



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
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**Address by Mr Didier Burkhalter
President of the Swiss Confederation**

**"Framing the use of veto in the face of
massive crimes"**

**69th Session of the UN General Assembly
Ministerial Meeting**

New York, 25 September 2014

Co-chairs

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Switzerland would like to thank France and Mexico for having organised this ministerial meeting concerning the initiative to frame the use of veto in the face of massive crimes. In this regard, Switzerland also thanks Liechtenstein for its declaration, which Switzerland endorses.

At a time when crises are breaking out at the same time in different parts of the world, it is incumbent upon the UN Security Council to play the leading role in efforts to prevent, mediate and resolve conflicts. This role is vested in the Security Council by the Charter of the United Nations. It must quickly respond to crises such as those currently unfolding in Syria and Ukraine, and recent events in Gaza.

Genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are the most serious crimes known to international law. Every state has an obligation to take all necessary steps to prevent them when they occur, to stop them, and to prosecute the perpetrators.

A special responsibility falls to the permanent members of the Security Council, given its considerable powers, since it has the authority to take appropriate measures to restore international peace and security and can thus prevent and put a stop to such crimes. Unfortunately, certain vetoes (and threats of vetoes) cast in the past prevented the Security Council from assuming this responsibility.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is why Switzerland has long argued that the permanent members of the Security Council must not use their right to veto in order to block actions taken by the council to prevent or stop genocides, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

As the coordinator of the "Accountability, Coherence, Transparency" (ACT) transregional group of 23 states, Switzerland will continue its efforts to reform the overall working methods of the Security Council. In this context, my country welcomes France's initiative concerning a voluntary and collective agreement by the five permanent members of the Security Council to frame the use of veto in the face of massive crimes. We call on all permanent members to support this initiative and to assume their responsibilities with regard to the most serious crimes in order to better protect civilian populations.

Thank you.