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Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your invitation. And thank you for coming to Switzerland.

A week ago, France was struck at its heart, in Paris. France, our neighbour — not only geographically, but also spiritually, because we share the same values. France, a country with which we have strong ties and a long friendship; very long, even, because next year we will celebrate the 500th anniversary of our treaty of “perpetual peace”...

The recent attacks in Paris, as well as in Beirut, in the Sinai, in Yola, Nigeria, in Baghdad and in other places, were assaults upon liberty, equality and human rights — upon humanity’s bedrock values.

There are hard times in life, for people as well as for countries. We must face them, united and standing tall.

Switzerland condemns these barbaric acts with the utmost firmness. It shares the pain of the countries affected, of their governments and of the victims’ loved ones. We will not give in to terrorist intimidation and are determined to work even harder to protect our peoples and uphold humanity’s basic values. In our view, the prevention of violent extremism must be the priority.

Today’s world has become more unstable, more complex and more dangerous. The resurgence of armed violence — of armed conflicts and terrorism — affects all our societies. It causes tremendous human pain and jeopardises security and prosperity around the world. A barrier of fire is burning on Europe’s southern and eastern edges, kindling flames in the heart of our continent.

The influx of refugees fleeing the violence and the flames consuming their homes make these crises a challenge for entire regions. Millions of people have fled Syria, the overwhelming majority to neighbouring countries. To Jordan, for example, where we are trying to help by revitalising schools. There are 220,000 Syrian children in Jordan, of whom 120,000 are currently in school, often in dire conditions. Sometimes there are 80 children per class; many go to school on empty stomachs. Another 100,000 children are not in school at all, potentially depriving them of prospects and a future — one more time bomb...

A minority of those refugees — but still, hundreds of thousands — are turning towards Europe, presenting it with a challenge: what are the right human, logistical and security responses? How can we achieve the right balance between controlling risks and upholding our values?

That said, conflicts and terrorism are not the only issues keeping Foreign Affairs ministries busy these days. Another trend is clearly taking shape: the return of geopolitics.

Both factors combined — geopolitics and armed violence — are deeply marking our world. Globalisation has shaped its destiny for at least a quarter century now, and the trend will go on. But these two factors — geopolitics and armed violence — are reshaping the outlines of globalisation, having a clear effect on foreign policy.

In our 21st century world, crises are no longer the exception but the rule. That in itself is unacceptable — and must be fought — but nobody can deny the obvious. To meet this challenge, the need for diplomacy has reached a level unparalleled in many years. Diplomacy, especially creative diplomacy, needs to take centre stage.



For today the situation looks grim. We are living in uncertain times and governments are almost always operating in crisis mode. Strong dialogue and creative diplomacy can change things. Switzerland can make useful contributions in that regard. The Lake Geneva area and the city of Montreux, which are hosting us today, are a symbol of that and a reality.

Many peace conferences and diplomatic meetings, public or low-profile, have taken place on the shores of this lake — even in this hotel, which hosted the second peace conference on Syria early last year. Switzerland has a specific history and role. It feels all the more responsible on account of this specificity, while standing shoulder to shoulder with the world.

That is what I wish to talk to you about today: the changes occurring in the world and Switzerland's response to them.

Let us start by taking a step back and looking a little more closely at globalisation, a major structural trend. Its main effect has been to diffuse power. Since the end of the Cold War, when we thought the Iron Curtains were behind us for good, the process of globalisation has transformed the world, perhaps more than any other phenomenon.

The world's increasing economic, social and technological interconnection has strengthened the power of many players, including non-State actors such as NGOs, multinational corporations and megalopolises. But power is also shifting from the developed economies, which have almost monopolised it until now, to the emerging and developing economies of the South and East.

Development gaps between the world's countries are narrowing. The number of people living in extreme poverty in the developing countries has plummeted from 47% in 1990 to 14% today. The proportion has gone down from one in two people to one in seven people in 25 years!

But there's another side of the coin. Globalisation has also brought about new inequality. Economic progress remains uneven. China and India have seen the sharpest drop in poverty, whereas sub-Saharan Africa is still lagging behind.

The swift spread of ideas, goods and capital, as well as the acceleration of population movements, can increase social, economic and political instability. As in numerous other OECD countries, many people in Switzerland are worried about immigration and its consequences in terms of integration, space planning in already densely populated areas and competition for jobs. Matters of identity are a major political issue across Europe today.

Globalisation can be a positive force and -offer humankind great opportunities. But it must be shaped to maximise the benefits and minimise the drawbacks. As always, a balance must be found: globalisation cannot bring about progress if it is perceived as a risk, if it moves too swiftly and if it benefits only the few.

Making progress, and not merely moving forward, is the key.

The agenda of globalisation, then, is to maintain a fair and peaceful order, to ensure the efficiency and legitimacy of national and international institutions and to guarantee the cohesiveness of our societies. Lastly, it is to develop shared responses to the numerous challenges, whether transnational threats or global problems such as climate change, security, water, migration and violent extremism.

The quest to achieve a necessary balance, to "to set the world right", has always been a major challenge. It is even more so today, because of the two trends I mentioned: the return of geopolitics and the resurgence of armed violence.

The return of geopolitics is a side effect of globalisation. A multi-polar world is not necessarily an obstacle to successful multilateralism, but collective action has become more complex. It requires more commitment, time and energy.

Yet the great powers seem to define their interests more in a spirit of confrontation than of cooperation. International norms and international law are coming under increasing pressure.



Geopolitical competition is growing not just on the planetary scale, but also in regional contexts.

The existing balance is being challenged in several parts of the world, particularly in East Asia (tensions in the South China Sea), Europe (Ukraine) and the Middle East (a series of conflicts). In all these areas of the globe, we are witnessing the upsetting of the regional balance and the re-emergence of nations that had been great powers in a sometimes-remote past, which had made their mark on the world over centuries. Let us think about the return of China and India, two powers that accounted for the world's biggest share of GDP until the mid-19th century. Let us think of Iran, Russia and Turkey, bridges between Europe and Asia.

Geopolitics is a matter of government choices. It is not a given fact. Our task is to demonstrate that all of us would be better off choosing cooperative solutions rather than exclusion.

With regard to the Iranian nuclear deal, Iran and the great powers have chosen diplomacy over confrontation. Switzerland is pleased with the outcome and strongly backed the process, which unfolded not only in this region, but, once again, in this very hotel.

Will this spirit of coordination and dialogue — beyond immediate differences — manage to prevail in order to find a solution to the Syrian crisis? Will the international community combat the so-called "Islamic State" effectively and on the basis of UN decisions?

Time will tell. But re-establishing consensus and rebuilding a fair and peaceful world order also require recognising that Western universalism has its limits and that globalisation — led by the West for over a century — is shifting towards multi-polarity.

The resurgence of armed violence is another obstacle hindering countries from moving forward on the path to development and reaping the benefits of globalisation. Although researchers remind us that the number of violent conflicts is decreasing over the long term, today we must face two trends.

First, the number of victims is soaring. The estimated number of people killed in violent conflicts was set at 56,000 in 2008. That figure rose to 180,000 in 2014. The war in Syria alone claimed 70,000 lives last year. The HCR says that in late 2014, there were 60 million internally displaced persons in the world — a number unequalled since the end of the Second World War!

The second trend is that instability and violence on Europe's borders have considerably increased. In the East of Europe, the Ukrainian crisis has brought war back to the continent, something unthinkable just a short time ago. In the South, the situation has deteriorated in many places. Old, unresolved conflicts, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and more recent wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya, have plunged the region into deep crisis. And failed States are fertile ground for the growth of jihadist terrorism.

The return of armed violence has had tremendous effects. In areas gripped by conflict, human security decreases, economic activity shuts down — today two-thirds of Syria's population depend on humanitarian aid while over four million people have fled the country — and the progress of development has been shattered.

Nor is Europe spared.

On the one hand, it must face a major influx of refugees attempting to flee that violence. Crafting an appropriate response to this crisis is one of the greatest challenges Europe has had to meet in decades.

On the other — and we must make a clear distinction between these two issues — Europe has become a more likely target of terrorism. By attacking Paris, the "Islamic State" has taken terrorism to a new level.

The insecurity and instability rocking the Middle East are increasingly affecting the situation in Europe. The threat of terrorism will surely continue weighing on our continent, even if we do everything in our power to reduce it.