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Current Issue: International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances

Statement by Switzerland

Mr. Chair,

I am speaking on behalf of Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

Enforced disappearances are often the consequence of unlawful police practice. This practice is prohibited under international law, whether it is used to combat organized crime or carried out while fighting terrorism. Enforced disappearances also contradict the OSCE principles and commitments. We are thus concerned that in 2018 enforced disappearances still occur in the OSCE area, and that many past cases have not been resolved yet. We are especially worried about the reported increase in so-called 'short term' disappearances, particularly in the context of the fight against terrorism.

In Turkmenistan opponents of the government have disappeared since the late nineties and early 2000s. This situation is particularly worrisome because the fate of dozens of people is still unknown. However, we welcome the dialogues that several countries, including Switzerland have in Vienna within the OSCE framework with the Turkmen authorities, with the aim to reach full transparency on each case.

Enforced disappearances also occur in conflict situations such as in eastern Ukraine where, according to latest observations by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, all sides have been responsible for such acts. We would like to stress that enforced disappearances are prohibited at all times, including during armed conflicts, as well as during any other public emergency or crisis.

Reportedly, in the last two years people have also disappeared in Russia's Northern Caucasus, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan.

On today's International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, we call on all concerned OSCE participating States to immediately take measures to stop this

inhuman and unlawful practice. We ask them to investigate all cases of alleged enforced disappearance, disclose the whereabouts of those disappeared and guarantee their human rights according to international norms and standards. Perpetrators need to be brought to justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.