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Swiss Statement

presented by
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Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

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Mr. Secretary-General,
Mr. Special Advisor of the Secretary-General for Human Security,
Excellencies,

Switzerland would like to associate itself with the statement of the Human Security Network, of which it is a member. Switzerland is looking forward to the upcoming negotiations on human security. The report of the Secretary-General provides an excellent basis for these negotiations and we would like to thank its authors for it.

Traditionally, the terms “State” and “security” are closely linked to each other: Security is understood to protect, first and foremost, the nation State and its institutions from threats, both domestic and foreign. As a consequence, the State authorities maintain the monopoly over the use of force. But the State is not an abstract entity which can be dissociated from its population and therefore security cannot be limited to protect the State for its own sake. This is why the concept of human security becomes important: We understand human security as a different perspective or approach to security where the *individual* is put in the center of attention, as compared to the classical *State-centered* approach. The two approaches are not contradictory but should rather complement each other. The focus of human security is hence on the protection of individuals from critical and pervasive threats to their physical and psychological safety, dignity and well-being.

The questions of what threats people should be protected from and by whom and how are very much context based. We therefore advice against the search for a precise “scientific” or legal definition of the concept - for this could end up limiting its very use. We commend the approach in the report of the Secretary-General, which suggests a common understanding rather than a definition of human security. We believe that a common understanding is as close as the General-Assembly can get to agree on with regards to human security.

What counts for us is that within this common understanding, the three pillars of human security - namely peace and security, human rights and development - receive equal attention. Also, we would like to advice against singling out or prioritizing certain fields of activities of the United Nations as “human security activities”. All Member States should be free to prioritize the topics they are most concerned with. Human security above all is an ordering idea, which should guide the United Nations as a whole.

In conclusion, any debate about the concept of human security should not divert our attention from taking action both at the national and at the international levels for people all over the world whose very existence, dignity and fundamental well-being is being threatened today. Improvements in human security directly impact people’s everyday lives to the better and at the end of the day, helping people on the ground is what really matters.

Thank you.