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**Mission permanente de la Suisse
auprès des Nations Unies et des
Organisations internationales à Vienne**

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**UN.GIFT:
Vienna Forum on the Fight against Human Trafficking**

Statement by

**Mr. Guillaume Scheurer
Minister
Swiss delegation**

Vienna, 13 February 2008

Madam Minister,
Executive Director
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Human trafficking poses a major challenge for us all. Many of its victims – men, women and children - remain invisible and are exploited behind closed doors, where nobody looks, or nobody wishes to look.

These victims often remain invisible because they are afraid and do not know who to turn to for help and protection. It is no accident that an organisation which looks after victims of human trafficking in Cambodia has chosen the name of "Hagar", which means "she who is afraid and runs away". This organisation, which is supported by Switzerland, is also present at this forum.

The only way to fight effectively against human trafficking is to bring it out into the open where it can be seen by the wider public. Initiatives such as UN.GIFT and the Vienna Forum are excellent means of raising awareness of these serious violations of human rights. They also highlight the responsibility to take action and above all to take effective action.

Switzerland is now trying to make its population aware that human trafficking is happening everywhere, even in our country.

For example in a few days, a large group of civil society organisations is going to launch a major campaign on the trafficking of women on the occasion of Euro 08, the European football championship which will take place in Switzerland and Austria in June. The message of this campaign will be addressed directly to men.

Of course it is important to address the general public but also to improve the training of key actors in the fight against trafficking. The first national training measure in this area was organised for police forces last year. This year, a conference gathering police and justice experts as well as staff of victim aid centres and migration offices will take place. It will look at the relationship between prostitution and human trafficking.

Switzerland is also participating in international efforts, for example by supporting UNODC projects in Brazil, Lebanon and the Black Sea region. The work carried out by experienced actors in the fight against human trafficking such as UNODC, the OSCE and the IOM is indispensable in our view, because it strengthens and improves measures taken in each country.

We are also collaborating with local and regional NGOs on numerous projects, for example in Russia and in Mongolia, where our priorities are prevention and better protection of victims.

We recently took stock of what has been achieved so far. Are we making progress in the fight against human trafficking in Switzerland? Is our action having any effect?

We came to the conclusion that improvements are required, for example with regard to the residence status of victims of human trafficking or the financing structure of the specialised services of victim assistance. Particular attention has to be paid to the vulnerability of minors and the need to protect them. Finally, we are going to be increasingly concerned with different forms of human trafficking than those we have dealt with up to now: human trafficking for forced labour.

However, we have also noted measurable progress. Switzerland today convicts three times more people involved in human trafficking than it did at the beginning of the decade. Specialised services of victim assistance are now looking after five times more victims than they did only five years ago.

We are convinced that we are now reaping the benefits of better collaboration between the police, prosecution services, administrations responsible for migration and public bodies and associations concerned with victim assistance. This means that the measures are not merely carried out but that their implementation is coordinated.

In our view, coordination is also the key to cooperation within the United Nations. The approach of the UN.GIFT initiative is a good one because it is designed to join forces and to conduct joint coordinated action against human trafficking.

This is why Switzerland is pleased that this initiative has been launched, and we place great expectations in it. A joint initiative such as UN.GIFT raises general awareness of the problem, investigates more precisely the mechanisms of trafficking, evaluates the instruments available and

disseminates throughout the world knowledge of those instruments that are efficacious and efficient. An initiative such as this strengthens the capacities and competences of State bodies and of civil society in the fight against this very serious form of human rights violation.