



SWITZERLAND
UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL
2023—2024

A Plus For Peace



Foreword

The world can only tackle global crises and challenges if it comes together as one. To do so will require strengthening the rules-based international order and multilateral cooperation. This was the conviction of the Swiss people when we voted in a referendum in 2002 in favour of Switzerland's accession to the United Nations. We are so far the only country in the world whose UN membership is based on a popular vote.

Almost 20 years on, Switzerland is seeking its first non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council. This candidature is a continuation of the work we have accomplished at the UN since our accession. We have held key positions in all major UN bodies and now wish to contribute our experience and ideas to the Security Council – a great responsibility that we are ready to take on with humility and enthusiasm.

Switzerland and the UN have much in common. As a diverse nation with four official languages and many cultures and religions, Switzerland has learned to use dialogue and broad engagement to develop solutions. This approach also shapes our foreign policy, with people at the centre of our commitment to “a just and peaceful international order” as stated in the Federal Constitution. This is why peace and security are priorities of our Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23.

My country is well known for its long humanitarian tradition, promoting international law, human rights, the protection of civilians and sustainable development. Switzerland is also an innovator in these and other areas, such as digital governance. We are keen to contribute our ideas and our commitment to multilateralism with a view to enhancing the UN's capacity to take action.

Switzerland has long hosted the UN in Geneva, a fact that we are proud of. The time has come to take our place at the table that bears primary responsibility for international peace and security. I am confident that Switzerland's independent and credible voice can help build bridges, especially in the current global situation and with the additional challenge the world faces due to COVID-19. I hope to be able to count on your trust and support.

Ignazio Cassis
Federal Councillor, Foreign Minister of Switzerland





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Switzerland in the United Nations

Switzerland traces its involvement with the United Nations back to the organisation's beginnings. We became a full member in 2002 but started taking on observer and member roles with various specialised UN agencies many years before. Switzerland has been among the most active countries in the UN, bringing its support, for example, as an active observer and member of the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council on several occasions. Former Swiss President Joseph Deiss also presided over the UN General Assembly from 2010 to 2011.

We are fully aligned with the UN's goals and values. The Swiss Federal Constitution enshrines key UN objectives, including the alleviation of poverty, human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples and natural resource conservation.

As a dedicated and reliable member of the UN family, we are the UN's fourth largest donor of assessed contributions per capita and we provide substantial voluntary contributions to support UN agencies, funds and programmes, promoting sustainable development around the world. Switzerland is firmly committed to international humanitarian law, human rights and conflict management, helping to preserve peace and protect vulnerable populations, with Swiss civilian and military personnel serving the cause of peace in many countries.

Geneva has been home to the UN's second most important headquarters ever since the organisation was founded in 1945. The UN holds six out of ten meetings in this lakeside city renowned for being the capital of peace. No fewer than 41 international organisations and several UN agencies are located on the shores of Lake Geneva, offering a vibrant ecosystem that also welcomes non-governmental organisations, academia, think tanks and economic and cultural networks.

Switzerland is a first-time candidate for the UN Security Council. With a seat on the Council in 2023–24, we trust that we can make a genuine contribution to international peace and security.

Light is hope! Zermatt, Switzerland, illuminated the iconic Matterhorn mountain daily in March and April 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. The aim was to give people around the world a sign of hope during the pandemic, show solidarity with those affected, and express gratitude to those people who are helping overcome the crisis.



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A plus for humanity

Pioneering humanitarian work: Switzerland is at the origin of international humanitarian law and home to the Geneva Conventions. We have long been engaged in humanitarian action – starting with the founding of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva by Swiss citizens in 1863. We are the top donor of annual, non-earmarked contributions to the ICRC and maintain close ties with many other humanitarian organisations. This tradition of international solidarity translates into the provision of impartial assistance during crises, armed conflicts and disasters, focusing on people's needs and their right to live in security and dignity.

Standing up for the rule of law: International law is one of the most important guarantors of peace. While more than half of UN members are small states with a population of less than 10 million – just like Switzerland – a reliable rules-based international order is crucial for states of all sizes as it is the cornerstone of effective multilateralism. Small states have an essential role to play in this regard on the international stage. Improving compliance with and respect for international law is a high foreign policy priority for us.

Upholding human rights and protecting civilians: We put people first. Respecting human rights, including civil rights and liberties, helps to prevent conflict and fosters peaceful and sustainable societies. Switzerland is proud to support the important work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We care about the protection of civilians and put our longstanding experience to good use as co-chair of the Group of Friends of the protection of civilians in New York and the Human Rights and Conflict Prevention Caucus in New York and Geneva.

Strength in diversity: Since the founding of modern-day Switzerland in 1848, the Swiss people have upheld a culture of diversity. Four national languages – German, French, Italian and Romansh – are spoken in the country. Close to 25% of the population are foreign nationals and one third were born abroad, meaning that different cultures and faiths live together and tolerance is part of everyday life.

A Swiss humanitarian aid worker prepares to depart for an emergency mission. Swiss Humanitarian Aid is focused on emergency aid, sustainable reconstruction and disaster risk reduction. In recent years, Switzerland provided emergency aid in more than 20 countries hit by crises or disaster.



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A plus for sustainable development

Committed to the 2030 Agenda: Switzerland strives to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and is working with all countries to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. There are only ten years left to achieve the SDGs, so action is needed now. We have been providing official development assistance since the 1960s through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), a trusted brand and reliable partner worldwide.

Sustainable financing is vital to achieving the SDGs. Our financial expertise supports sustainable economic growth, digital transformation, market development and the creation of decent jobs worldwide. This helps countries become more competitive, reinforcing private-sector initiatives to give people better prospects for the future.

A pioneer in environmental protection, Switzerland is helping to implement the Paris Agreement by committing to climate neutrality by 2050 and supporting developing countries' efforts to reduce emissions. Additionally, our approach to preventing and reducing the risks associated with natural disasters has proven to be effective and we share this experience with others. Furthermore, Switzerland promotes a better understanding of climate change and its impacts on peace and security. Our Blue Peace initiative enhances cross-border collaboration on water access.

Caring for health and the environment: Switzerland is helping to build sustainable societies. In recent years, some 8 million people have gained better access to drinking water and effective farming irrigation systems; 9 million people have completed their education thanks to Swiss assistance; and long before COVID-19, we started advocating for stronger healthcare systems, universal health coverage and access to quality healthcare services.

Gender equality and the role of women: Gender equality is part of all our development cooperation activities. Our foreign policy seeks to empower women and girls and ensure their rights are respected. We were actively involved in establishing UN Women and are committed to remaining its second largest core donor. We are also a driving force behind the International Gender Champions initiative, a network launched by Switzerland in New York that brings together, among others, women and men in leadership roles at the UN.

Since 1850, the volume of Alpine glaciers has declined by about 60%. At this rate, half of the Alpine glaciers are likely to disappear in the next 30 years. Switzerland pursues an active policy on reducing greenhouse gases and contributes to limit global warming. Researchers are testing technological solutions on the Rhone glacier to stop the ice melting.



A plus for multilateralism

Multilateralism matters: Switzerland works closely with others to find effective solutions to global challenges as a member of a broad range of international organisations, multilateral development banks, UN agencies, programmes and funds. A neutral and independent state, Switzerland builds bridges to foster consensus.

International Geneva: For more than 100 years, Switzerland has hosted international organisations. As the UN's European headquarters, Geneva is the operational heart of the multilateral system. The city hosts the most international organisations in the world and is a leading centre for multilateral dialogue and cooperation addressing current and future challenges. Geneva serves as a hub for negotiations on disarmament, human rights, labour rights, health, digital policy and humanitarian issues and regularly welcomes UN-facilitated peace conferences and talks, most recently on Syria, Libya and Yemen. We have the ambition that everyone can be part of the discussion and the decisions: this is why we will continue to provide dedicated support to small states and least developed countries. So far, a total of 177 permanent missions call Geneva their home.

“The Swiss people have decided. They have said ‘yes’ to co-operation with the UN. They have said ‘yes’ to a stronger international commitment. They have said ‘yes’ to taking greater responsibility for resolving global challenges.”

A reliable and responsive partner: Switzerland's foreign policy seeks to foster lasting strategic partnerships that build on mutual trust. We work closely with our European neighbours, are an active member of the International Organisation of La Francophonie and share close ties with other French-speaking countries. We interact with many regional and sub-regional organisations as a member or partner, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We also cooperate closely with organisations such as the African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Caribbean Community. With long-established and friendly relations with all UN members, our development cooperation covers more than 30 countries. We are always ready to listen to and work constructively with all countries: the success of our policies depends on valuable partnerships with governments, the scientific community, civil society and the private sector.

Former Swiss President and Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss presided over the 65th UN General Assembly in 2010-11. Deiss is quoted speaking about the decision of the Swiss people to join the UN in New York in 2002.



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A plus for innovation

A leader in innovation : Switzerland has a top-ranking position when it comes to innovation, according to the Global Innovation Index. With the highest number of European patent filings per capita, we are a country of inventors : the Red Cross Movement, the Swiss army knife, Velcro and aluminium foil are all of Swiss origin. No fewer than 116 Nobel Prize winners have a connection to Switzerland.

We are also a dynamic country for research and development in fields such as medicine and information technology. Swiss space technology is at the forefront : we contributed to Apollo 11 and many other missions, and are working within the UN to ensure the long-term sustainability of outer-space activities. Our education system combines a renowned academic tradition with dual vocational education and training, offering national and international students affordable and high-quality instruction.

Supporting safe and fair digitalisation : Switzerland is shaping the digital transformation, ensuring that technical innovations and digital technologies benefit everyone. They are key to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and meeting other urgent challenges. We recognise the UN's role in establishing a suitable global framework and support the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. Switzerland advocates for a rules-based international order for the digital world by taking on leading roles in multilateral cooperation on cybersecurity. Geneva's expertise as a global digital policy hub gives rise to innovative initiatives between states, international organisations, civil society, academia and the private sector.

Backing UN reform : Switzerland remains dedicated to a modern, innovative, effective and efficient UN system and endorses the Secretary-General's reform agenda. We have made major efforts to reach agreement among the member states on reforming the UN development system. Since the work of the Security Council must be transparent, representative and effective, we coordinate the cross-regional Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group and strive to improve the Council's working methods.

Elios, the first collision-tolerant drone by Swiss company Flyability, operates in a hazardous environment. Designed to inspect and explore the most inaccessible places, Elios allows humans to look for potential victims without entering contaminated or collapsed structures and to plan their rescue.



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A plus for peace

A long tradition of good offices: Switzerland is a reliable, neutral facilitator and mediator. We will continue to assist parties to a conflict in their search for a negotiated solution and help other actors, including the UN, in doing the same. In recent years, Switzerland has supported 17 peace processes and facilitated ceasefire negotiations in six countries. Our role as a protecting power, assuming consular and diplomatic tasks for states that have broken off relations, dates back to the late 19th century.

Switzerland is active in the field of peacebuilding, offering a wide range of tools and hands-on experience in the areas of rule of law, institution building and post-conflict reconstruction. Every year, over 200 Swiss civilian experts respond to requests from other states or international organisations. They may assist parties in the drawing up of transitional justice strategies or mediating conflicts. Switzerland also chairs the Burundi configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. We are among the top 10 donors to the Peacebuilding Fund and back UN efforts to sustain peace and the review of the peacebuilding architecture.

Additionally, Switzerland is committed to strengthening the Women, Peace and Security agenda, a key element of peace and security. We were among the first countries worldwide to adopt a national action plan and help other countries draw up their own plans. Together with South Africa, Switzerland will chair the Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network in 2022.

Peacekeeping: Switzerland supports UN peace operations by providing civilian and military personnel, sharing expertise and delivering training. Swiss Armed Forces currently serve in 18 countries where multilateral peace operations are deployed. In Africa, we collaborate with regional training centres in Bamako, Nairobi and Accra.

Disarmament and non-proliferation: Switzerland actively participates in arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation processes. We remain committed to a world without nuclear weapons. We are currently serving on the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency and will chair the Missile Technology Control Regime in 2022–23. As new technologies evolve and new risks emerge, we will champion multilateral responses and cooperative approaches to cope with the challenges ahead.

Swiss captain Joëlle Vrolijk, a woman member of the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), greets a local inhabitant. Vrolijk supervised the observance of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan.

Why support Switzerland?

Switzerland is a reliable partner with an independent foreign policy. We say what we do and do what we say. As a member of the Security Council, we will continue to stand up for peace, with no hidden agenda.

Switzerland has a long tradition as a neutral and independent state. We have had no colonial possessions and have never aligned ourselves militarily. The firm belief that respect for the rule of law and the realisation of human rights for all are the foundations for peaceful, prosperous and sustainable societies guides our foreign policy.

Openness and independence form the backbone of Swiss foreign policy. Dialogue, confidence building and consensus-seeking are in our country's DNA. Switzerland's experience and our engagement in the UN encourage us to lead by example. We will be a responsive Security Council member, collaborating with and serving the interests of the wider membership.

The year 2022 will mark the 20th anniversary of Switzerland joining the United Nations as a full member. For the first time, Switzerland is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2023–24 period.

We are committed to a strong, effective multilateral system. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, we will continue working for humanity, sustainable development, multilateralism, innovation, and peace.

Thank you for supporting Switzerland at the UN Security Council elections in June 2022.

“The Swiss are here. We have been waiting for them a long time.”

— **Kofi Annan**
the UN Secretary-General
as the Swiss flag was raised for the first time
alongside those of the other 189 member states.
New York, September 10, 2002



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