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Centenary of the Locarno Peace Treaties at the FCDO 03.12.2025

Secretary of State,
your Excellencies,
leaders from the municipality of Locarno,
Esteemed guests,

100 years on from their signing, the Locarno Treaties remain both an inspiration and a warning.

An inspiration because after years of terrible conflict, nations summoned the courage to address their differences through diplomacy.

A warning because we know all too well what followed when that diplomacy faltered—or was abandoned.

Much has changed in the hundred years since 1925, but some things have endured.

The United Kingdom remains a major diplomatic actor, building coalitions and advancing multilateral solutions to global challenges.

And Switzerland, then as now, continues to serve as a hub for diplomacy, offering a platform for conflict resolution.

Also enduring is the friendship between the UK and Switzerland.

In the 1920s it was a Brit, Arnold Lunn, who introduced modern alpine skiing to Switzerland. In return, Switzerland has provided Brits with inventions including Velcro, instant coffee, LSD and even – perhaps most interesting for those who occasionally question my nation's commitment to transparency – cellophane.

Lunn, who was knighted in 1952 for services to British Skiing and Anglo-Swiss relations, once said: "The object of a turn is to get round a given obstacle losing as little speed as possible. Therefore, a fast ugly turn is better than a slow pretty turn." There are lessons for the modern-day Diplomat in these words.

Today, as war has returned to the continent and our security is being reshaped, Switzerland – with Geneva as a hub of multilateral governance – remains committed to remaining a venue for peace and dialogue.

From supporting Ukraine and defending international law, to strengthening humanitarian action and promoting dialogue, it is a privilege to work side by side with the United Kingdom in pursuit of these shared goals.

This ongoing partnership reflects the same spirit of responsibility and cooperation that animated Locarno a century ago.

And next year, as Switzerland takes on the Chairmanship of the OSCE, it is again this spirit of cooperation that will guide us as we seek ways to build trust and reduce tensions.

It is a great honour to open this event and mark the centenary of the Locarno Peace Treaties – Treaties agreed in Switzerland and signed in this very room.

Thank you, Secretary of State, for hosting us this afternoon in the Locarno Suite and thank you to the whole FCDO team for the collaboration – both for today's event, and around the world.