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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Statement by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Pascal Couchepin

27.02.2008

Recognition of Kosovo and the establishment of diplomatic relations

Today, on the recommendation of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and following consultations with the Foreign Affairs Committees of the Council of States and the National Council, the Federal Council decided to recognise Kosovo and to establish diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries.

The Federal Council took note of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Assembly of Kosovo on 17 February 2008 and the formal invitation to recognise Kosovo that was addressed to the Swiss government by the President and the Prime Minister of Kosovo on the same day.

In particular, the Federal Council welcomed the clear commitment expressed by the authorities of Kosovo in the two above-mentioned documents to respect in full the obligations set out in the Comprehensive Proposal for Kosovo Status Settlement of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Kosovo, Marti Ahtisaari, especially those concerning the protection of minorities and the supervision of Kosovo's independence by means of an international civilian and military presence.

The Federal Council also noted that the authorities of Kosovo intend to cooperate with the NATO military presence, KFOR, on the basis resolution 1244/1999 of the United Nations Security Council.

In a situation such as this, where emotions run very high and there is a conflict of interests, an ideal solution is not possible. Nevertheless the Federal Council considers that this new step in the political reconstitution of the region to be preferable to any alternative. In addition, it considers that in view of the circumstances of this particular case, Switzerland's recognition of the independence of Kosovo does not constitute a precedent.

Clarification of the status of Kosovo is a precondition for the stability as well as for the economic and political development of the whole of the Western Balkans. The Federal Council declares its intention to pursue Switzerland's commitment in the region and to take an active part in the international efforts both in Kosovo and in the region as a whole.

Switzerland has always adopted balanced positions on issues concerning the Balkans, taking into account the legitimate interests of all parties involved. The Federal Council wished to emphasise that Switzerland's recognition of Kosovo goes hand in hand with its desire to develop further its good relations with Serbia and to strengthen the very close cooperation that exists between Serbia and Switzerland.

General Secretariat FDHA

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