



## Media Invitation

Bern, 27 May 2014

### Conference of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship 2014

#### "OSCE and Human Rights Defenders"

**10 and 11 June 2014**  
**Hotel Schweizerhof**  
**Bern**

Opening address by Didier Burkhalter, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE

On 10 and 11 June 2014, the Swiss Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will organise an international conference on human rights defenders in conjunction with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and with the support of the Serbian Chairmanship 2015. The conference will be attended by **national human rights experts** of the OSCE participating States, human rights defenders and representatives of civil society and human rights organisations from Switzerland and abroad. Some 100 participants are expected.

The protection and promotion of human rights and the strengthening of the rule of law are objectives of Swiss foreign policy. These objectives can only be achieved if internationally recognised human rights norms and standards are actually implemented. Human rights defenders play a key role in this respect but are often intimidated and prevented from carrying out their work. Given this situation, the protection of human rights defenders is crucially important.

**The ODIHR guidelines on the protection of human rights defenders will be discussed and launched during this two-day conference.**

The head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Didier Burkhalter, will deliver the opening address. The media are invited to attend this first part of the conference from 10:00 to 12:30. After his speech, the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE will answer the journalists' questions (11:00 to 11:30).

Journalists who wish to attend the *opening of the conference* are requested to register with FDFA Information **by Thursday 5 June 2014 at 12:00** in order to obtain a conference pass (email: [info@eda.admin.ch](mailto:info@eda.admin.ch)).

Journalists who wish to *put questions to Mr Didier Burkhalter* at the end of the opening address are also requested to register **by Thursday, 5 June at 12:00** ([info@eda.admin.ch](mailto:info@eda.admin.ch)).

**Further information:**

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[The conference on the OSCE Website](#)

[FDFA Website OSCE](#)

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[Swiss Guidelines on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders](#)