

**Statement by Didier Burkhalter
Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal
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Leaders' Segment

**“Putting humanity first: Switzerland will live up to
its responsibilities”**

**World Humanitarian Summit
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Switzerland is grateful to the United Nations and to Turkey for organising this much-needed World Humanitarian Summit. Mr. Secretary-General, Switzerland is ready to support the five core responsibilities and will continue to help translate them into meaningful action for those in need.

I wish to emphasise two things:

First, it is our common responsibility to constantly work towards peace. The best way to end the suffering is by ending the conflicts and restoring peace. Switzerland is committed to strengthening its capacities for mediation. My country will continue to support the peace efforts of the UN and other organisations, in Geneva and elsewhere.

It is equally important to improve our ability to *preserve* peace. Switzerland seeks to strengthen conflict prevention by making the protection and promotion of human rights an integral part of these activities: human rights violations are often an early warning sign of instability. This is why we, together with other countries, will launch an appeal for stronger interaction between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in June. This is in line with your very justified calls, Mr. Secretary-General, for transcending institutional silos to maximise the effectiveness of our efforts for those in need.

Second point: Switzerland attaches particular importance to improving respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. We must enhance the protection of civilians, of humanitarian and medical workers, and of medical facilities. At the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December 2015, all states agreed to work towards establishing a dedicated forum for international humanitarian law. I invite you to help set up such a body to facilitate exchange among the States Parties to the Geneva Conventions. Switzerland commits to efficiently promoting and facilitating this process, alongside the ICRC.

We will also continue to promote the unambiguous recognition of the humanitarian principles – humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. It is in this spirit that Switzerland will deliver for the fourth time humanitarian aid to both sides of the Contact Line in Ukraine this week. We have been the only third country so far to help the people on both sides with direct measures.

The bottom line is: It is high time we all placed humanity – the concern for people's dignity and well-being – at the forefront of our policies. Switzerland will live up to its humanitarian and peace commitments and responsibilities – they are the essence of our values.