Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19:

Federal Council report on the priorities for the 2016–19 legislative period

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

The Federal Council tasked the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) on 11 May 2011 to submit a strategy at the beginning of each legislative period setting out the priorities of Swiss foreign policy. This report presents the second such strategy, fulfilling this obligation accordingly and also addresses a motion referred by Parliament (motion number 10.3212 on a clear foreign policy strategy).

Preface

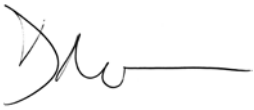
"The Confederation shall ensure that the independence of Switzerland and its welfare is safeguarded; it shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources."

These goals are enshrined in the Federal Constitution and pursued by Switzerland as part of its foreign policy. Few other countries are economically, socially, and politically as interconnected with the world as Switzerland. In order to safeguard its interests, security, prosperity, and independence, Switzerland depends on a stable and open international environment. It needs good relations with neighbouring countries and its most important trading partners, the EU and the EU/EFTA states. It is in its interest to work in a constructive and substantive way within international organisations to reach new and lasting solutions.

The Foreign Policy Strategy for 2016–2019 sets priorities for the next four years. It enables the Federal Council to further pursue its successful foreign policy and at the same time to respond flexibly to global changes. We want to continue to promote dialogue and constructive solutions and to act as bridge-builders to help resolve conflicts. In this respect we can build on our long years of experience and expertise in offering our good offices.

At the same time, we want to prevent violent extremism and work towards a globalisation that promotes security and prosperity for all. The aim is to ensure that as many people as possible can live in peace and dignity today and in the future. Through our international cooperation work – for example, in the area of vocational education and training – we help ensure that young people in particular have prospects in their home countries.

For the Federal Council it is important that Swiss foreign policy dovetails with domestic politics. We are counting on you to support and help formulate Switzerland's foreign policy over the next four years.



Didier Burkhalter
Federal Councillor

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Introduction

Following a description of the background 'Continuity and change' situation – and analysis of the international environment, this report sets out the constitutional objectives of Swiss foreign policy and principles for their implementation. The report's main section covers the four strategic priorities of Switzerland's foreign policy for the legislative period through 2019, namely relations with the European Union and the EU and EFTA member states, relations with global partners, the commitment to peace and security, and to sustainable development and prosperity. This is followed by separate sections on citizen-oriented services, communication abroad, and resources, representations, and staff.

Continuity and change

The first foreign policy strategy, which covered the legislative period from 2012 to 2015, proved effective in providing relevant and applicable guidance. It contributed to ensuring the coherency and credibility of Switzerland's foreign policy against a turbulent backdrop in world affairs with an array of increasingly acute crises. The previous strategy established broad outlines but left scope to identify and actively seize opportunities while responding quickly and pragmatically to new developments. The Federal Council gave an account of implementing the strategy in its annual foreign policy reports.

The foreign policy strategy for 2016–19 continues this approach. Continuity is pivotal in the strategy, since it also focuses on Switzerland's overarching objectives, interests, and values as defined in the Federal Constitution (cf. Section 1.3.). Switzerland also remains well placed by international comparison. It is a key centre for science and research worldwide, and it ranks among global leaders in terms of economic strength, innovation, and competitiveness, infrastructure, legal certainty, political stability, standard of living, international networks, openness, and image. Switzerland can exert considerable soft power. This is coupled with international community expectations that Switzerland will play an active and pragmatic role as a medium-sized European country. The Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE in 2014 is one example of how it can contribute through its foreign policy to benefit the world and Switzerland alike.

Switzerland continues to pursue a pragmatic, citizen-oriented foreign policy, which also includes services for Swiss nationals. Swiss foreign policy is firmly rooted in the country's political culture, its institutions, and its historical experience. Switzerland's foreign policy values dovetail with those of its domestic policies, and it enjoys broad support nationally.

Swiss foreign policy takes advantage of its room for manoeuvre and scope to exert influence. The actors involved are renowned for their patience and perseverance. Switzerland appreciates that there are serious constraints at times on what it can achieve when acting on its own. Therefore, it seeks to work together with partners that share its objectives wherever possible and beneficial.

Whilst focusing keenly on continuity, the new foreign-policy strategy also introduces some shifts in emphasis, while taking into account progress made in implementing the previous strategy. Relations with Switzerland's immediate neighbours have been bolstered, and significant progress has been made in resolving differences of opinion in most cases. The Federal Council attaches great importance to maintaining these close, pragmatic, and trust-based relations with neighbouring countries and has accordingly defined relationships with the European Union as well as EU and EFTA member states as one of its priorities.

Meanwhile, Switzerland operates in an international environment subject to rapid change. Hence the strategy has been adapted to safeguard Swiss interests effectively in the future while allowing it to shape the process of globalisation positively.

The international environment

A state of upheaval has prevailed worldwide since the end of the Cold War. After decades where a duopoly held sway over the global system, the collapse of the Soviet Union left the United States as the sole superpower. However, this phase proved short-lived. Tectonic shifts in the geopolitical landscape that were initially barely visible or perceptible in the post-1989 environment have increasingly taken on greater magnitude and seem likely to continue to influence global politics in the coming years.

As globalisation progresses, the international power structure is changing: the West in general and the United States in particular are seeing their power and influence decline in relative terms, though the United States

will likely remain the strongest power worldwide for the foreseeable future – above all in terms of its military strength. States in the South and the East now stride the international stage with more self-confidence and purpose, seeking to take on a dominant role in their region or even globally. The world is moving toward an increasingly multi-polar and fragmented set-up with different centres having greater regional focus. That said, this is by no means a linear trend, as highlighted by the current economic difficulties of certain BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). The unpredictable development of future oil prices will also have implications for the international power structure. Were low prices to persist, this could influence some producer states' domestic stability and foreign policy stance. Added to this, the 'new' emerging powers have only had limited success thus far in developing attractive alternative societal and economic models, accumulating sustainable reserves of soft power, and incorporating other states in lasting alliances. The trend toward a more multipolar international system is heightening volatility and may increase geopolitical rivalries and conflicts. This makes greater coordination between the major powers essential, but this in turn has mixed implications for the multilateral system.

Another discernible development is the greater number of actors exerting power in the international arena: although states remain the most important players, they are ceding some of their power to non-state actors. The latter include civil society, examples being the Arab Spring in North Africa and the Euromaidan movement in Ukraine. It also covers international economic and financial groups to say nothing of terrorist organisations and organised crime. The trend towards a broader distribution of power can be positive by lending a voice to democratic actors from civil society. However, it can also have a destabilising effect by allowing terrorist and criminal networks in some cases to undermine already weakened state structures or even bring them toppling down. Digitalisation is accelerating the shift in power – above all through the rapid global spread of the Internet in general and social media in particular.

A further key theme in developing global politics is the build-up of crises and conflicts. These are not merely isolated 'chance' occurrences. Instead they manifest a transition phase. Instability and armed violence have increased in neighbouring European states in particular. In the East, the Ukraine crisis has brought war back to Europe. Pan-European security has also decreased in the wake of polarisation between Russia and the West. The array of long-standing unresolved conflicts in Europe's neighbours to the South have plunged the region into a deep crisis. They include clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, more recent conflicts such as those in Syria, Yemen, and Libya, jihadist terrorist groups growing in strength, geopolitical and sectarian tension, as well as poor governance and weak statehood. Switzerland and the surrounding region also see an increase in the consequences of these negative developments. Europe, for example, has increasingly become a target for jihadist

terrorists. Added to this, the unrelenting violence, major humanitarian needs, and the lack of prospects have given rise to a refugee and migrant crisis that poses enormous challenges for Europe as well.

Global challenges such as migration, climate change, and other factors will become even more pronounced in the future. And they will adversely affect the environment, the fight for resources, cyberattacks, space as the 'new frontier', terrorism, violent crime, pandemics, and resistance to antibiotics. There are marked risks in the cyber-world in particular, given the technological vulnerability of modern societies. Environmental issues (specifically with regard to the climate and biodiversity) have long since taken on global dimensions in politics, the economy, and society.

One problem remains the high number of countries with weak and unstable state institutions, but often with an underdeveloped civil society as well. The populations in such fragile states suffer mostly from extreme poverty, violence, corruption, and arbitrary political rule. Governments in these countries are unable or unwilling to perform basic state functions. Fragile states are an ideal breeding ground for terrorist and criminal groups.

The economic outlooks worldwide are uncertain. The global economy is recovering only slowly from the impact of the financial, economic, and debt crisis. It still has to return to a sustainable growth path. Meanwhile, growth in the emerging economies also shows clear signs of slowing down. Switzerland too suffers from appreciation of the Swiss franc and weakening in traditional sales markets (in particular the EU). Although the multilateral trading system has taken only small steps toward further development within the WTO framework certain successes have been achieved in liberalising global trade (e.g., trade agreements, information technology agreements). All in all, the environment for a medium-sized open economy such as Switzerland's has deteriorated, and this calls for special efforts. At the same time, new supraregional normative systems (such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, TPP) are emerging that go well beyond traditional free-trade agreements and are likely to have far-reaching consequences for the global economy and Switzerland alike.

The prevailing phase of upheaval points towards increasing fragmentation of the international system. It is characterised by uncertainty, volatility, and instability, a lack of governance worldwide, and new actors. In some cases it involves a neo-traditionalist mindset in political power and exclusive spheres of influence. Established orders and norms are being called into question. Democracy, human rights, and freedom come under pressure in many places. This increasingly undermines international law and cooperation.

However, this needs to be put into context in two respects. Firstly, Switzerland's immediate environment still enjoys relative stability. The EU has major challenges to contend with. A lasting solution must still be found

for the debt and euro crisis, whilst the refugee crisis has increased political fragmentation in Europe. Wrangling over its intrinsic identity persists. That said, as the process of European unity has progressed, the EU has developed a certain resilience to crises. Although it is scarcely possible to predict at this stage what form it will take in the future, we can assume that the EU will continue to develop and remain the central defining force shaping Europe. Despite all its difficulties, the EU is a vital anchor for stability and prosperity in Europe. Switzerland has an interest in the EU finding its way out of the crisis and remaining able to act. Were the European Union to be destabilised or even break apart, this would have negative political and economic implications for Switzerland.

Secondly, experience in recent years has shown that cooperation and joint solutions are not only urgently needed in an increasingly multi-polar world; they are also possible if there is the required political will. Amidst all the division, common and constructive approaches have nonetheless prevailed time and again in the international community. Examples of this include the nuclear deal with Iran, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris climate change agreement, and rapprochement between the United States and Cuba. Positive developments are also often overlooked. For example, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been reduced by around half in the past 20 years or so. There has been a significant decline in infant mortality. Incomes have clearly increased in many developing countries, and a middle class has emerged. More and more children have access to education.

The phase of upheaval is opening up chances and opportunities. Globalisation and the attendant change process can and should be actively shaped. Switzerland is well positioned to build bridges, provide support in channelling the change process, stand up for its own values and interests, and to forge alliances with others keen on solving problems and tackling global challenges. It can develop innovative and viable solutions that also serve its own interests.

The constitutional objectives of Swiss foreign policy

Switzerland's foreign policy objectives centre on safeguarding and promoting the interests and values set out in the Federal Constitution. These interests and values are enduring and provide a broad and stable framework for Swiss foreign policy.

Article 2 of the Federal Constitution states that the Swiss Confederation shall "protect the liberty and rights of the people and safeguard the independence and security of the country", "promote the common welfare, sustainable development, internal cohesion and cultural diversity of the country", "ensure the greatest possible equality of opportunity among its citizens" and shall be "committed to the long-term preservation of natural resources and to a just and peaceful international order". As regards foreign relations, Article 54 para. 2 of the Constitution states: "The Confederation shall ensure that the independence of Switzerland and its welfare is safeguarded; it shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources".

These foreign policy objectives reflect Switzerland's values. Switzerland is shaped by its cultural diversity, its political institutions – in particular the opportunities for its population to be involved in decision-making processes, federalism and power sharing (consensus and the concordance system) – and legal certainty. The internal cohesion and coexistence of different cultures and social groups rank among Switzerland's strengths, just as much as its inclusive political system with its unique institutions. This system and its political culture have to be cared for and nurtured. After all, a large number of internal conflicts across the world shows that political and social stability should not be taken for granted.

Swiss domestic and foreign policies are closely interrelated. Switzerland's inner strengths also help guide its foreign policy. Switzerland is committed to democracy and the rule of law, to dialogue and a culture of compromise, to inclusion and power sharing, and to human rights and humanitarian principles.

As a result of globalisation, far-off crises and conflicts can also have consequences for Switzerland. They can have a negative impact on the Swiss economy and jeopardise investments or exports. They can affect Swiss nationals living or travelling in these areas beset by conflict and crisis, or pose a threat to natural resources. Fragile states are fertile ground for terrorist groups with inhuman ideologies, for organised crime, and for armed violence. The global economy reacts sensitively to threats to trade flows,

transportation, and energy resources. Switzerland is also exposed to the pressure of migration from countries affected by instability, oppression, human rights violations, poor socio-economic prospects, and environmental degradation.

Switzerland therefore does its utmost to prevent conflict, fight poverty, and protect the environment, while accepting that it can often only make an impact by working together with others. It is committed to international stability and shaping globalisation and international rules and standards. These multi-faceted efforts in turn have a positive impact on Switzerland's independence, freedom, and security, as well as its prosperity.

Implementation principles

The implementation of Swiss foreign policy is based on certain principles that transcend day-to-day issues and that remain valid regardless of temporary developments in the international environment. These principles are the rule of law, neutrality, universality, dialogue, solidarity and responsibility, as well as efficiency and coherence.

The rule of law

Switzerland is a state governed by the rule of law. It is in its interests for law to take precedence over power in international relations. International law and compliance are therefore of great importance for Switzerland. Without rules, international actors feel tempted to resort to pressure or even use force to further their interests. To counter this, Switzerland has for many years been resolutely opposed to violence and advocated peaceful settlement of disputes.

Neutrality

Neutrality is a foreign policy instrument aimed at safeguarding Switzerland's independence. Switzerland has the status of a permanently neutral state, and complies with the obligations imposed on it by the law of neutrality. First and foremost, this means that it does not participate in international conflicts. However, implementation of its neutrality policy – intended to ensure visibility and credibility of its neutrality in the legal sense – is not bound by legal norms, and depends instead on analysis of the prevailing international environment. Although neutrality requires a degree of impartiality and objectivity in adopting positions, it does not prevent Switzerland from safeguarding its interests. On the contrary, it is a flexible instrument that can be used to implement Swiss foreign policy and facilitate contact with different partners. It can be particularly advantageous when it comes to providing good offices, a traditional strength of Swiss

foreign policy and something that allows Switzerland to set itself apart from other countries and take on a special role.

Universality

By tradition, Switzerland endeavours to maintain good relations with all states of the world as far as is possible. As a country heavily dependent on its open approach to the world, particularly economically, and given that it is not a member of the EU or other major alliances or groups such as the G20, Switzerland must maintain a well-developed network of relationships to safeguard its interests effectively. That said, the principle of universality does not mean there are no foreign policy priorities. Nor does it prevent Switzerland from recognising the special importance of certain partners or the need to develop specific strategies for particular countries.

Dialogue

Dialogue is a key element of Switzerland's political culture, and also something it is committed to in its foreign policy. Switzerland seeks to build bridges and promote dialogue. Dialogue may not be a panacea for all ills, and it does at the very least require all parties involved to show a willingness to engage. However, without it or the offer to make such a move, there is scarcely any chance of resolving a conflict or preventing one that has started to arise. Actively listening to the various actors involved and seeking to understand them does not mean that Switzerland agrees with their position. Nor does it mean that it cannot stand by its own interests and values.

Solidarity and responsibility

The influence a state can exert and its ability to create scope for safeguarding its interests are now measured not just in terms of its military strength, economic power, or the size of its population. Instead it hinges too on its willingness to show solidarity and responsibility in playing its part in tackling global challenges. This sense of responsibility also extends to future generations. The goal must be for a responsible foreign policy to leave these generations a world as peaceful and safe as possible with an environment that is intact.

Efficiency and coherence

Efficiency is pivotal to Swiss foreign policy. Switzerland's foreign policy in general, and its foreign policy initiatives, motions, and activities in particular must always be gauged against the means at its disposal, making prudent use of the scarce resources available. Swiss foreign policy activity is centred less on the action in question and more on the planned strategic measure behind it. This is seen across all areas of activity – for example, in the case of consular support for Swiss nationals living and travelling abroad. A coherent approach in foreign policy is a prerequisite for efficiency; efficiency and coherence are mutually dependent on each other. Coherence entails recognising the interplay between individual political spheres, and adjusting the foreign policy approach accordingly. The requirements in terms of coherence are further heightened by globalisation – especially between different sectoral policies. Transparency and sharing

information are important when it comes to identifying inconsistencies at an early stage and ensuring coherence. Every foreign policy will at some stage face inconsistencies and conflicts in terms of objectives and resources – these must be kept to a minimum by using coordination processes and defining specific criteria.

The strategic priorities of Swiss foreign policy

An active and forward-looking foreign policy requires setting strategic priorities. Establishing such priorities is all the more important given the wide range of foreign policy activities and actors. The present foreign policy strategy sets the framework and defines the broad outlines of Switzerland's international commitment for the legislative period through to 2019. It is designed to leave room for manoeuvre and sufficient flexibility to identify and actively exploit scope and opportunities for action that emerge over the short term. It also enables pragmatic responses to new developments. The four strategic priorities do not stand in isolation from each other. Instead they interrelate closely with areas of overlap. Constructive use must be made of the synergies this creates.

Photo: Parliamentary Services, 3003 Bern; Grafic: FDFA

Relations with the European Union and EU and EFTA member states

CORE OBJECTIVE:

Based on the consolidation and renewal of the bilateral approach, Switzerland aims to ensure a regulated relationship with the EU based on partnership allowing scope for development, and to promote close ties with the EU and EFTA member states, taking particular account of its neighbouring countries.

Switzerland is in the centre of Europe. It shares the fundamental democratic principles of its European partners and has close ties politically, economically, and culturally with these states and above all its neighbours. With the exception of Liechtenstein, all are EU members. Switzerland shows solidarity in its commitment to stability and development across the continent.

Amid shifts in power and cross-border challenges and threats, what is needed are stable partnerships – especially with like-minded states – and common solutions. This applies in particular to global competition (research, trade, and innovation), internal and external security (including counter-terrorism and the fight against crime), international cooperation and humanitarian aid, and citizens' quality of life (mobility, opportunities, jobs, cultural diversity, environment, and health). Switzerland works in various ways with its partners in Europe, both multilaterally and bilaterally for instance, via the OSCE, in the Council of Europe, the NATO Partnership for Peace, with the EFTA states and with subregional cooperation groups. The EU is of particular importance in this regard.

The core objective for the coming four years is to ensure that Switzerland has a regulated relationship with the EU based on partnership and with scope for development. Good relations with the EU are crucial for pragmatic cooperation with European states in a wide range of policy areas, guided by Swiss interests and values. Such cooperation contributes to promoting prosperity and security. Switzerland and the EU have a shared interest in maintaining stable bilateral relations. As an important economic partner, and acting as a bridge between Europe's north and south, Switzerland is more closely intertwined with the EU than some of the member states themselves.

The challenges that currently affect the entire continent – such as handling the refugee crisis – underscore the importance of having a close and constructive cooperation with the EU as Switzerland's most important partner. Within the framework of the Schengen and Dublin association agreements, Switzerland is committed to effective European solutions – in addition to national measures – and positions itself as a partner that is both autonomous but willing to show

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter (right) welcoming German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier on a working visit in Bern in August 2015. KEYSTONE/Peter Schneider

solidarity and cooperate. In so doing, it safeguards its foreign policy interests. This also applies in the case of counterterrorism and the fight against crime, where Schengen association offers valuable instruments such as the Schengen Information System and common standards on external border controls. Over and above this, Switzerland also works together closely with Europol, for example, with regard to foreign terrorist fighters.

Switzerland has particularly close economic ties with neighbouring states (cross-border commuters, border regions). One third of all Swiss foreign trade and almost two thirds of its trade with the EU is with neighbouring countries. For its part, Switzerland is among the 10 most important trading partners of each of its neighbours. There are also close social links: more than 750,000 citizens from neighbouring states live in Switzerland, and a further 290,000 commute across the border each day to work. Meanwhile, more than 300,000 Swiss citizens live in neighbouring countries.

Relations between Switzerland and the EU are based and structured around a series of bilateral agreements covering a wide range of sectoral areas of cooperation. Together, these agreements form what is known as the bilateral path. This form of cooperation makes it possible to build on and bolster relations between Switzerland and the EU and is in the interests of both.

However, this bilateral approach also requires an institutional framework within which existing agreements can be kept up to date. This guarantees access to the internal market, increases legal certainty, and prevents erosion of basic principles underlying the bilateral agreements. On 9 February 2014, the Swiss people and cantons voted in favour of the popular initiative against mass immigration. This gave rise to fresh uncertainty over the future of the bilateral path. Thus the Federal Council's goal remains to find a mutually agreed solution that respects both the new article of the Federal Constitution (Article 121a) and the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. If unsuccessful, the Bilaterals I package of agreements will be at risk. This is expected to have a negative impact on other fields of cooperation between Switzerland and the EU – particularly in the areas of education, research, and innovation.

Therefore, the Federal Council has set itself the goal of renewing the bilateral path with a view to preserving it and safeguarding its future development. It wants to find a solution with the EU that will enable it to manage immigration from EU states more effectively while upholding the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons. To this end, it seeks a mutually agreed solution with the EU based on a common interpretation of how the agreement is applied, in particular regarding the safeguard clause. Reaching such a solution with the EU would make it possible to ratify Protocol III extending the free movement of persons to Croatia. If the corresponding protocol is ratified by 9 February 2017, Swiss researchers will once again be able to participate in the EU framework programme (Horizon 2020 package) as fully associated and equally entitled partners.

The institutional framework for relations with the EU is also to be defined, and would form the basis for future sectoral agreements on access to the EU's internal market, for instance, in areas such as electricity and financial services. Conclusion of new agreements on collaboration and extension of existing areas of cooperation will contribute further to develop the bilateral path (for example, in the fields of security, environment and health). As regards research, the aim is to return by 2017 to the level of cooperation that existed prior to 9 February 2014. In this context, the Federal Council will also decide in the current legislative period on renewing Switzerland's enlargement contribution, which aims to reduce social and economic disparities within the enlarged EU.

The strategic partnerships with Germany, France, Italy, and Austria – which are of crucial importance in Switzerland's relations with Europe – are to be consolidated and expanded further in specific respects. These relationships developed well in the 2011–15 legislative period, but the scope remains for them to be enhanced further, and they need to be maintained on an ongoing basis. Firstly, the number of diplomatic visits should remain high to keep the channels of communication open, regularly acknowledging the full extent of bilateral cooperation, and possibly identifying new areas for working together. Secondly, the specific bilateral issues

are to be addressed promptly and brought to a solution. Thirdly, coordination and work with neighbouring countries on multilateral cooperation – for example in the UN or OSCE – should be stepped up. Fourthly, Switzerland's relations with its neighbouring countries are to be maintained, particularly with a view to their key role as EU member states. And fifthly, particular attention should be paid to the border regions. The focus should remain on seeking cross-border solutions for common challenges.

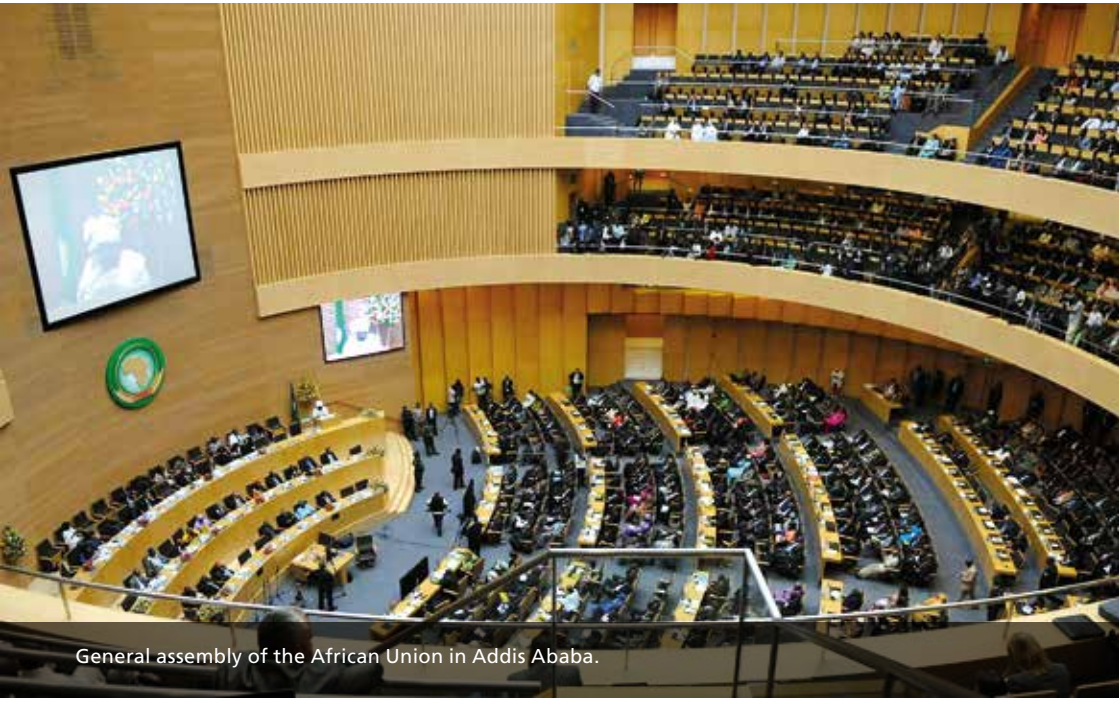
Switzerland also enjoys very close, trust-based relations with Liechtenstein. Beyond its neighbouring countries, Switzerland will seek to maintain close ties with all EU and EFTA states through frequent diplomatic visits. It will seek to develop, continue, and intensify cooperation on specific issues, also via multilateral activity. Switzerland will also remain in close contact with the EU Council Presidency.

Relations with global partners

CORE OBJECTIVE:
Switzerland will bolster its network of relationships with global partners with a view to safeguarding its interests and resolving specific problems.

Swiss foreign policy centres on the principle of universality. Accordingly, Switzerland not only maintains relations with major and regional powers, but also with smaller and medium-sized states, regional organisations, and non-state actors. The latter are becoming increasingly important in light of the shift in power. These relationships, generally referred to as bilateral, remain crucial. Given the shifts in power worldwide, coupled with the fact that Switzerland is not a member of the EU, NATO, or the G20, it is important for it to strengthen its relationships with states, regions, and international organisations beyond the EU and EFTA area.

In an increasingly globalised and interdependent world, bilateral issues and problems will by no means disappear. Nor will opportunities for cooperation. Added to this, bilateral and multilateral issues often overlap. Therefore, multilateral aspects are becoming an important part of bilateral relations. Switzerland will seek to use bilateral ties systematically to make itself heard on affairs (e.g., diplomatic initiatives and candidatures) and interests – particularly with regard to the other three priorities set out in this strategy. It will also identify and maintain relations with like-minded states and strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas of common interest. More systematic cooperation with countries of comparable size and similar foreign and



General assembly of the African Union in Addis Ababa.

economic policy positions would open up considerable potential.

Bilateral exchanges and cooperation essentially take part at three levels. Switzerland in principle engages in dialogue to varying degrees with all states interested in doing so. It maintains partnerships with selected states with which it has regular exchanges at the ministerial and technical level. Strategic partnerships may be based on corresponding declarations of intent by both parties (e.g. a memorandum of understanding or joint statement), as well as on various coordination mechanisms on the Swiss side (e.g., country strategies, roadmaps, intradepartmental and interdepartmental coordination meetings), annual political consultations, regular sectoral consultations and dialogue, and regular contact at the ministerial level, be it with foreign ministers or the minister responsible for specific policies.

The concept of strategic partnerships stems from a decision taken by the Federal Council in 2005 to strengthen relations with the United States, Japan, the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and Turkey. Bolstering and diversifying the strategic partnerships with these countries will remain one of Switzerland's objectives in the legislative period through to 2019. Particular focus is to be placed on enhancing coordination and coherence in this respect, with a view of ensuring that Switzerland's interests and values are safeguarded effec-

tively. Themes and areas where Switzerland can make a difference or add value, while benefiting from the cooperation and making its influence felt are to be pursued further or defined.

Partnerships have been established with further G20 countries in recent years that have a quality essentially on a par with strategic partnerships (e.g., Mexico, South Korea, Indonesia and Australia). Consolidating these partnerships is a priority. By the middle of the current legislative period, it is to be examined whether strategic partnerships with other countries would be warranted – provided there is corresponding interest from the other side and the FDFA has the appropriate resources (also locally) to ensure follow-up and coordination.

Switzerland's regional presence and networks are to be consolidated in areas including South-Eastern and Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Asia-Pacific region, the Americas, Africa, and the Middle East. Switzerland has different interests in these regions, be they political or relating to security policy, economic policy, environmental policy, or migration policy. Bilateral cooperation instruments will be used where appropriate and expedient.

Regional organisations are carrying increasing weight, politically and often also economically. It is therefore in Switzerland's interests to strengthen its presence in these organisations through cooperation, if this interest is reciprocated. Switzerland is already an accredited observer or active partner in the Pacific Alliance, the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the League of Arab States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the African Union. It is seeking to be accorded the status of a sectoral dialogue partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Associations of smaller countries and microstates can also be interesting partners, for example in the Caribbean (CARICOM) or the Pacific region (PIF). The focus during the current legislative period will therefore be on systematising Switzerland's activities as an observer and partner in regional organisations.

A broad network of representations worldwide is essential when it comes to strengthening and intensifying relationships with partners and regions outside the EU and EFTA area. Having a local presence adds considerable value, for example, with regard to implementing foreign policy, fostering contacts and networks, coordination, visit preparations, support and follow-up, and in carrying out analysis and reporting. Switzerland's network of representations also performs considerable services for Swiss business and in particular SMEs.

Peace and security

CORE OBJECTIVE:

Switzerland will build on its commitment to peace and security, lending significant impetus to a viable and just international order.

The commitment to peace and security has become increasingly significant in recent years. This is in part attributable to the crisis-related developments worldwide that also have negative repercussions for Switzerland. As a highly globalised country with an export-oriented economy, Switzerland depends for its security and prosperity on a stable environment and a viable and just international order. In times of crisis and uncertainty, it is particularly important – and in keeping with its interests and values – that Switzerland plays a role in shaping its environment through comprehensive and creative forms of engagement.

Switzerland has also been able to show on many occasions in recent years that it can make valuable contributions to promoting peace and security through its foreign policy, which is both independent and plays a co-determining role. In today's multipolar world, Switzerland does not belong to any of the power centres. It is a European country representing European values. However, it is autonomous in its commitment to peace and security. Switzerland can build bridges where others cannot, working together with a wide range of partners and developing its own initiatives.

Over the past 15 years, Switzerland has also established an extensive set of innovative instruments for promoting peace and security tailor-made for tackling current challenges. With its network of representations committed to universality and its involvement in international cooperation stretching back decades in some cases, it has a good platform for making a meaningful contribution in many contexts. In so doing, Switzerland focuses its efforts primarily within areas where it can make a difference due to its experience, networks, expertise, and the instruments at its disposal. Geographically speaking, the priorities are the Middle East, Africa, and the OSCE area.

Switzerland's commitment to peace and security essentially comprises crisis and conflict resolution on one hand, and working to define common answers to global challenges on the other. Despite a heightened focus on crises at present, it is nonetheless important to pay appropriate attention to shaping globalisation with a view to the longer term.

The FDFA will further enhance its mediation capabilities in the field of crisis and conflict resolution. Mediation and facilitation form part of Switzerland's role in providing good offices, which is appreciated and much sought after worldwide and plays an effec-

tive role in de-escalating and resolving conflicts. More and more states are interested in using the good offices Switzerland provides in this field. Therefore, the FDFA wants to professionalise this mediation role, increase capacities, and expand training. Switzerland should increasingly lead more of its own mediation proceedings in future, and provide high-level Swiss mediators to the UN and OSCE, as is already the case, for instance, in the peace efforts in Syria and the Ukraine crisis. It also offers mediation services covering specific themes, such as water, for example. The FDFA wants to encourage young people into mediation with the help of specialist careers in the field, and to strengthen cooperation with partners, other states, and organisations.

Besides mediation and crisis diplomacy, the instruments for promoting peace and human security will continue to play a crucial role. There is particular focus here on strengthening institutions that ensure the rule of law, democratic transition, and processes establishing lasting peace without leading to fresh outbreaks of violence. Efforts will also be concentrated on dealing with the past, preventing atrocities, and protecting the civilian population from violence. Switzerland is also playing its part in ongoing work to enhance the instruments available to UN peace missions, supporting these with civilian and military personnel. Providing better protection for women in conflict situations is an important issue for Switzerland, as is ensuring that they are better integrated in peace processes, in accordance with UN Resolution 1325. Switzerland will also continue to make itself available to act as a protecting power for states that have broken off diplomatic ties.

Promoting human rights is one of the cornerstones of Swiss foreign policy. Lasting security depends on human rights being respected. Switzerland is committed to ensuring that human rights are respected, promoted, and effectively implemented across the world. By seeking dialogue with all parties and ensuring that the focus is on factors that unite rather than divide, Switzerland can channel its efforts towards building bridges. In so doing, it remains true to its values and interests. This approach allows Switzerland to play a leading role in its human rights efforts – for example, with regard to engaging civil society, the private sector, and other non-state actors in the issue of human rights.

Within a multilateral framework, Switzerland works in general to promote strong human rights institutions at the global, regional, and national levels while focusing in particular on bolstering the resources of the UN's human rights pillar. Monitoring current implementation of human rights is a further priority. Using a range of bilateral and multilateral instruments and concrete projects, Switzerland works in areas where it can make a specific, credible, and substantial contribution (e.g., efforts with regard to abolishing the death penalty, protecting human rights defenders, the private sector, and human rights).

Switzerland attaches great importance to the protection and rights of migrants in

The ICRC supplying people in the Donetsk region in Ukraine with vital necessities during a ceasefire in March 2015 – in collaboration with the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine SMM (deputy head of the SMM, Alexander Hug, left back). OSZE

their regions of origin, providing support to countries of first refuge (such as Syria's neighbouring states), states on the Horn of Africa, and states in Eastern Europe in strengthening their protection and reception capacities. The aim is to reduce the pressure to make an onward journey to Europe by ensuring an efficient asylum system and better living conditions for migrants (protection, care, economic integration). In addition to bilateral and multilateral measures in the area of migration foreign policy, Switzerland also contributes via its humanitarian commitment to alleviating suffering on the ground, combating the causes of displacement through peacebuilding and development efforts, and working to ensure better management of migration towards Europe in the interests of cooperative migration governance in Europe. Under the Nansen Initiative, Switzerland is also working to ensure the protection of people forced to flee their homelands by natural disasters.

The fight against international terrorism is a key aspect of the commitment to peace and security. The Federal Council approved Switzerland's counterterrorism strategy in 2015. Under this strategy, the fight against terrorism is to take place within the framework of the Constitution and in accordance with international law, with particular focus on fundamental and human rights. Switzerland wants to be seen in this regard as a reliable and prudent player committed to international law, and its foreign policy is linked

with all four of the strategic areas of action (prevention, law enforcement, protection, and crisis management).

In the field of counterterrorism, one of Switzerland's foreign policy priorities is its efforts against violent extremism, the aim here being to prevent radicalisation and recruitment of young people and to strengthen the resilience of potentially vulnerable groups over the long term, particularly in fragile contexts. Switzerland wants to contribute to shaping the corresponding policies as well as establishing and developing best practices. It wants to promote International Geneva as the hub for combating the causes of terrorism and to launch corresponding projects such as the Geneva-based Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF). A foreign policy action plan drawn up by the FDFA provides specific detail on Switzerland's commitment to preventing violent extremism.

When it comes to defining common answers to global challenges, Switzerland attaches great importance to the ability of international organisations to take action. Shaping globalisation requires functioning multilateralism. The UN has a key role in Switzerland's commitment to peace and security. Switzerland contributes to important discussions on reform and review processes at the UN, and will place emphasis in the coming years on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It also supports measures to improve cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the Security Council as well as other UN political bodies. Switzerland has submitted its candidature for a seat on the UN Security Council for the 2023–24 term, and also wants to contribute to peace and security via this forum with its expertise as a bridge-builder.

At the regional level, the OSCE plays a central role. Switzerland developed several initiatives here during its Chairmanship in 2014 and membership of the Troika from 2013 to 2015. It will pursue these further. It will continue its commitment to finding a solution to the Ukraine crisis and other conflicts, such as that in the South Caucasus. And will strive to expand the OSCE's capabilities with regard to peace operations. It also proposes to strengthen the OSCE's role in promoting economic exchange (connectivity). Moreover, Switzerland is committed to a fundamental political dialogue between OSCE states on future European security. Two reports launched on Switzerland's initiative and published by the Panel of Eminent Persons on European Security as a Common Project provide a basis for this. A further issue centres on improving implementation of human dimension commitments. Besides the OSCE, Switzerland engages in promoting cooperative security in other formats such as NATO's Partnership for Peace, as well as in other regions.

Strengthening International Geneva as an important centre for peace and security and a venue for peace negotiations also remains a priority. Compared with other locations, Geneva has a unique concentration of actors, organisations, and skills. This enables Switzerland to make an active contribution to addressing challenges that need a coordi-

nated response. Switzerland will focus here on fostering a networked approach, harnessing the knowledge base centred in Geneva to deal with the increasingly complex processes of global governance.

The thematic priorities in shaping globalisation in respect to peace and security include fighting terrorism through the rule of law and human rights; a peaceful, secure, and open cyberspace. It should be based on clear rules and mutual trust. These extend to arms control, disarmament, and preventing the proliferation of conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery.

Switzerland is committed to international law. An order based on rules and norms is essential for international stability. In particular, Switzerland advocates better compliance with international humanitarian law, promoting a corresponding dialogue, cooperation between states, and supporting specific projects aimed at improving implementation in this field. Switzerland wants to continue its decisive action in returning illicitly acquired assets of politically exposed persons. It will also incorporate a heightened focus on anti-corruption in its commitment to peace and security. Experience has shown that corruption benefits organised crime (e.g., human trafficking) and is one of the major causes of fragility and insecurity.

Be it with regard to crisis and conflict resolution or shaping globalisation, Switzerland takes into account the interaction between peace and security on one hand and sustainable development on the other. This interaction is reflected in the 2030 Agenda, which lists "peaceful and inclusive societies" as one of its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

It is also addressed in the Federal Council's Dispatch on International Cooperation 2017–20, which sets out a common strategy. In addition to development cooperation, cooperation with Eastern Europe, and humanitarian aid, human security is covered for the first time. As regards international cooperation, Switzerland's commitment to reducing poverty and exclusion in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is becoming increasingly important. Switzerland performs important work in preventing long-term causes of violent conflict through its international cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. For example, it supports establishment of state institutions governed by the rule of law and promoting human rights.

Where peace and sustainable development overlap, one of Switzerland's foreign policy priorities is the issue of water. Acting on the basis of the FDFA lines of action in the field of water and security, Switzerland seeks to ensure that water does not contribute to conflicts arising and is used instead to promote cooperation. To this end, it launched a global high-level panel on water and peace at the end of 2015. It is to submit proposals within two years on creation of instruments and a governance structure to prevent water-related conflicts at global and regional levels.

Humanitarian aid also straddles peace and sustainable development, forming part of Switzerland's multi-faceted commitment to preventing crises and limiting the consequences and damage. It seeks to help victims of an armed conflict or natural disaster whose governments cannot handle the emergency situation without outside assistance. Humanitarian aid eases suffering, but it is no substitute for a political solution. Emergency relief focuses primarily on protecting and supporting those most affected. Particularly in the case of protracted armed conflicts, it is essential to help people to help themselves. Therefore, Switzerland's emergency relief efforts also concentrate on strengthening the resilience of the local population. Other areas covered by humanitarian aid are disaster risk reduction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation. Particular attention is paid here to preventing and reducing disaster risks.

Sustainable development and prosperity

CORE OBJECTIVE:

Switzerland aims to achieve a world without poverty where sustainable development is promoted, and will contribute to providing a global environment conducive to prosperity.

Sustainable development

The world is in a transition phase, and the global challenges know no borders. More than ever before, these call for joint action. Poverty and inequality, often stemming from corruption, arbitrary rule, and conflicts, are still widespread, with minorities, women, and children the most affected. This results in high economic, social, environmental, and political costs, while contributing to the lack of prospects for young people. That said, eliminating at least extreme poverty is within reach for the first time.

In an increasingly multipolar and fragmented world fraught with geopolitical tension, global governance is taking on new significance. But the world has also become more complex. New actors are gaining influence, and this in turn is opening up opportunities for exchange and innovation. There is a demonstrably close connection worldwide between poverty, global risks, and conflicts: there can be no sustainable development without peace, and no peace can flourish without sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals was adopted in September 2015 under the auspices of the UN and signed by heads of state and government of 193 countries. Switzerland was a driving force behind the agenda. The 2030 Agenda contains a pledge that no one will be left behind. All countries will use their policies and resources to contribute to implementing the agenda, taking into account the economic, social, and environmental aspects. The aim is to mobilise other important actors, such as the private sector, in addition to state institutions.

Switzerland is committed to a world without poverty and in peace for sustainable development. It works towards reduction of global risks, poverty, and hardship, as well as for peacebuilding and respect for human rights. Switzerland acts here out of a sense of solidarity, taking on responsibility while also safeguarding its own interests.

Switzerland's international cooperation is guided by seven strategic objectives:

1) contribute to developing an international framework that responds to global challenges;
2) prevent and manage the consequences of crisis and disaster as well as fragility; promote conflict transformation;
3) support sustainable access to resources and services for all;

Syrian refugees breaking fast at a centre in the desert city of Kerak, Jordan, where mainly single mothers and orphans have found shelter. The celebration was organised by the UNHCR and regional partner organisations in June 2015. UNHCR/Christopher Herwig

4) promote sustainable economic growth;
5) strengthen the rule of law and democratic participation while supporting institutions that serve society and the economy;
6) ensure respect for human rights and fundamental liberties while supporting efforts to advance their cause; and
7) strengthen gender equality and the rights of women and girls.

Switzerland's international cooperation contributes to implementing the 2030 Agenda. At the multilateral level, Switzerland promotes greater coordination between multilateral organisations, particularly those in which it is a member. It advocates taking Sustainable Development Goals into account in setting international norms and monitoring progress made. At the level of partner countries, Switzerland's international cooperation provides support in drawing up strategies, programmes, and projects for sustainable development. This is based on the new objectives and also involves the most vulnerable people.

Switzerland uses its instruments effectively and efficiently while aiming to achieve a world without poverty that promotes sustainable development. These instruments include humanitarian aid, bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, as well as global programmes, economic and trade policy measures in the field of development cooperation, transition cooperation, and measures to promote peace and human security.

In terms of geographic focus, Switzerland deploys its instruments where they are needed most. This means primarily sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, as well as fragile contexts in other parts of the world. Another important area is support for more advanced developing countries (i.e., those in the middle-income group), where the development needs of many poor and vulnerable people can also have an impact felt across entire regions. Through joint action – known as the whole-of-government approach – the actors involved in Switzerland's international cooperation achieve a greater impact than they would have acting on their own, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Switzerland also works together closely with other donor countries to coordinate its international cooperation activities and make them more effective.

The Sustainable Development Goals will form an integral part of Switzerland's international cooperation efforts in the future. The primary focus will be on those themes most relevant to achieving its strategic objectives. It asks where Switzerland can add value, such as basic education, vocational training, and community development. It works on global issues such as water, climate change, and the environment, food security, migration, health, and finance and trade. This calls for both joint efforts with regard to shaping globalisation and action in individual countries. The priorities will be the themes of peace, human rights, water, and security.

Partnerships are one instrument used to implement international cooperation objectives. Involving a variety of actors is a necessity, and key partners include organisations from developing countries and international NGOs, as well as multilateral organisations. Partnerships with the private sector must be strengthened, as should partnerships with research institutions focused on interdisciplinarity and knowledge exchange.

The experience Switzerland has amassed over many years presents a platform for mobilising new resources and expertise, as well as for developing new alliances as part of its international cooperation activities. Thus Switzerland will enhance its role in providing political impetus and as a catalyst in finding sources of financing, while bolstering its strategic partnerships. Through its international cooperation, Switzerland supports reforms and improves framework conditions, strengthens the private sector and civil society as agents of change, exerts influence on global politics, and is committed to a coherent policy on sustainable development.

Prosperity

A strong, competitive, and innovative economy creates growth and fosters prosperity. The Swiss economy traditionally depends heavily on exports, and requires close international ties. Hence maintaining prosperity and expanding it are directly linked to the global economic environment and the corresponding rules and norms worldwide. Open markets are of existential importance for

Switzerland, as are free trade and transparent, predictable and fair systems of rules and norms for the global economy.

Switzerland can impose measures to mitigate the consequences of negative developments during recent years. For example, it is steadily expanding the number of bilateral free-trade agreements (bilateral or via EFTA). In the current legislative period, Switzerland will also have to address how it wants to position itself in a world of new normative systems such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which are likely to have a lasting influence on the global economy.

A stable and internationally competitive financial centre also makes an important contribution to maintaining prosperity. Since the global crisis, financial markets in many countries have been subjected to stricter regulations. This has tended to raise barriers in providing cross-border services. However, market access is pivotal for Switzerland's export-oriented financial centre. Switzerland is meeting requirements for this by complying with international standards in banking regulation, client protection, and cooperation in tax matters. Against this backdrop, Switzerland maintains regular dialogue on financial and regulatory issues with the G20 states and selected growth markets. It also seeks to secure improved market access for Swiss financial services providers with selected partner states in Europe and beyond.

For an open economy such as Switzerland's, prosperity is impossible in isolation. Today's goods and services markets are too interconnected. And so are the capital and labour markets. These close links bring with them a dynamic system of setting international rules and norms. The 'old' world of customs is increasingly being replaced by a 'new' world of common rules on environmental and climate issues. They also concern transport, energy, and health policies. This is also an important part of shaping globalisation. Hence for Switzerland, sustainably safeguarding prosperity means taking part in drafting these rules and norms internationally, promoting Swiss values and interests in doing so where possible and necessary in conjunction with like-minded countries and by forging corresponding alliances. Meanwhile, Switzerland must also be promoted and maintained as a centre for business, science, and research. Furthermore, Swiss foreign policy maintains close links with key trade and investment partners via joint economic committees and supports Swiss companies active abroad.

Citizen-oriented services

Switzerland has close economic ties worldwide, and its citizens are also becoming ever more mobile. The number of Swiss citizens living abroad increases by around 2 per cent every year and totalled more than 750,000 in 2015. Meanwhile the Swiss rank among the world's most frequent travellers, undertaking some 10 million trips abroad every year. These trends are likely to continue.

With this rise in mobility, there is an increasing call for the FDFA's services and its representations abroad. Therefore, the FDFA continually adapts its range of consular public services in line with the changing environment and growing demand. Instability and volatility in many parts of the world have an influence on provision of services as do technological developments. In addition to comprehensively trained consular staff at the counter, the FDFA is also phasing in e-government solutions, which also contribute to the federal government's cost-saving efforts. The range of solutions is to be steadily expanded within the limits of what is legally feasible.

From mid-2016, a new register for Swiss citizens living abroad (eVERA) will make it possible for them to register online, make changes to their address, and order and pay for certain services online, such as confirmation of registration or of citizenship. The electronic platform 'itineris' offers Swiss citizens a web-based solution that allows them to register their travel plans online and receive up-to-date information in crisis situations, as well as direct support where appropriate. The FDFA will continually review whether further services can be offered as web-based solutions or via an app.

The Swiss Abroad Act, which came into force on 1 November 2015, enables the federal government to pursue a coherent and holistic policy in respect of Swiss nationals abroad. Based on this, the FDFA will continue to develop the guichet unique ('single counter approach').

The representations abroad and the Consular Directorate (CD) work together closely, to provide the best possible services for Swiss citizens. The representations remain the main contact for the Swiss community abroad. The CD sees itself as a service centre, and it is the contact point for the entire federal administration and the cantonal authorities for all questions relating to the Swiss abroad. The FDFA runs a round-the-clock helpline for citizens, which handled an average of more than 150 enquiries a day at the beginning of 2016. The helpline is also increasingly taking on emergency on-call duties for the representations, easing the burden on them and allowing them to concentrate on their core tasks. A total of 95 representations should benefit from this service by the end of 2016.

As part of their public service role, the representations provide services offered in Switzerland by the residents' registry office. For example, every representation offering consular services is able to issue emergency passports if need be. If Swiss citizens find themselves in difficulties abroad, they receive assistance under the consular protection services. The representations foster contacts with the Swiss community abroad and promote exchanges, in particular between Switzerland and young Swiss citizens abroad.

Given the volatile developments in the security situation in various regions of the world, crisis prevention, preparedness, and crisis management for Swiss citizens are becoming increasingly important. In its area of activity, the FDFA's Crisis Management Centre (KMZ) coordinates all resources deployed by the federal government to protect Swiss nationals abroad. The KMZ also informs the general public about what the FDFA can and cannot do in terms of providing support in cases of need.

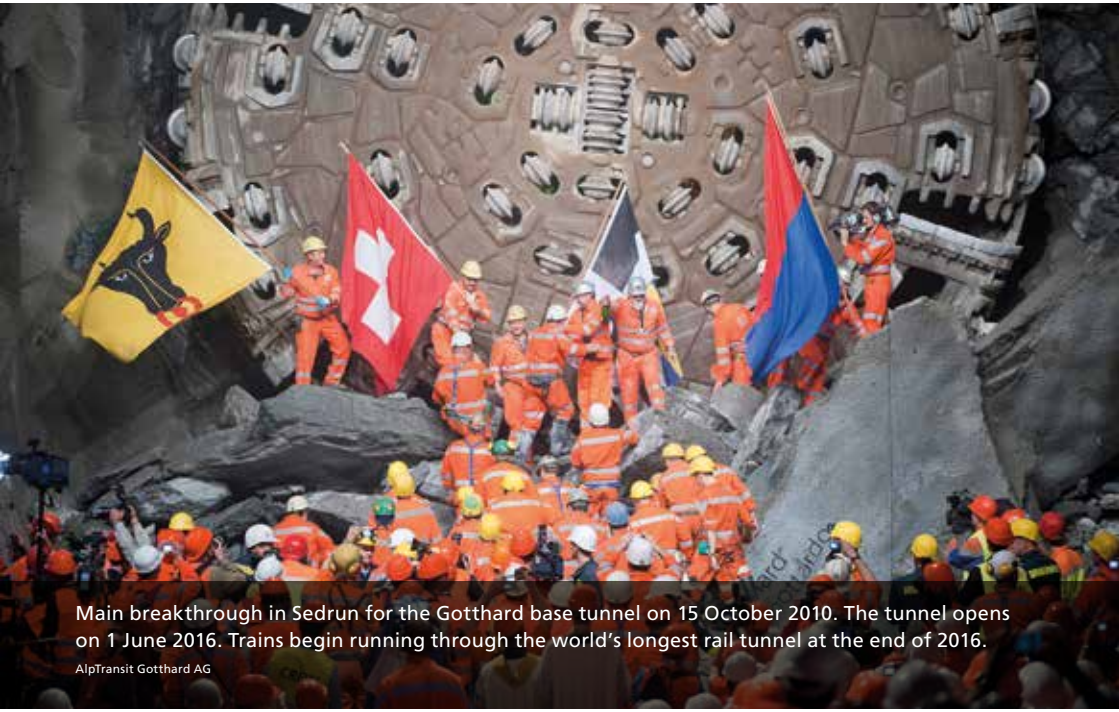
The KMZ tracks the security situation worldwide and publishes information on changing risks in travel advice notices. Citizens travelling or living abroad are contacted by SMS or email in the event of a changing situation. The FDFA will systematise and standardise security-risk management further with introduction of the new Security Management Plan, which assesses security risks for Swiss representations and Swiss nationals abroad while identifying specific protection measures. It also establishes a single location for all FDFA units active in the fields of security and crisis management (KMZ, Humanitarian Aid, CD), which creates additional synergies.

The federal administration's continuing standardisation of processes and instruments at all crisis management levels abroad is to be promoted between the agencies involved. Great importance is also attached to training FDFA staff in areas such as security and crisis management and operation of the Crisis Intervention Pool. The aim is to further strengthen the skills and performance of the FDFA units responsible for crisis management and security issues while fostering close cooperation with other federal agencies (in particular the FIS and fedpol) and crisis centres of neighbouring states and other countries.

Communication abroad

Today's information and communication society calls for appropriate means of presenting and explaining foreign policy. How a country is perceived abroad, if at all, can no longer be left to chance. This is also the case for Switzerland, which is keenly observed worldwide – for example, as a country with a political system shaped by direct democracy, as an important business and financial centre, and as a successful location for education, research, and innovation.

Ensuring that Switzerland has a positive image abroad, highlighting its various facets, is not merely an end in itself. It is an important instrument in international competition for influence and a country's ability to attract investment and skills. It has an impact on factors such as room for manoeuvre in foreign policy, investment, economic and scientific exchange, and tourism. Communication abroad promotes interest in Switzerland worldwide and can influence decisions in Switzerland's favour.



Main breakthrough in Sedrun for the Gotthard base tunnel on 15 October 2010. The tunnel opens on 1 June 2016. Trains begin running through the world's longest rail tunnel at the end of 2016.

AlpTransit Gotthard AG

The communication measures abroad are to be continued with a view to the positive perception of Switzerland internationally. The focus will be on the country's strengths and themes with positive connotations, such as science, innovation, sustainability, and contributions to security and peace. Public relations instruments will also be used to support the safeguarding of Swiss interests in sensitive areas, such as financial and tax issues or with regard to Switzerland's position in Europe.

Several events with global impact will be held in the coming years, and these should be used as platforms for Switzerland's communication abroad: opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel, the 2016 European Football Championship in France, the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, the World Expos in Astana, Kazakhstan (in 2017) and Dubai (in 2020) (subject to Swiss participation being approved by the Federal Council and Parliament) and the 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. These major events generate publicity and media coverage, and attract a great deal of international attention. They therefore offer a good opportunity for presenting Switzerland and its strengths to a broad audience. Switzerland's network of representations also carries out specific communications activities locally in other regions, conveying the core messages.

The federal government uses a broad array of traditional and new information and communications channels (especially social media) to communicate information abroad on its positions and messages in a manner specifically tailored to the audience in question. In implementing its communications measures, it takes advantage of the synergies that exist between the departments and offices involved, working together with other partners from the public and private sectors if required.

Resources, representations, and staff

Implementing foreign policy calls for corresponding financial, structural, and human resources. The network of representations is an essential instrument in implementing Swiss foreign policy. It works by applying the principles of universality, coherence, and effectiveness. Having a local presence adds considerable value and serves to safeguard Switzerland's interests. FDFA continually evaluates the relevance of its network of representations and the way in which it works to allow for necessary adjustments and to address the changing needs of Swiss foreign policy.

The network should be used efficiently, implementing the agreed objectives, responding to citizens needs and creating ongoing and sustainable added value. The FDFA gives the representations the technical, administrative, and human resources frameworks, with the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics responsible for real estate providing the physical infrastructure in close cooperation with the FDFA. This enables the representations to implement Swiss foreign policy as a whole with the utmost efficiency and effectiveness. Having to make quick adjustments in the network and the individual representations owing to the rapidly changing environment and the cutbacks in resources, remains a persistent challenge.

In places where there is currently an embassy and a cooperation office of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), these will be integrated in a single Swiss representation with a view to further enhance the effectiveness, visibility, and coherence of Switzerland's commitment abroad and to exploit synergies. All of Switzerland's other activities, actors, and staff deployed by the federal administration in a given country are also to be brought together under one roof where the opportunity arises or there are synergies that can be used.

Implementation of the basic principle of 'one Switzerland = one foreign policy = one local representation' will serve to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of Switzerland's foreign policy. It will allow for better coordination while also fostering strategic dialogue, between the various federal agencies and actors financed by the federal administration whose efforts are relevant to Swiss foreign policy. Furthermore, it will ensure even greater expediency in aligning the various foreign policy instruments.

The FDFA is working together with selected partner countries to make it possible to expand its network of representations in specific instances where needed. This will enhance delivery of objectives set out in this strategy. Where the situation permits and there are no political factors preventing such a move, Switzerland can house the representation of another country in the premises of one of its own representations, or move into the premises used by a partner state. Sharing properties in this way also serves to strengthen the corresponding bilateral relations.

To enhance Switzerland's role as a centre for business and science, and as well as Swiss tourism and the country's role as the host state of international organisations, it is important that visas can be issued as conveniently as possible anywhere in the world, taking due account of security aspects. The FDFA addresses this with its own representations in key tourist markets where a visa is required. It also works together closely with various other Schengen states to ensure that visas can also be issued in places where Switzerland lacks a representation.

The FDFA engages in extended cooperation with certain partner countries, also covering consular protection in some instances. In addition to this, Switzerland works with private service providers in regard to visas to increase its global presence. The FDFA's scope for conducting security checks when issuing visas is to be steadily improved, thereby contributing to Switzerland's internal security. Since the end of 2015, all representations of Schengen countries collect biometric data (fingerprints) from visa applicants. This applies to both Swiss representations and those of other partner countries Switzerland works with in issuing visas in certain locations. Introduction of biometric data in issuing visas increases the scope for checks and evaluation, and greater use is to be made of this in the coming years.

The FDFA reviews the network of representations on an ongoing basis, making the most of any synergies and possibilities for optimisation. This said, even if efficient use is made of these opportunities and synergies, it will be necessary under certain circumstances to refrain from some tasks if further savings objectives are to be met.

In addition to adequate financial resources to maintain a universal network of representations, competent and experienced staff is essential. Over the coming four years, the FDFA wants to remain able to recruit talented individuals and provide further education and training for its staff. Despite the pressure on time and resources, there should be more room created for reflection. Strategic and communications skills should also be enhanced. The FDFA wants to be an attractive employer for a staff that is also being deployed increasingly in fragile contexts but is still expected to deliver outstanding performance in terms of both quality and quantity – even in an unstable, volatile world beset by conflicts.

Conclusion

Regularly assessing the current strategic situation offers an important basis for ensuring that Switzerland's interests are effectively safeguarded and its values promoted. The Federal Council's foreign policy strategy set out here defines the priorities for the legislative period through 2019. It will support the Federal Council in its efforts to strengthen the coherence and credibility of Switzerland's foreign policy and further cement the support it enjoys in domestic politics. The constitution provides for Parliament, the cantons, and the Swiss population to cooperate in shaping the federal government's foreign policy, a citizen-oriented approach that has always required a high degree of coordination. Against the backdrop of globalisation and the increasing complexity of foreign policy challenges, this need for coordination is growing. And so is the need for a common strategic basis.

Swiss foreign policy will centre on the following four priorities in the coming years:

Relations with the European Union and the EU and EFTA member states

Based on consolidating and renewing the bilateral approach, Switzerland aims to ensure a regulated relationship with the EU based on partnership and scope for development. It also seeks to promote close ties with the EU and EFTA member states, taking particular account of its neighbouring countries.

Relations with global partners

Switzerland will bolster its network of relationships with global partners with a view to safeguarding its interests and resolving specific problems. In doing this, it will address ongoing shifts in power.

Peace and security

Switzerland will build on its commitment to peace and security, lending significant impetus to a viable and just international order. It will play its part in crisis and conflict resolution, contributing to defining common answers to global challenges, and strengthening International Geneva.

Sustainable development and prosperity

Switzerland aims to achieve a world without poverty where sustainable development is promoted. It will contribute to providing a global environment conducive to prosperity. The Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 will become an integral part of Switzerland's foreign policy.

In implementing these foreign policy priorities, Switzerland will operate in a difficult context. The world has seen a rise in instability. The international environment is beset with increased uncertainty, and Switzerland finds itself confronted with a large number of crises and problems. Norms and established orders are increasingly being called

Despite improvements, one third of the population in Bangladesh still lives in poverty. Switzerland's international cooperation efforts are helping secure a better future for them. FDFA

into question. In a multipolar world, drawing up cooperative solutions for common challenges can at times be a very demanding task.

Thus there is an ever greater need for commitment, solidarity, and a willingness to take on responsibility. With its own independent foreign policy, Switzerland can contribute to mastering these challenges to benefit the world and its own interests. Bridge builders such as Switzerland have never been needed more. Switzerland can develop innovative and viable solutions based on its values that reflect its own interests. Its diplomacy is effective and creative, and it has a wealth of competence and experience in international cooperation. Shaping its environment is essential if it is to remain capable of safeguarding its security, prosperity, and independence.

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