REGIONAL SEMINAR ON MACHINE READABLE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS (MRTDs) AND TRAVELLER IDENTIFICATION MANAGEMENT

8-10 April 2014

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Opening remarks: H.E. Nicolas Brühl, Ambassador of Switzerland in Uzbekistan, Representative of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to open this Seminar on behalf of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship.

I want to thank the national authorities of Uzbekistan, and in particular Director Turakhodjaev of the State Personalization Centre, for the generosity of hosting us in this impressive venue.

I also want to pay tribute to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). We take some pride in the fact that the OSCE is the first regional organization to co-organize such a Regional Event, in particular, in a region which is of vital importance to the OSCE.

I believe this joint-endeavour is testament to the strong bond between the two organizations which is set to continue in June when the ICAO Secretariat will address the OSCE Security Committee to present on the new ICAO Traveller Identification Programme (TRIP) Strategy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When Switzerland assumed the OSCE Chairmanship this January, our key message was clear: The comparative advantage of the OSCE is its comprehensive approach to security – an approach that encompasses the politico-military, economic and environmental-, and human dimensions.

Travel Document Security is such a cross-cutting topic in the OSCE and of relevance to all three dimensions:

- Secure travel documents, issuance processes and effective border controls enhance security and prevent terrorists and other criminals from crossing borders undetected.

- Secure travel documents and tools that allow border control officers to determine the identity of a passport bearer beyond reasonable doubt allow for speedier cross border movements of goods and people.

- Faster passport checks, in turn, are only possible if border controls can trust issuing authorities that the process of establishing identities was conducted diligently, in line with good governance and rule of law principles, and respected citizens' fundamental freedoms.

In short, comprehensive travel document security is an integral part of wider OSCE efforts that seek to ensure security, stability, good governance and the rule of law.

For instance, projects by the OSCE Secretariat's Transnational Threats Department focus more on security aspects such as assistance efforts with upgrading technological security features of passports or effective solutions for establishing identities at border controls.

Yet other activities by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) on population and civil registration systems focus more on rule of law aspects. Nevertheless, civil registries are also the very foundation for the issuance of travel and identification documents.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The topic of secure travel documents and related processes is also high on the national agenda of Switzerland. Switzerland actively contributes to international efforts that advance relevant ICAO standards and tools including in the OSCE context.

For instance, since 2012, Switzerland has been chairing the ICAO Public Key Directory (PKD) Board. In simplified terms the PKD is a multilateral tool which allows border controls to check whether data on the chip of electronic passports is genuine and has not been tampered with.

As PKD Board Chair one of our objectives is to increase the number of PKD participants including through OSCE outreach activities. We are therefore pleased to see that since committing to participating in the PKD in 2009, participation of OSCE participating States in the PKD has risen to 24. And as we have heard today the latest participant is Uzbekistan!

Let me therefore close my remarks on this high note and congratulate Uzbekistan on this major achievement!

Allow me also to wish you all fruitful discussions!