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First Preparatory Meeting of the 25th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum

Statement of Switzerland during the opening session

Dear Chairman

The delegation of Switzerland would first of all like to thank Minister Hans Jörg Schelling and Minister Tatyana Valovaya for opening our meeting with their insightful and forward-looking keynotes. We also wish to congratulate the Austrian chairmanship and the Office of the Coordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities for organizing such a high-level start to the cycle of the 25th Environmental and Economic Forum.

Switzerland is looking forward to our discussions over the next two days. Not only since the chosen thematic priorities reflect Ministerial Decision 4/16 on Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity very well, but also since the new format of our meeting allows for more focused and in-depth discussions. We believe that this approach reflects the renewed relevance of the OSCE's second dimension.

With regard to our discussions on good governance and the prevention of corruption, we are looking forward to discussing how the OSCE can better contribute to the current global agenda. We believe that the prevention of corruption merits increased attention: The most effective way to counter corruption is to prevent it from happening. We therefore welcome the launch of the second cycle of the review mechanism of UNCAC, focusing on chapter II on "Preventive Measures". We urge UNCAC member states currently under review to swiftly process their reviews, and we are looking forward to obtaining some initial results soon.

Switzerland also continues to support the implementation of the OECD Convention on Combating the Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions. We therefore welcome discussions on how the OSCE can foster the adherence to these instruments.

We also look forward to the discussions on how to take the topic of connectivity forward. We support both the focus on improving economic relations between states as well as on utilizing economic connections in conflict regions. Switzerland has argued for a long time that economic confidence-building could be an important role for the OSCE. We think that the OSCE can make an important contribution for instance by providing a platform to discuss different perceptions of existing regional economic cooperation formats. We consider this meeting an important first step in this regard. We are also looking forward to continuing discussions on trade facilitation, which can have an important confidence-building aspect. This has also been highlighted in decision 4/16 at the recent Ministerial Council.

In addition, fostering small-scale economic interactions can be an important ingredient for building confidence in conflict regions. Via its presence in and knowledge of the field, the OSCE is well-placed to play a role in this regard.

Last but not least, we are looking forward to discussing ways to enhance economic participation in order to stem the prevention of radicalization. Switzerland supports the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). This fund is active in economically empowering vulnerable groups. We are eager to discuss how our work can be further enhanced in this field.

Mr. Chairman.

Let me end by expressing my country's profound appreciation for the efforts of both the Austrian Chairmanship and the OSCE Secretariat.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.