



Switzerland's priorities for the 74th session of the UN General Assembly

The aims and principles enshrined in the UN Charter largely correspond with Switzerland's interests and values as set out in the Federal Constitution. This makes the UN a key instrument for Switzerland to reach its foreign policy goals, and gives us the opportunity to promote Switzerland's interests and values worldwide. This list of activities and priorities is based on the two main strategic pillars of Switzerland's engagement with the UN for 2012–22: *Peace and security* and *UN reforms*. Switzerland has set the following three priorities for the upcoming session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA):

Human rights

Strengthening individual rights and fundamental freedoms is one of the UN's main goals. Switzerland is committed to promoting, ensuring respect for, and implementing human rights. For the 74th session of the UNGA, the focus will be on the following human rights: freedom of speech, assembly and association, and women's rights, particularly the subject of violence against women. Among other things, Switzerland will support the negotiation of the General Assembly resolution on the safety of journalists and play an active role in the Group of Friends for the Protection of Journalists. 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, one of the main pillars in the area of women's rights. Switzerland will also continue its engagement under the topic of 'Women, Peace and Security'.

UN reform

Switzerland wants a strong, properly funded and modern UN system fit for the 21st century. To this end it supports the UN Secretary-General's reforms aimed at improving the effectiveness of development activities in the field. Switzerland also supports efforts to improve the management and administration of the UN so that the UN can implement its mandates effectively and efficiently. Here the focus is on strengthening a modern management culture at all levels. In addition, Switzerland promotes innovative models in development finance and greater cooperation between the UN and the private sector.

Science diplomacy¹

While new developments in the field of science and technology, together with economic innovations, open up opportunities for people and our societies, they also come with risks. Digitalisation, artificial intelligence, cyber security and internet governance are all issues that impact heavily on people's lives in the 21st century. Against this backdrop, the UN is the right place to begin tackling these global challenges. Switzerland works to ensure that digitalisation is used for the benefit of humankind and that cyberspace is free and safe. It promotes cross-cutting cooperation between the different stakeholders and supports any follow-up work regarding the UN's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Switzerland takes part in both of the UN processes on cyber security and supports the applicability of international law in cyberspace.

It also intends to position Geneva more strongly as a centre of excellence in global governance for the future. Here the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) Foundation can offer the international community, with its concept of science diplomacy, an innovative and flexible instrument.

¹ Science diplomacy refers to the use of scientific cooperation in diplomacy in order to approach common problems and build constructive international partnerships. It is an umbrella term for both formal and informal exchanges in technical, research-based, academic or engineering fields.

Other activities

In addition to these three priorities, Switzerland – as an active UN member state and host state of many international organisations – is also committed to the following:

Peace and security: In order to strengthen conflict prevention, Switzerland works to mainstream human rights in the relevant debates on security policy. It will promote the concept of 'sustaining peace' in the context of the review of the peacebuilding architecture. In its capacity as chair of the Burundi Configuration, Switzerland is committed to dealing with the past and the prevention of atrocities. Switzerland's candidacy for the UN Security Council 2023–24 remains an important focus. In the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, Switzerland in principle supports the disarmament agenda launched in Geneva by the Secretary-General. An example here is reducing the risks posed by nuclear weapons. For the review of the UN's global counterterrorism strategy, Switzerland adopts a holistic approach.

Humanitarian aid: Switzerland works to promote the protection of the civilian population, access for humanitarian aid workers to those in need, protection of medical missions and compliance with international humanitarian law. It is active in strengthening disaster and crisis prevention, and the resilience of affected communities. Another aim is to reinforce the link between humanitarian aid and development cooperation ('nexus'). Switzerland is also committed to implementing the UN global compact on refugees, particularly within the context of the first Global Refugee Forum, which will take place in Geneva in 2019.

Sustainable development: The High-level Political Forum and the Dialogue on Financing for Development in September 2019 will present opportunities to advance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In October 2020, Switzerland will host the UN World Data Forum in Berne. In so doing, it will further the issue of accountability regarding the 2030 Agenda – both the evaluation of progress in this area and its credibility. Switzerland will also participate in the Secretary-General's climate summit, which aims to speed up the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, based on new scientific findings Switzerland will announce its intention to increase its emissions reduction target by 2050. Switzerland will also take part in the discussions on a global pact for the environment – the exact form of which is currently unclear – and in the high-level meeting on universal health coverage. Swiss engagement in improving water governance in the UN system will also continue, as well as efforts to promote sustainable food systems worldwide.

International Geneva: Promoting International Geneva as a centre of global governance is a cross-cutting theme of Switzerland's UN policy. To this end, on 20 February 2019 the Federal Council adopted a dispatch to strengthen Switzerland's role as a host state for the 2020–23 period, which will be discussed by the Federal Assembly in the summer and autumn of 2019.

Other human rights-related themes: Switzerland is committed to the ban on torture, respect for children's rights, the protection of human rights defenders and the fight against impunity. In institutional terms, it works to improve the working methods of the Human Rights Council and other mechanisms aimed at protecting human rights, such as the UN human rights treaty bodies.

Other reforms: Switzerland supports reforms in the field of peace and security, and efforts to improve the working methods of the UN Security Council. It remains concerned with strengthening and reforming the humanitarian aid system, and calls on the UN to engage with new actors, ideas and working methods in order to ensure that those in need receive aid and protection efficiently and effectively. Switzerland has a stringent zero tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse in UN field missions as well as sexual harassment in the workplace.