue of missing persons. We also intend to launch a process on migratory challenges which should lead to the development of a regional strategy with the Regional Cooperation Council and in close consultation with the EU.

The violent recent protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the resignation of several political leaders remind us of the difficult political, economic and social context in that country and the prevailing risk of instability. Our mission on the ground is working closely with EUFOR and the EU delegation to help improve the situation.

The OSCE field presence is ready to offer its good offices and to facilitate dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is well positioned to do so as it has managed to build up trust over the years – both with cantonal and federal authorities and with representatives of civil society. My Special Representative has called on the authorities to engage in immediate dialogue with the citizens.

We will also contribute to normalising the situation in Northern Kosovo. The OSCE is not only organizing elections there, but also aims to help create a democratic environment, restore confidence and encourage the political participation of minorities – again in close cooperation with the EU.

As for our second geographical priority, Switzerland is looking for ways to build on its long-term involvement in the Southern Caucasus to help resolve the protracted conflicts in that region.

In Georgia, the OSCE is working closely with the UN and the EU in the context of the Geneva International Discussions. The Swiss Chairmanship will support this format as much as possible. We stand ready to revive discussions on an international presence (OSCE, UN) in Georgia if this is in line with Georgia's wishes and if all the parties involved demonstrate a degree of openness and flexibility on this issue.

Concerning the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Swiss Chairmanship will maintain and support the established formats for conflict settlement (primarily the Minsk Group, co-chaired by the US, Russia and France). This conflict deserves particular attention at this stage as tensions have been rising lately with several violent incidents.

I also consider it important to draw your attention to the difficult situation in Transdniestria and throughout Moldova. Alongside Russia and Ukraine, the OSCE has been mandated to act as joint mediator in the Transdniestrian settlement process since 1993. There are indications that we may be entering a period of growing tensions in this conflict. I ask all parties involved to act with caution and to refrain from making unilateral moves. More than ever, it is essential that the international community act in a coordinated manner.

2. Improving people's lives

Our second objective is to improve people's lives. It is important for the OSCE to act not only in the interest of States but also of their citizens. All good politics is in the service of the people. This notion also lies behind our leitmotiv to "create a security community for the benefit of everyone".

The Swiss Chairmanship is convinced that reinforcing cooperation between regional and global organizations in promoting and protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law significantly increases the impact of its work. Regional organizations need to play a leading role in implementing *on the ground* the commitments undertaken in the context of the UN.

This is precisely why we have decided to focus our efforts on better implementation. International instruments for human rights, democracy and the rule of law as well as conventions and political commitments can only help improve people's lives if their implementation is accepted and promoted by states at national level. Organizations like the UN and the OSCE should do everything possible to support states in these efforts.

One particular aspect worth mentioning here is our focus on the prevention of torture. A Chairmanship event on this issue will bring together the UN Special Rapporteur on torture, Juan Méndez, and experts from civil society and other multilateral and national agencies involved in torture prevention. There will also be a series of regional workshops, with the aim of increasing the involvement of civil society across the OSCE.

The Swiss Chairmanship undertakes these initiatives with a view to encouraging the implementation of international commitments throughout the OSCE, beginning with those contained in the basic documents, namely the Convention against Torture (CAT) and its Optional Protocol (OP-CAT). The Optional Protocol, which has not yet been ratified by all participating States, is a fundamental instrument for combating torture in all its forms.

On the question of climate change and security, it is to be noted that one consequence of climate change is the increasing number of natural disasters, which are putting many human lives at risk. This is why Switzerland has decided to make better prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters a priority of its Chairmanship. Promoting the sharing of know-how and fostering cooperation on these issues will improve the protection of people living in the OSCE area and beyond.

We are working on this in close cooperation with specialized UN agencies such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). We are also seeking to contribute to the World Conference on Disaster Reduction of March 2015 in Sendai (Japan). Moreover, we are committed to firmly embedding this topic in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Within the field of combating transnational threats, the fight against terrorism is a key concern. Kidnapping for ransom is a major source of funding for terrorist groups and organizations.

We should all find a common response to this challenge. This is why the Swiss Chairmanship welcomes the Security Council's adoption of *Resolution 2133* of 27 January. This resolution invites Member States to continue holding expert discussions within the UN and other competent international or regional organizations. The OSCE will contribute to these discussions. Kidnapping for ransom will be the subject of several OSCE debates,

notably within its security committee and at a conference on counter-terrorism at the end of April in Switzerland.

At this conference, we will also address the issue of foreign fighters. Over the last few years, an increasing number of citizens from OSCE participating States have joined armed groups outside the OSCE area and have participated in violent conflicts. Syria is a particularly prominent example with many such foreign fighters.

Once these people return, they often stay in touch with extremists and terrorists, which heightens the risk of terrorist attacks for their home countries. We therefore need to discuss how to prevent persons from being recruited and departing to these conflict zones. But we also need to reflect on how to reintegrate returnees from such conflicts into our societies.

3. Strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act

Concerning our third objective of strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act, I wish to draw your attention to the OSCE's current reform process, called "Helsinki+40". The idea behind this process is to adapt the OSCE to the changing security needs, to address governance issues and to redefine the organization's ways and means. The UN underwent a similar process in 2005, which resulted in the adoption of the World Summit Outcome Document. The purpose of the "Helsinki+40" process is to get a clear idea of where the OSCE is heading by 2015, 40 years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act.

Within the framework of this reform process, we are seeking to strengthen the OSCE's mediation capacities. During our Chairmanship, we would like to put Switzerland's particular expertise in the field of mediation to the benefit of the organization. Our goal is to create a unit within the OSCE that is specialized in mediation and dialogue facilitation.

The initial results are encouraging and we would like to thank the UN, and more specifically the Mediation Support Unit, for sharing its knowledge, participating in an expert exchange, and co-organizing a training session.

In this context, I welcome the recent creation of a UN-OSCE Mediation Partnership Framework between our Conflict Prevention Centre and the UN Policy and Mediation Division. I hope that this joint framework will lead to numerous concrete activities in the field of mediation.

Lastly, we also aim to enhance the exchange with representatives of civil society during our Chairmanship. In particular, we want to give young people a voice. We have organized a

“Model OSCE”, where Youth Ambassadors from all participating States will jointly develop a youth action plan similar to the “Model UN” and the UN youth action plan. We hope that their plan will inspire the OSCE Ministerial Council to adopt a youth action plan of its own and to provide young people with an institutionalized role within the OSCE.

Madam President

I have highlighted numerous opportunities for closer cooperation between the UN and the OSCE. We are eager to intensify the dialogue between our organizations. My hope is that we will succeed in translating many ideas for further cooperation into successful projects.

I would be happy to answer any questions or comments that the members of the UN Security Council may have.

Thank you.