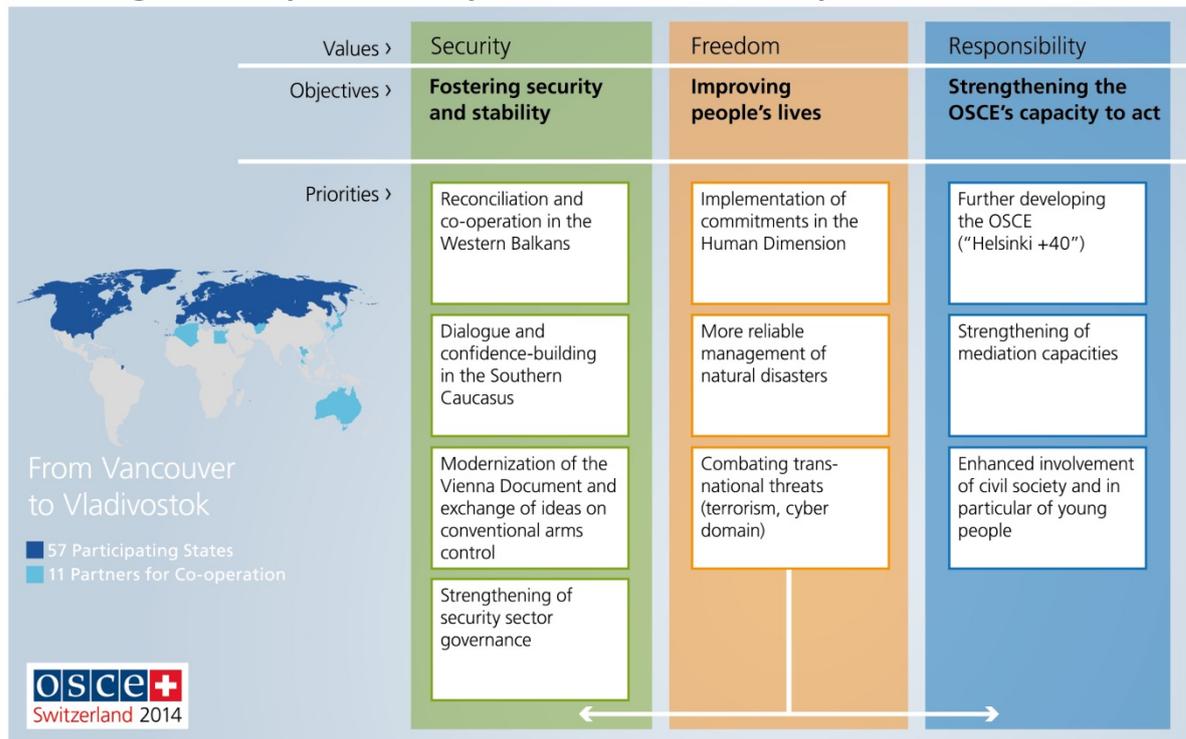


Swiss OSCE Chairmanship in 2014

The Swiss Chairmanship's commitment to implementing its priorities

Priorities of the 2014 Swiss Chairmanship:
 "Creating a Security Community for the Benefit of Everyone"



Objective 1: Fostering security and stability

Reconciliation and co-operation in the Western Balkans: Under the auspices of its Special Representative for the Western Balkans, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship helped to normalise relations between Belgrade and Pristina, mainly by supporting OSCE facilitation of the holding of local and general elections throughout Kosovo and, together with the European Union and Serbia, by encouraging the OSCE's deployment in northern Kosovo too. Furthermore, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship encouraged Serbian and Albanian leaders to strengthen their relations and, in addition, set about promoting the launch of a regional process aimed at meeting the challenges posed by flows of extra-European immigrants into the region. In order to encourage the regional reconciliation process, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship also facilitated the historic commitment by four presidents in the region to resolve the issue of missing persons following the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

Dialogue and confidence-building in the South Caucasus: The OSCE Special Representative for the South Caucasus represents the OSCE as a co-mediator in the Geneva talks on the Georgia conflict and in the "Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism" (IPRM) in Ergneti (Georgia). The security situation stabilised further, and the negotiating process was successfully continued in June after a strained round of talks. Switzerland closely monitored the attempted mediation in the Nagorno-

Karabakh conflict by the three co-chairs of the OSCE Minsk Group. When OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter visited Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia from 2-4 June 2014, he championed the idea of a more intensive, structured negotiating process in Nagorno-Karabakh. His proposal was favourably received by the mediators.

Modernisation of the Vienna Document: The content and provisions of the 2011 Vienna Document were retained and not fundamentally questioned within the framework of the ongoing talks on updating the Vienna Document. Switzerland helped to ensure that the continuing work has so far not fallen back to below the results attained in 2011 and also to enable the safeguarding of achieved *acquis*. The present tensions between NATO and the Russian Federation in light of the Ukraine crisis brought the talks on conventional arms control to a *de facto* standstill. No concrete progress towards breaking the deadlock is to be expected in the medium term. However, by providing and supporting informal forums and platforms, Switzerland is committed to ensuring that a minimal dialogue is maintained.

Strengthening of security sector governance: Switzerland prioritised efforts to ensure that the democratic control of armed forces in the OSCE be embedded as a transversal issue. Thanks to the Chairmanship's activities, capacities in the security sector reform and governance were strengthened. Internal guidelines on this topic are being developed. A conference organised together with the United Nations on strengthening governance in the security sector heightened awareness in the OSCE States and was in line with the objective of shoring up cooperation with the UN in this area. In 2014, a "Friendship Group", to which 20 participating States now belong, was set up. The aim of this group is to generate political support for this issue. Serbia intends to make further headway in this domain. With respect to the OSCE Code of Conduct (CoC), in 2014 Switzerland took part in or co-sponsored a number of conferences in Belgrade, Vienna and Zagreb. In the framework of OSCE Chairmanship projects, Switzerland also initiated the "Compilation of Practical Examples for Democratic Control of Armed Forces", a kind of "best practice guide" designed to improve the CoC's implementation. A "Commemorative Study 20 Years OSCE CoC" has been produced and will be presented to the OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel. Together with the Swiss parliamentary delegation to the OSCE a parliamentary resolution on the CoC was drawn up, which will be submitted at the 2015 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Objective 2: Improving people's lives

Implementation of commitments in the human dimension: Switzerland proposed an ambitious agenda for respecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Throughout the year, the Swiss Chairmanship set priorities and refocused the OSCE's attention on the defence of human rights, torture prevention, respect for human rights in the fight against terrorism, gender equality, the fight against human trafficking, and tolerance and non-discrimination. Several high-level conferences (conferences on combating human trafficking (February), torture prevention (April), counter-terrorism (April), defence of human rights (June), and gender equality (July)) involving ministers, representatives of civil society and experts from various organisations (the OSCE, UN and Council of Europe) resulted in the drafting of conclusions and specific action plans which will serve as the basis for the OSCE's future work. Torture prevention was a common theme throughout Switzerland's Chairmanship, both in its work with the OSCE States and at the four regional workshops organised for representatives of civil society. Numerous prospective ways of bolstering the OSCE's strategic commitment in this domain will be pursued beyond Switzerland's Chairmanship by implementing specific projects. The Swiss Chairmanship set an example by promoting the OSCE's basic principles on human rights by carrying out a self-assessment of its own performance in implementing its commitments made within the OSCE context. This initiative sets a precedent and will be continued by the Serbian Chairmanship.

More reliable management of natural disasters: During its year-long Chairmanship, Switzerland worked on more efficient ways to prevent natural disasters in the OSCE region. In co-ordination with international partners it focused on practical issues regarding the management of natural phenomena and on exchanging tried-and-tested practices in emergency preparedness. Preventing natural disasters and lowering the risks of catastrophes can mobilise people, beyond borders and despite conflicts, to work together, exchange knowledge and thus build mutual trust.

The aim was to familiarise the OSCE and OSCE participating States with the concept of integral risk management when dealing with natural disasters, to facilitate international exchanges of experience, to encourage capacity-building and discuss the potential role of the OSCE. This was done in a number of ways: in the context of three thematic meetings of the 2014 OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, which were attended by experts from the 57 OSCE States; by financing projects (e.g. training courses on how to reduce the risks of natural disasters at the local level; by carrying out field and study visits; by shoring up national coordination mechanisms for dealing with natural hazards), and through political work designed to lead to a possible Ministerial Council decision in Basel in December 2014 on how to lower the risk of disasters.

Combating transnational threats: At the end of April, Switzerland organised a counter-terrorism conference in Interlaken, where Swiss and foreign experts discussed proposals for preventing the financing of terrorism and considered how self-proclaimed fighters from OSCE States might be deterred from taking part in terrorist activities and fighting in other countries and how they can be reintegrated into our societies after returning home. It is estimated that some 2,000 citizens or inhabitants of OSCE States are currently deployed as foreign fighters in Syria. The countries affected have to deal with the return of such persons, who can subsequently pose a domestic security threat. Another topic covered was respect for human rights in the counter-terrorism context. In connection with the financing of terrorism, the Interlaken conference also included an intensive discussion on the problem of kidnappings for ransom.

Objective 3: Strengthening the OSCE's capacity to act

Further developing the OSCE ("Helsinki+40"): Forty years after the Helsinki Final Act, the OSCE is intent on reforming itself to make itself fit for the future and more effective. This ongoing reform process was launched in 2012 and is known as the "Helsinki+40 Process". At the end of 2013, Switzerland, Serbia and Ukraine presented a joint roadmap that provided for the continuation of the reform process based on eight thematic working groups. A coordinator was appointed for each working group.

The process was launched in February in Vienna, within the Informal Helsinki +40 Working Group (IHWG), which is responsible for developing this process.

However, the process was overshadowed by the Ukraine crisis, which hampered progress. In Basel Switzerland will attempt to induce the participating States to adopt an H+40 Declaration. The outcome remains uncertain. In 2015, Switzerland will support Serbia in the H+40 Process.

Strengthening of mediation capacities: Mediation and promoting dialogue are among the most effective ways of ending violent conflicts. The Swiss Chairmanship systematically strengthened the OSCE's mediation capacities. This was achieved by putting together a mediation support team and training OSCE staff; by transferring knowledge and drawing up operational guidelines; by cooperating with the UN and other organisations; and by providing concrete support for ongoing attempts at mediation designed to resolve conflicts within the OSCE region. In order to generate the necessary political support for the deployment of mediation capacities in conflict situations, in the spring, together with Finland and Turkey, Switzerland set up an "OSCE Group of Friends of Mediation".

Enhanced involvement of civil society: In keeping with the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship's objective of more closely integrating civil society into the OSCE's work and giving it a louder voice, Switzerland opted to make torture prevention the central theme of the human dimension. This is one subject on which the parallel civil society conference in Basel will issue a declaration and adopt a series of recommendations. In an effort to make these recommendations more specific and organise them in a more regionally balanced way, Switzerland organised four regional workshops with civil society representatives in Belgrade, Vienna, Tbilisi and Dushanbe, which also served to foster regional networking. This even led to a specific project in the Balkans on the rights of people with mental disabilities.

In addition, Switzerland strove to ensure that representatives of civil society were able to take part as panellists in all OSCE functions and events. To make sure that the voice of civil society is also heard at the highest level, whenever possible on his travels OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Didier Burkhalter

arranged meetings with the local civil society. Thus, in Azerbaijan, the United States, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kosovo he spoke to civil society representatives about their concerns. To underline Switzerland's commitment to the protection of human rights activists, a Chairmanship conference on this topic was organised in Bern (from 10 to 11 June 2014), at which the OSCE/ODIHR Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders could be presented.

Enhanced involvement of young people: The Swiss Chairmanship focused the OSCE's attention on young people, as a cross-cutting issue. It set out to give young people a voice within the OSCE and to enable them to acquaint themselves with OSCE structures and topics. To achieve this goal, Switzerland set up a "Model OSCE" with 57 young women and men from the OSCE participating States. The Model OSCE negotiated a "Youth Action Plan" for the OSCE in three simulated rounds of negotiations. The Youth Action Plan is to be presented to the Ministerial Council in Basel.