



**Sonntag, 14. Januar 2018, Kunstmuseum Basel**

**Basel Peace Forum**

**Grusswort von Regierungspräsidentin Elisabeth Ackermann**

Dear Secretary of State,  
Dear Under-Secretary General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all in Basel to the second edition of the Basel Peace Forum. I am proud that swisspeace decided to launch this innovative meeting here. And I hope that it will also remain here in the future. I think our beautiful city is well suited for such an event also for historical reasons: For example at the eve of the First World War, in 1912, a large international gathering of social democrats convened in Basel trying to prevent an escalation of the political tensions. As we know, they failed. But it was an important attempt nevertheless.

If we go back even further, I would also like to mention here that the Westphalian Peace of 1648 ended the Thirty Years' War in Europe. Why would I bring them up at a peace conference in Basel today? It's because Johann Rudolf Wettstein, the mayor of Basel at the time, was among the persons attending that peace conference as a delegate of the Swiss Confederation. The bridge over the Rhine beside the Art Museum in which we are meeting for this opening today is named in his honor. Religious peace, tolerance, and federalism were the core elements of the Westphalian Peace Accord more than 300 years ago.

Many regions of the world today use a Westphalia peace model in the sense of creating national and inter-state premises for religious tolerance and coexistence.

One hundred and fifty years later Basel was the place, where France and Prussia and Spain brought their war to a temporary end. The city clerk of Basel at the time, Peter

Ochs, played a major role in assuring that this accord came into being. Peace accords and peace efforts never were abstract procedures. Nor are they today. They emerge from the lives and acts of engaged human beings.

This leads me to Karl Jaspers, the great philosopher, who taught at the University of Basel from 1948 to 1961. In 1958 he was awarded the peace prize of the German Book Trade. His acceptance speech for the award of the Peace Prize at the time belongs in my eyes among Karl Jaspers' most important contributions. Let me cite a passage from this speech that I consider one of its central themes:

*„Friede ist nur durch Freiheit, Freiheit nur durch Wahrheit möglich. Daher ist die Unwahrheit das eigentlich Böse, jeden Frieden Vernichtende: die Unwahrheit von der Verschleierung bis zur blinden Lässigkeit, von der Lüge bis zur inneren Verlogenheit, von der Gedankenlosigkeit bis zum doktrinären Wahrheitsfanatismus, von der Unwahrhaftigkeit des einzelnen bis zur Unwahrhaftigkeit des öffentlichen Zustandes. Das letzte Wort bleibt: Die Voraussetzung des Friedens ist die Mitverantwortung eines jeden durch die Weise seines Lebens in Wahrheit und Freiheit; die Frage des Friedens ist nicht zuerst eine Frage an die Welt, sondern für jeden an sich selbst.“*

But let's return from Karl Jaspers back to our time.

In 2014, when Switzerland was assuming the Chairmanship of the OSCE, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Basel hosted the ministerial council meeting. And now today, we are witnessing the second edition of a new conference format, the "Basel Peace Forum".

I sincerely hope this will be just the second "Basel Peace Forum" and many more will follow and will help Basel stand for political and intellectual reflection and innovation linked to peace. The results and ideas provided should contribute to our efforts to mitigate violence and to promote peaceful coexistence in the world.

I am grateful to the Swiss Foreign Ministry, to swisspeace, and to many committed individuals for having made this event possible.

Regierungspräsidentin Elisabeth Ackermann