Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

On 11 May 2011 the Federal Council commissioned the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to compile a strategy paper at the beginning of each legislative period setting out the priorities of Swiss foreign policy. This report, approved by the Federal Council on 29 January 2020, fulfils this requirement.

Foreword

Swiss foreign policy reflects the traditions, diversity and innovative strengths of our country. It makes an essential contribution to our ability to assert ourselves globally, the peace and security we enjoy, our economic success, our excellent framework conditions for education and science, and the fundamental rights which underpin democracy. Nevertheless, increasing volatility will require us to exercise still greater coherence, agility and foresight in the years to come. A strategy that sets priorities and identifies goals is therefore a basic prerequisite for us to succeed in safeguarding our interests and promoting our values.

Switzerland is an interconnected country at the heart of Europe. Its position among the global leaders in business, education, research and innovation and its solidarity with the international community have made Switzerland a strong brand. This applies both in traditional areas, such as human rights, peacebuilding, international law and development cooperation, as well as in terms of new partnerships with business and civil society, in the technology and environmental sector, and in science diplomacy. In addition to the federal government, the cantons and cities – particularly Geneva, but also many others – make a valuable contribution to global governance through the organisations and institutions based there.

Switzerland's foreign policy is derived from the provisions of the Federal Constitution. Designed for the long term, these are based on Switzerland's value tradition. The Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 is the third such paper to set a framework for the Federal Council's foreign policy. It builds on consistency, trust and tradition and, with new focus areas, provides appropriate instruments for dealing with changing global parameters for the new legislative period.

This strategy was developed as part of an interdepartmental process. It serves as a strategic compass for the Federal Council and the Federal Administration to position our country in the world, while at the same time maintaining the flexibility to respond quickly to change. It aims to ensure that Switzerland is perceived as a credible and coherent actor in foreign policy.

The strategy responds to shifting geopolitical constellations by defining priorities under four thematic focus areas that can be applied in a modular fashion in all country contexts and parts of the world. They can be implemented irrespective of changes in government constellations or political systems.

These four thematic priorities – peace and security, prosperity, sustainability, digitalisation – have allowed us to develop an interconnected and dynamic policy. There is some overlap between them and they are mutually dependent. They must therefore be implemented in combination with each other.

With some 170 representations abroad, Switzerland's external network has an important role to play. For a country that does not belong to any alliance of states, a well-structured network of representations is also an important link to our partner countries and host states. This network enables Switzerland to shape its foreign policy independently and with an eye to the future. It also provides services directly to citizens and to representatives of science, culture and business. Through its customer focus and effective crisis management, the external network serves all Swiss citizens, either when travelling abroad or in their day-to-day lives as Swiss nationals abroad.

Public dialogue and parliamentary and cantonal involvement are central to a coherent foreign policy. This document has also been shaped by direct exchanges with the public during the summer of 2019, discussions with stakeholders from science, business and civil society, as well as regular exchanges with Parliament and the cantons. On behalf of the Federal Council, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved. This dialogue with our citizens is something we would like to continue. We therefore look forward to your participation in shaping a shared, credible and effective foreign policy for Switzerland.

Ignazio Cassis
Federal Councillor

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Foundations

Core mission

The core mission of Switzerland's foreign policy is to promote the country's interests and values, which are mutually dependent and set out in the Swiss Federal Constitution. The Constitution provides a framework that guides strategic policy-making.

It states, for example, in the aims under Article 2 that the Swiss Confederation "shall protect the liberty and rights of the people and safeguard the independence and security of the country", "shall promote the common welfare, sustainable development, internal cohesion and cultural diversity of the country", "shall ensure the greatest possible equality of opportunity among its citizens" and "is committed to the long-term preservation of natural resources and to a just and peaceful international order". With regard to foreign affairs, the Federal 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 co-existence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources" (Art. 54 para. 2). Article 101 paragraph 1 also specifies that "the Confederation shall safeguard the interests of the Swiss economy abroad".

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is responsible for coordinating foreign policy and ensuring coherence with other departments.

Switzerland's domestic and foreign policies are closely interrelated. Switzerland is shaped by its cultural diversity and its political institutions and traditions, in particular the population's participation in democratic processes, federalism and 'concordance' or consensual democracy. These are also the guiding themes of Swiss foreign policy.

Principles

Switzerland's foreign policy strategy is underpinned by the constitutional principles of freedom, the rule of law, equality of opportunity and sustainability. Regarding implementation, the focus is on universality, multilateralism and neutrality.

Swiss foreign policy serves to both protect and promote **freedom**. This relates to Switzerland's self-assertion as a nation but also its confidence in promoting democracy, the market economy and the liberal international order. Standing up for freedom also means bearing responsibility, defending human rights and working to ensure prosperity and security. Switzerland does so with a broad definition of security, which includes the prevention and management of the causes of conflict and interlinks its foreign security policy in the narrow sense with international cooperation.

The **rule of law** can be understood as the supremacy of law over the rule of might. For a country as heavily integrated in the global economy as Switzerland, international relations are underpinned by international law, as this is what guarantees legal certainty and predictability. Switzerland therefore advocates compliance with, and development of, this legal system. In a rapidly-changing world, there is also a growing need for flexible instruments. For example, the volume of soft law has increased. This helps further develop the international order even when the conclusion of formal rules is not possible or desirable. This increase in soft law presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Switzerland, which must ensure that new rules are democratic and governed by the rule of law.

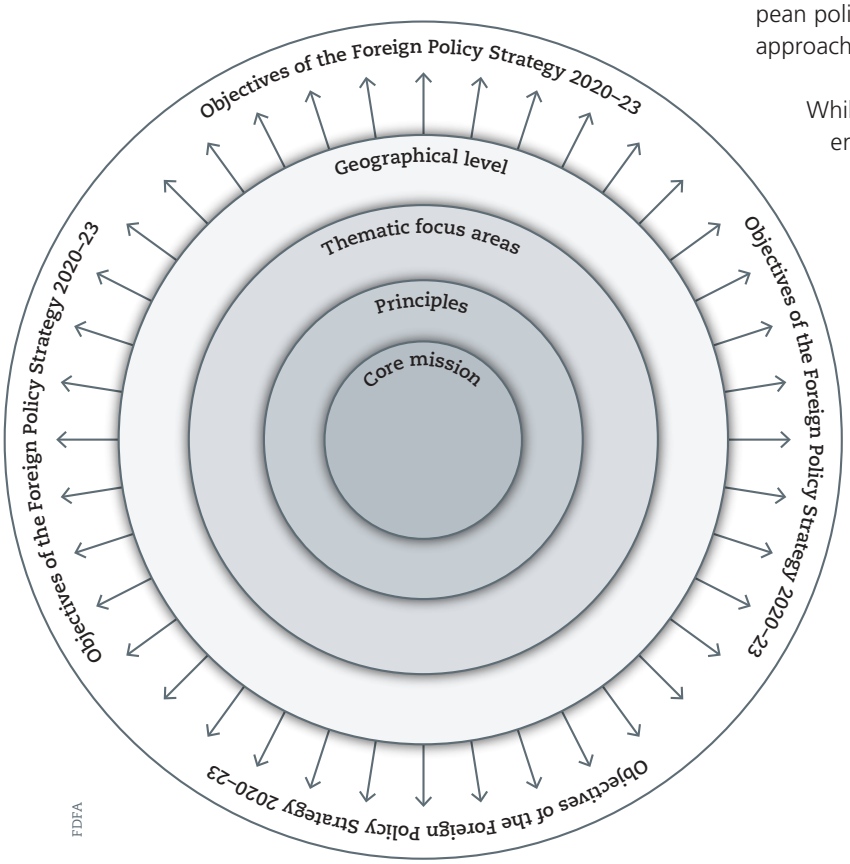
Equality of opportunity, i.e. a fair start in life with regard to educational and career opportunities, is an important factor of success for Switzerland. All members of society – particularly at the beginning of their lives – should have the same development opportunities, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion and economic or other status. Equality of opportunity should be not only sought at home but also promoted as part of Switzerland's foreign policy. This will help to minimise unequal opportunities in and between countries.

The Federal Constitution is also Switzerland's basis for promoting **sustainable development**. As formulated by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, this is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". This principle was substantiated by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda and its 17 goals in 2015.

In the implementation of its foreign policy, Switzerland is guided by the principle of **universality**. This means maintaining good relations with all states of the world. This does not mean, however, that the foreign policy instruments are deployed in all countries in the same way or that Switzerland has a representation in every country. Rather, Switzerland represents its interests in a modular fashion and according to political priorities. It does so both bilaterally and multilaterally, and as a member of international organisations.

In these international organisations Switzerland works closely with other states to find solutions to global challenges. **Multilateralism** allows Switzerland to achieve leverage through alliances and thereby increase its influence. But in order to remain effective and relevant, the multilateral system needs to be modernised. Switzerland is in favour of adapting the multilateral system to the new conditions and technologies. Over the long term, it aims to remain an attractive host state for international organisations, peace talks and discussions addressing future challenges.

Neutrality is an important instrument in securing Switzerland's independence. The law of neutrality requires a neutral state not to engage in international armed conflicts and to treat all belligerents equally. Switzerland's policy of neutrality thereby safeguards the effectiveness and credibility of its neutrality.



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Coherence

The Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 provided the framework for Swiss foreign policy in the last legislative period. It contained two geographical priorities – the European Union and strategic partnerships – and two thematic focus areas – peace and security, and sustainable development and prosperity.

The 2019 Foreign Policy Report reviewed the last foreign policy strategy. One of the challenges to emerge in implementation was the issue of coherence.

The number of actors involved in shaping policy has continued to rise in recent years. Conflicts of interest are increasingly frequent, making it difficult to achieve a coherent policy. Apart from governments, other important actors of foreign policy include parliaments, multinational companies, civil society and international organisations. One of the primary objectives of this strategy is to ensure greater coherence across all foreign policy issues and between foreign and domestic policy.

This requires a future-oriented understanding of coherence – one that is sought horizontally between government departments, federal offices and Parliament but also vertically at the local, cantonal, national, bilateral, regional, multilateral and global levels. This in turn increases the need for coordination. The Federal Council ensures that the various actors and instruments are coordinated and that Swiss interests and values are represented fully and effectively in relations with other countries. To further increase coherence in the future, greater use will be made of interdepartmental bodies such as the Federal Council's committee for foreign affairs and European policy and dialogue with the cantons. Here, a strategic approach to foreign policy communication will be crucial.

While it is natural for conflicting aims and interests to emerge, collective responses can generally be found. The Federal Constitution and legislative planning form the reference framework for the main issues of coherence. The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development also provides an international framework for addressing conflicting aims.

Context

Globalisation has been the most significant international trend of recent decades. While the increasing global interdependence has raised the level of prosperity in many countries, it has also given rise to and accentuated inequalities, and created new forms of vulnerability.

Switzerland has gained from globalisation and currently stands as one of the world's 20 largest economies. Its economy is heavily export-oriented and closely integrated in global value chains. In terms of competitiveness and innovative capacity, Switzerland is a world leader thanks to its highly-skilled workforce and strong research base.

Globalisation will remain relevant in the coming years, although there are also counter-trends. In many places there is a discernible return of nationalist sentiment. Questions around identity and differentiation are becoming more important. Moreover, several interacting drivers of change are altering the framework conditions for Switzerland's foreign policy. The international context remains volatile and difficult to predict.

In terms of **political drivers,** global power shifts involve fragmentation. Nationalism and confrontational power politics are on the rise. Tensions between major powers are again strongly impacting world politics and the global economy. The strategic rivalry between the United States and China, which manifests itself in trade, technology and security issues, also clearly highlights diverging values, with China advocating a state and development model that does not link prosperity to political pluralism. Meanwhile, although the democratic and market economy model remains successful, it is coming under pressure. In addition, many democracies face a crisis of confidence.[1]

The **world economic order** is also becoming more fragmented. While there has been a marked increase in bilateral and plurilateral trade agreements, little progress has been made in negotiations at multilateral level, in particular in the World Trade Organization (WTO). Protectionist measures and the use of economic means as policy instruments are weakening trade. The risk of a deterioration in the global economy is rising, while the scope for monetary policy as a way of supporting the economy is diminishing. One important economic driver is the rapid increase in physical and digital interconnectedness. Growing connectivity through infrastructure and technology offers major opportunities. However, this increased interconnectedness is also being used as a means of political control. Globalisation is also shifting, with cross-border trade in services growing faster for some time than global trade in goods, and intra-regional trade tending to increase more strongly than inter-regional trade.[2] Far-reaching transformations in industrial production as a result of digitalisation and automation suggest that this trend could become more marked. The relocation of factories away from low-wage countries and closer to target markets is now possible due to cheaper production methods.

The **environmental drivers** of change, particularly climate change, are increasingly shaping foreign policy. The consequences of environmental change are undermining developmental progress. If mobility and economic growth come at the expense of the environment, this ultimately also poses a threat to prosperity and security. Environmental protection and the sustainable use of resources are becoming ever more important. Economic growth must be further decoupled from harmful emissions. A global energy transition from fossil fuels to renewables could lead to more decentralised energy supply systems. This will have far-reaching geopolitical implications which cannot yet be estimated in detail.[3]

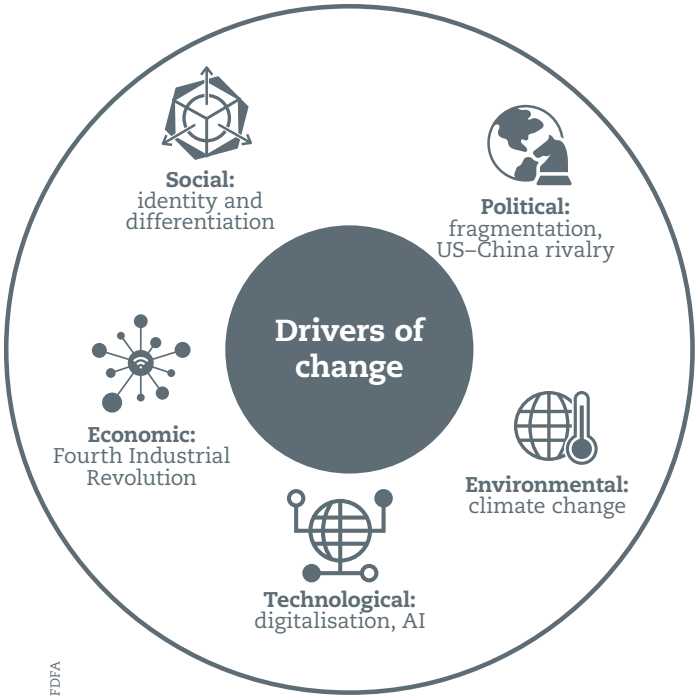
Technological developments will be one of the strongest drivers of change in the coming years. Data and information play a key role in the race between the world's major powers: they have become a key 'commodity' and are altering the foundations of power. The risk of the digital realm being misused for criminal purposes is clear, and the need for regulation is therefore significant.

Artificial intelligence (AI) heralds a new phase in the digital transformation. AI, machine learning and robotics offer tremendous opportunities to promote prosperity and sustainable development. There are also major challenges, however, as AI raises some complex ethical and legal questions in various fields of application.[4]

Finally, **social change** is also influencing foreign policy. A desire to regain a perceived loss of sovereignty and identity, and declining trust in politics and its institutions since the financial crisis of 2008 have led to a rise in protest movements. Non-state actors are demanding authority and setting limits on states' influence in policy-making. New transnational movements such as climate change activism are influencing policy. While social media create opportunities for networking, they also favour centrifugal forces that drive society apart.

The world order that has endured since the end of the Cold War is undergoing radical change. It is now in danger of being eclipsed by a more unstable architecture of competing regional norms and regulatory systems. The rule of law, human rights and international law are increasingly being called into question or interpreted differently. It remains to be seen whether this is a temporary setback or a completely new trend.

1 *The Global State of Democracy 2019*, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2019.
2 World Bank: https://databank.worldbank.org/home.aspx.
3 *A New World: The Geopolitics of the Energy Transformation*. Global Commission on the Geopolitics of Energy Transformation, 2019.
4 See report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Artificial Intelligence addressed to the Federal Council, dated 13.12.2019.



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Developing multilateral solutions is becoming more important, but also more challenging. Many actors are aware that global challenges, such as limiting global warming, regulating global trade, reducing poverty, stabilising fragile states and dealing with migration, can only be tackled through cooperation. International organisations are still relevant, as long as they focus on the issues. What is now needed are forms of governance that better integrate non-state actors in the democratic process and make them accountable, and which promote interdisciplinary cooperation.

A stable and prosperous Europe is crucial to Switzerland's prosperity and security. A stable and rules-based relationship with the EU and broad access to the single market is therefore a priority. The developments associated with Brexit, transatlantic relations and the role of Russia in European security also have a direct impact on Switzerland. The profound crisis of confidence between Russia and the West also undermines Switzerland's security. How successfully Europe as a continent positions itself in the world is also a key factor in Switzerland's success.

The regions south of the Mediterranean are also part of Europe's extended neighbourhood. The many conflicts in the Middle East, as well as in North Africa and the Sahel, the continued jihadist threat and lack of opportunities for young people in these regions have a negative impact on Europe. Positive economic development in Africa is therefore of strategic interest to Europe. Despite tremendous progress being made in poverty reduction thanks in part to development cooperation efforts, one in ten people worldwide is affected by extreme poverty, and more than half of these people live in sub-Saharan Africa.

In a globalised world, Swiss foreign policy can no longer be primarily defined in geographical terms. A global perspective and thematic priorities are required, to be implemented in the different regions in their respective context. Based on this context analysis, and the provisions of the Federal Constitution, we can derive four thematic focus areas for the current legislative period:

→ **Peace and security:** Given the polarisation of world politics, bridge-building actors are highly sought after. Switzerland can make an important contribution through its good offices and its expertise in peace policy. An effective implementing tool for this will be Switzerland's candidacy for and membership of the UN Security Council in 2023–24.

→ **Prosperity:** The international environment is becoming more challenging for the Swiss economy. Switzerland's commitment to ensuring favourable conditions and market access is crucial, both in Europe and globally. Consolidating the bilateral approach with the EU must take priority. At the same time, focused development cooperation contributes to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

→ **Sustainability:** Implementation of the 2030 Agenda will also be a priority for the new legislative period. Switzerland will reinforce its foreign policy commitment to tackling climate change and protecting the environment.

→ **Digitalisation:** Switzerland will develop its digital diplomacy profile. As a global centre for shaping digital governance and addressing other future challenges, the role of International Geneva will be bolstered. Switzerland's profile and its expertise at the interface between diplomacy, technology and science will be specifically developed for the purposes of science diplomacy.

As this context analysis shows, foreign policy is becoming more important and more challenging. If Switzerland wants to continue its success story, its foreign policy must be coherent, agile and guided by clear goals, and must be supported by domestic policy. Switzerland intends to actively help shape its context on the basis of its interests and values, and aims to work increasingly with like-minded partners to do so. At the same time, relations with the major powers are gaining in importance. Finally, given the volatility of the current international context, it is important to strengthen our capacity for anticipation and analysis in foreign policy. A permanent strategic overview of foreign policy and a rolling risk analysis are indispensable in order to be able to respond promptly to developing situations and crises.

Thematic focus areas

1. Peace and security

Switzerland aims to help build a peaceful and safe world that allows people to live free from want and fear, where their human rights are protected and they can enjoy economic prosperity. Peace, security and the rule of law are the foundations of prosperity and sustainable development. Switzerland's foreign policy reinforces these foundations. To this end, it focuses on the proven instruments of security policy, human rights policy and migration policy, as well as humanitarian commitment and science diplomacy. A decisive factor in increasing Switzerland's effectiveness in the new legislative period will be the country's membership of the UN Security Council.

Good offices: In the current global political climate, states that act as mediators have an important role to play. Demand for Switzerland's good offices remains high. Its reputation as a reliable, discreet and neutral mediator is valued. Core elements of its political culture, such as power-sharing, dialogue facilitation and inclusion of all interests are becoming more important for foreign policy. Switzerland will continue to develop its capacities to contribute to peaceful conflict resolution as a mediator, and to facilitate processes in this respect, including in its role as host state. In addition, it will continue to perform consular and/or diplomatic tasks for states on the basis of protecting power mandates where relations with other states have broken down.

Civilian and military peacebuilding: Beyond its good offices, Switzerland contributes to sustainable conflict resolution through various instruments. It can, for example, offer expertise in conflict prevention and dealing with the past and is actively engaged in the fight against impunity for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Protecting the civilian population – in particular from sexual violence – is also important. To support peacebuilding, Switzerland sends some 200 experts every year to join UN, OSCE and EU missions, or to its representations as part of bilateral programmes. The deployment of military contingents also remains important. Such deployments focus on the contribution to stability in the Western Balkans as part of the multinational Kosovo Force (KFOR) and in the European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina. Swiss Armed Forces personnel are also deployed worldwide in peace support missions. As confirmed in the 2016 Security Policy Report, the Federal Council is seeking to increase the quality and quantity of military peace support efforts and still intends to be able to deploy up to 500 Swiss Armed Forces personnel at a time.

UN Security Council: The UN Security Council is the most important body for the promotion of peace and security at international level. Switzerland is presenting its candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the first time for the 2023–24 period. The aim is to contribute Switzerland's strengths to help promote peace and security, to build bridges as a neutral country and to better safeguard Swiss interests through direct access to the key players in world affairs. A seat on the UN Security Council is an important lever through which to influence international developments and to give greater emphasis to Switzerland's own positions.

The Federal Constitution empowers the Federal Council to promote **human rights and democracy** worldwide. Switzerland's democracy, with its citizens who enjoy equal rights and are able to actively participate in political life, is held in high regard throughout the world. An important foreign policy mission is therefore election assistance and observation. Switzerland is also characterised by mutual respect between majority and minority groups with differing religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds and is firmly committed to the universal protection of human rights. In principle, Switzerland is careful to ensure equal commitment to civil and political rights and to economic, social and cultural rights. Special attention is paid to particularly vulnerable groups.

Science diplomacy: Where dialogue between policy-makers breaks down, science can help establish sustainable relations. Issues of common concern can be addressed through scientific cooperation between states, which in turn fosters trust and establishes or enhances international partnerships.

Humanitarian commitment: Switzerland's good reputation is based in part on its humanitarian tradition. Maintaining this tradition is also in Switzerland's own interest. Switzerland shows solidarity by providing impartial assistance in crisis situations, in armed conflicts and during disasters, with a focus on people's needs to guarantee their safety, dignity and rights. Humanitarian aid is intrinsically linked to compliance with international humanitarian law, international refugee law and humanitarian principles. Switzerland

Photo: UN Photo/JC McIlwaine

Security Council Meeting Room at UN Headquarters in New York

has a triple role in this respect. First, it is on the ground implementing its own projects through the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit, with which it has internationally recognised expertise. Second, it supports humanitarian organisations such as the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and specialised UN agencies. Third, Switzerland actively promotes better compliance with and strengthening of international humanitarian law. As the depositary state for the Geneva Conventions, Switzerland plays a crucial role.

Migration and displacement: Switzerland works to identify the root causes of migration in regions of origin and helps reduce irregular migration. Armed conflicts and human rights violations are causing massive refugee movements across the world. Because millions of refugees and internally displaced people sometimes wait decades for a solution in the first country entered, Switzerland helps these countries develop integration measures. Refugees and displaced people should be able to lead an independent life. Where appropriate and in Switzerland's interest, the Federal Council aligns Switzerland's migration policy with that of the EU and its member states. Switzerland is therefore involved in EU measures, supports European countries bordering the Mediterranean and contributes to improving the protection of Schengen external borders and to preventing irregular migration to Europe. In order to create prospects for local populations, Switzerland promotes framework conditions in developing countries: the rule of law, access to public services such as education and healthcare, creation of employment opportunities, disaster risk reduction, mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its effects, and environmental protection.

Located in the heart of Europe, Switzerland closely monitors changes emerging in the European security architecture. The current **security policy challenges** lie in the weakening of existing arms control regimes and simultaneous rearmament, in the fight against terrorism, organised crime and cybercrime, and in counter-espionage. Within the OSCE, Switzerland advocates constructive solutions to modernise conventional arms control. Through its participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP), Switzerland promotes dialogue in the Euro-Atlantic area. Switzerland is also strengthening its cooperation with the EU Common Security and Defence Policy. Globally, the priorities are minimising the risks of nuclear weapons, nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and upholding the bans on chemical and biological weapons, as well as universalisation of the ban on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. Technological change means cyber diplomacy is becoming more important. Switzerland is helping to minimise the risks associated with new technologies, such as in cyberspace and in relation to autonomous weapons systems or ballistic guided missiles. To this end, it also draws on the internationally recognised expertise of the three Geneva Centres.

Switzerland prevents and combats threats such as illegal intelligence activities, **violent extremism and terrorism**. Counterterrorism efforts must be based on international law, and developing standards in accordance with the rule of law is crucial. Switzerland addresses cross-border crime, such as cybercrime and organised crime, human trafficking and people smuggling, through international police cooperation. Cooperation within the scope of the Schengen Association Agreement is key here.

Objectives

→ **1.1 Switzerland will seek to be elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and perform the role with credibility and commitment. This will enable Switzerland to help secure a peaceful, rules-based international order and make multilateral bodies more efficient. Through targeted partnerships it will extend its influence, advance its interests and promote its commitment in the long term.**

→ **1.2 By actively contributing to the promotion of democracy, conflict prevention, mediation and conflict resolution and in the fight against impunity, Switzerland will be one of the world's leading countries in the field of peacebuilding. Through its planned presidency of the Women, Peace and Security network in 2021, Switzerland will strengthen the role of women in peace and security policy.**

→ **1.3 Switzerland will reinforce the universality of human rights through an international framework with institutions that are capable of effective action, in particular the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, and the human rights bodies of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Opposing the death penalty and advocating the ban on torture, strengthening freedom of expression and protecting particularly vulnerable groups will be the priorities.**

→ **1.4 Switzerland will deliver emergency relief in humanitarian crises. It will reinforce its reputation as a hub for humanitarian issues, in particular via International Geneva, and will develop new approaches to tackle humanitarian challenges. There will be a special focus on new technologies, armed conflicts in urban zones and internally displaced people. In regions of first refuge, it will promote the protection and sustainable integration of refugees and displaced people, and reduce the causes of irregular migration and displacement.**

→ **1.5 Switzerland will campaign for the preservation of arms control and disarmament agreements. It will fight organised crime, cybercrime and terrorism, prevent the support and export of terrorism, and will work to combat human trafficking and people smuggling.**

2. Prosperity

Switzerland fosters prosperity that is sustainable, thus ensuring the preservation of its high standard of living. It advocates a rules-based world economic order and a functioning financial system, and will continue to be at the forefront in education, research and innovation. It will continue to secure access to international markets for the economy, and through its development cooperation will show solidarity and contribute to prosperity throughout the world.

Business environment: Foreign policy should establish and maintain a favourable business environment, both bilaterally and multilaterally. This includes open markets and a stable, rules-based global economic system. Central to this is cooperation with Switzerland's neighbours and the EU, the country's most important trade and economic partner. Good governance and successful economic policy form the basis for a credible foreign policy. In turn, this improves Switzerland's economic competitiveness and standing as a business location. This policy is based on the foreign economic strategy and financial market policy and is guided by the principles of economic freedom and competitive neutrality.

Global trading, financial and monetary system: Switzerland's prosperity depends in large part on the international trade of goods and services and on cross-border investment. Digital transactions are also becoming more important. As a trade-oriented, medium-sized economy, Switzerland is reliant on the open markets, legal certainty and predictability of a rules-based global economic system. To this end, the WTO trade system is an important basis. For Switzerland's globally integrated economy with an important financial centre and its own currency, a stable financial and monetary system is crucial. This is why Switzerland seeks to actively participate in the relevant multilateral bodies and plays a conscious role in shaping and preserving the systems. It pursues its interests in the development and implementation of international rules and standards. This concerns all areas of economic policy, regulations that have an impact on international trade, cross-border investment and digital trade. In corporate taxation, including taxation of the digital economy, Switzerland advocates taxation at the place of value creation and, in so doing, promotes growth through innovation.

Economic and financial agreements: In addition to the multilateral system, Switzerland concludes bilateral economic and financial agreements – including free trade agreements, investment protection agreements and double taxation agreements – and participates in plurilateral initiatives. In this way it broadens access to foreign markets and seeks access that is as non-discriminatory as possible. The agreements are an important instrument to improve the competitiveness of Switzerland as a financial centre and business location.

Leading the way in education, research and innovation (ERI): Switzerland is a high-quality, globally renowned and competitive location for education, research and innovation. Key factors in this respect are its internationally active ERI players and the necessary framework conditions and resources. Switzerland proactively capitalises on emerging global trends and coordinates the national and international dimensions of ERI in a coherent and complementary manner. It is an attractive location for many top research institutions and innovation-based companies. Science diplomacy also plays a key role here. Of central importance in this respect are the objectives and instruments outlined by the Federal Council in its paper 'Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation'.

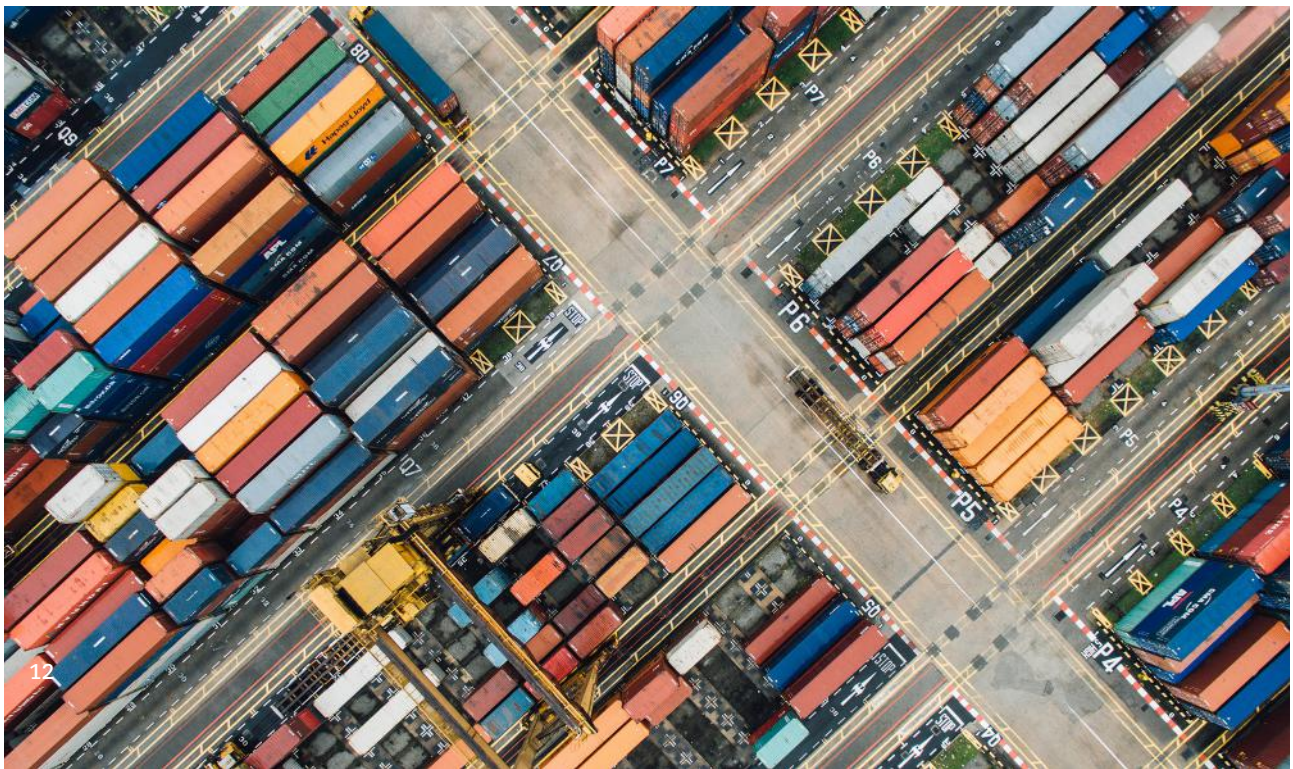
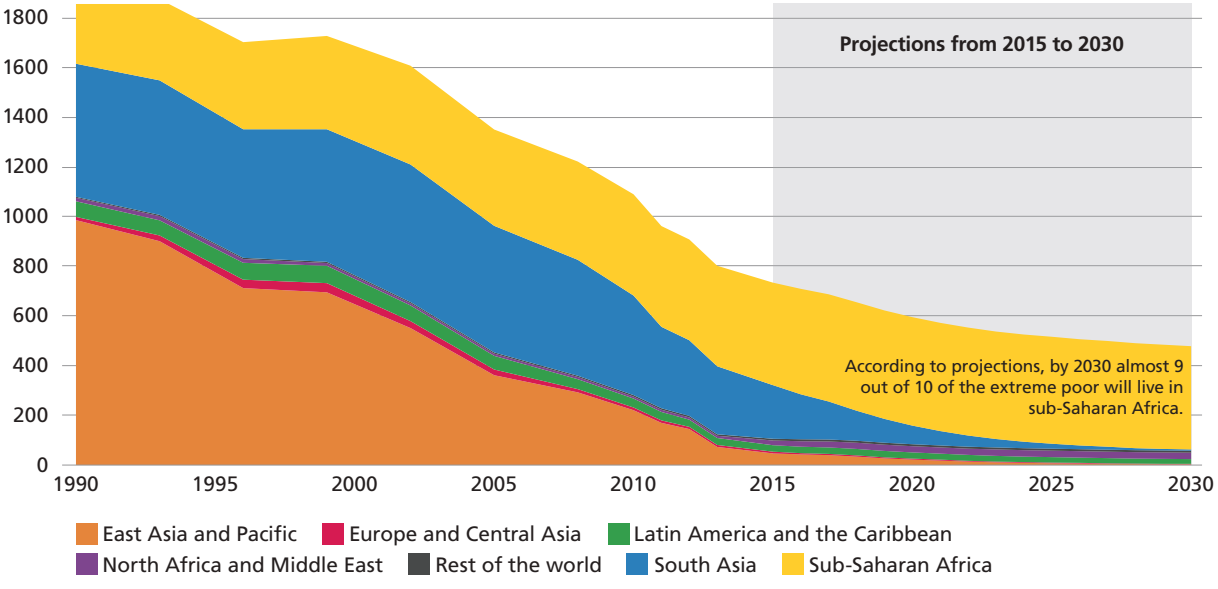


Photo: unsplash

People in extreme poverty
(in millions)



Source: World Bank PovcalNet and Poverty & Equity Data Portal

Development cooperation: Switzerland's prosperity is based on a thriving and sustainable global economy. It assumes responsibility by helping developing countries become more competitive and adaptable, promoting favourable framework conditions and supporting private-sector initiatives to give people prospects for the future. Through its economic, financial and trade-policy expertise it can support others in shaping structural change and developing markets. It advocates good governance to ensure a fair distribution of goods, to prevent social exclusion, corruption and conflicts, and to support equal opportunities and protection from abuse. To this end, it is also committed to the restitution of illicitly acquired assets ('asset recovery') by seeking development-relevant solutions for restitution that will also benefit the population. As part of its international cooperation, Switzerland promotes the creation of decent jobs. It invests in providing high-quality and reliable basic services, particularly in healthcare and education, and in supporting a sustainable agricultural and food industry as a basis on which to tackle poverty and to promote economic development. It is committed to ensuring the conservation of natural resources and the sustainable management of resources in general. To the greatest possible extent, the Federal Council seeks to minimise negative effects of its policy-making on developing countries.

Objectives

→ **2.1 Switzerland will work to reinforce a stable, rules-based and reliable trade, financial and monetary architecture. It will improve the general conditions for economic and financial relations with partners and will secure unobstructed and non-discriminatory access to foreign markets for its economic operators. With regard to the EU, Switzerland will seek to consolidate access to the single market and the bilateral approach through the conclusion of an InstA.**

→ **2.2 Switzerland will provide effective support where needed to help Swiss companies with their international activities via the instruments of commercial diplomacy and export promotion.**

→ **2.3 Switzerland will create optimal conditions to ensure it remains one of the world's leaders in education, research and innovation and reinforces its competitiveness.**

→ **2.4 Switzerland will promote market access for developing countries and will create new economic opportunities for them. It will support private-sector initiatives in the areas of access to capital, integration in the world economy, entrepreneurship and specialist skills to facilitate the creation of decent jobs.**

→ **2.5 Switzerland will campaign for sustainable management of natural resources and will contribute to ensuring equitable access to good basic services.**

3. Sustainability

As part of the 2030 Agenda, Switzerland strives for sustainable development that gives equal consideration to environmental, economic and social dimensions. To this end it has set up the relevant structures within the Federal Administration, and works nationally and internationally with all relevant stakeholders to promote environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources, as well as sustainable economic and social development.

With its 17 goals, the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development provides a universal framework for sustainability policy. The three inextricable dimensions of the environment, the economy and society apply to all in equal measure. This comprehensive approach is also an important point of reference for the Federal Council's sustainability policy in Switzerland and abroad. It has set up an internal organisational structure within the federal government with two delegates and an interdepartmental steering committee for implementation and strategic management of the 2030 Agenda. This structure ensures that the 2030 Agenda is clearly established within the Federal Administration and allows better coordination of the relevant federal policies. This is done in close collaboration with the cantons and communes, and with actors from industry, the scientific community and civil society.

The 17 goals comprise all policy areas, some of which have already been discussed. The following section sets out the sustainability aspects in the areas of the environment, climate, water, sustainable finance, energy, disaster risk reduction, health, culture and cities.

The environment: Environmental pollution does not stop at national borders, and ecosystems are interdependent. Switzerland supports conditions that favour the sustainable use of natural resources and conservation of biodiversity. It advocates a global economy that reduces negative impacts on the environment and promotes transparency in this respect.

It also pursues high standards in the chemicals industry, waste management, commodities extraction and trading, and in infrastructure. At a fundamental level, Switzerland advocates the strengthening of international environmental governance. A comprehensive, efficient and effective environmental regulatory system based on scientific data should guarantee effective environmental protection and shield people from the risks of environmental degradation. Switzerland is willing to make a fair contribution to environmental financing and makes the necessary public funds available. In so doing, it prioritises the polluter pays principle and the possibility of mobilising additional funds from the private sector.

Climate: Switzerland is committed to limiting global warming to 1.5°C. It promotes clear, robust and universally applicable transparency rules. The principle of counting emissions reduced abroad towards a country's national targets serves to prevent double counting and safeguard environmental integrity. The emissions targets under the Paris Agreement will gradually become more ambitious, and developing countries are to be supported in implementing climate policy and

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda

integrating measures to tackle climate change. Switzerland contributes to the developed countries' goal of jointly mobilising USD 100 billion a year by 2020 in public and private funds worldwide to support developing countries. It thereby supports efforts to both mitigate climate change and adapt to its impact.

Switzerland is leading the way in research into the causes and effects of climate change. In this area, it also relies on its globally recognised Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research. In all relevant bodies – in particular within the UN and OSCE, as well as through its observer status in the Arctic Council – Switzerland works to ensure a better understanding of climate change and its impacts on security.

Water is a central element in this respect. Because demand continues to rise while the quantity of water remains limited and pollution is increasing, water must be managed sustainably and allocated fairly between neighbouring countries. As part of its Blue Peace Initiative, Switzerland works to ensure that water is used as a driver of cooperation, peace and sustainable development in low and middle income countries.

Sustainable finance: A sustainable Swiss financial centre offers opportunities in innovation and competitiveness. It contributes to the achievement of Switzerland's sustainability goals under the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. Sustainable financial services integrate environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into business or investment decisions. Transparency and voluntary disclosure are encouraged, so that customers and investors are given clear information and the opportunity to make informed decisions. The primacy of long-term market-based approaches and the subsidiarity of government action are fundamental principles. At the same time, Switzerland actively participates in the work of international financial bodies. The federal government also promotes **responsible business conduct** in all economic sectors. This makes an important contribution to sustainable development and to solving societal challenges. With this objective in mind, the Federal Council has adopted the action plans on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and on business and human rights for the 2020–23 legislative period. In doing so, it advocates internationally agreed guidelines and supports companies in sector-specific implementation.

External energy policy: Besides water, other key factors in energy security are electricity trading and the transit of oil and gas through the EU. The conclusion of an electricity agreement with the EU allows Switzerland to participate fully in the European internal electricity market. Relations with the EU take priority in terms of Switzerland's external energy policy. Switzerland is also involved in the International Energy Agency, where it campaigns for sustainability, security and investment protection. At global level, Switzerland advocates an end to fossil fuel subsidies.

In **disaster risk reduction** Switzerland is strengthening its partnership with developing countries and regional organisations through information sharing, technology transfer and the development of institutional capacities to mitigate risk. It has extensive experience of risk management in relation to natural disasters, particularly in mountain regions. It is therefore improving the way risks are analysed, helping to mitigate losses and damage, helping to build the resilience of the populations affected and promoting sustainable reconstruction in the aftermath of disasters. It increasingly uses modern technologies in all these activities.

Health foreign policy: Regardless of crises and disasters, everyone has the right to the best possible physical and mental health. Equal access to appropriate, high-quality healthcare for all is therefore a priority. Switzerland's health foreign policy focuses on improving the protection of public health and enhancing health systems in general. Within specialised international organisations and through direct and indirect cooperation with other countries, Switzerland is involved in seeking solutions to global health challenges.

Switzerland's **cultural foreign policy** centres on three priorities: cultural participation, social cooperation, and creation and innovation. It places a particular focus on digitalisation. It works to promote cultural diversity and has launched a number of international cultural initiatives. The Pro Helvetia foundation makes an important contribution in this area, with some 4,500 art and cultural projects in over 100 countries. It is set to open a new office in Latin America in 2021, which will add to its existing network that covers Southern Africa, South Asia, China, Russia, the Arab world and the cities of Paris, New York and San Francisco.

Importance of cities: More than half the world's population currently lives in cities and, according to the UN, this is set to increase to two thirds by 2050. Cities are directly affected by global challenges, such as climate change, water scarcity, food security, migration and epidemics. To better respond to such challenges, cities are increasingly joining international networks. This gives them more weight as foreign policy actors. There are already over 200 city networks, such as the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, an association of more than 90 cities which represents a quarter of the global economy and has committed to implement the Paris Agreement. At international level, Switzerland supports UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and funds its liaison office in Geneva. It promotes integrated urban development, which improves urban mobility, energy supply and resilience to natural disasters. Swiss cities are tourist destinations and also host foreign policy forums, and therefore play an important role in foreign policy.

Objectives

→ **3.1 The sustainable use of natural resources, such as water, soil and forest, and the protection of biodiversity, are crucial for Switzerland. It will contribute to resource efficiency and strive to achieve high standards in the areas of chemicals and waste management, commodities extraction and trading as well as infrastructure. The federal government promotes responsible corporate governance and a sustainable financial sector.**

→ **3.2 Switzerland will contribute to effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and to a gradual increase in the domestic climate targets in order to limit global warming to 1.5°C. In line with its commitments, Switzerland will assist developing countries with the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, in particular in reducing emissions and adapting to climate change. It will assist these countries with disaster risk reduction and reconstruction and will help to ensure that basic services are restored as quickly as possible after a disaster.**

→ **3.3 Switzerland's international engagement aims to better protect the population from health risks, ensure access to safe and affordable medicines and promote sustainable national health systems. Switzerland will seek to promote global health governance and contribute to the further development of international addiction policy.**

→ **3.4 With cultural heritage around the world under increased threat from armed conflicts and natural disasters, Switzerland positioned itself with its strategy for the protection of endangered cultural heritage. The federal government will support the various funding areas of Switzerland's cultural policy abroad, such as film funding, Swiss schools and the transfer of cultural property. At multilateral level, Switzerland seeks to participate in EU programmes, is an active member of the UNESCO Executive Board and works to consolidate the role of culture within the Council of Europe.**

→ **3.5 Switzerland will utilise the potential of cities as foreign policy actors through domestic and international partnerships. It will increase the dialogue in sustainability with the relevant city networks and through UN-Habitat. In this way it will help tackle the negative environmental impact and the after-effects of conflict on cities.**

4. Digitalisation

Switzerland will raise its profile in global efforts to consolidate digital governance. It will further develop its digital foreign policy and position Geneva as a leading location for debate on digitalisation and technology. In its digital foreign policy, it advocates the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders. It will contribute to finding new solutions and pursue the goal of an open and secure digital space which is based on international law and revolves around people and their needs.

Digitalisation and new technologies such as artificial intelligence and blockchain offer opportunities for everyone, and greater use of technology can enhance efforts in the above areas of peace and security, prosperity and sustainability. However, the digital transformation also presents risks for people, the economy, society and democracy. It increases complexity and dependencies and can threaten the security of individuals, companies and governments beyond national borders. Privacy is under pressure, working life is undergoing radical change, the influence of individual companies is growing, and new technologies are at times being misused by states and other actors.

Switzerland has a vision of a free, open and secure digital space, and works to reduce the associated risks and threats. It involves the relevant actors to develop new approaches at international level. Switzerland is developing its foreign policy profile in all areas of digitalisation on the basis of its recognised competencies, its 'Digital Switzerland' strategy and the 'National strategy for the protection of Switzerland against cyber risks'. Cooperation with business, civil society and experts is crucial. Science diplomacy is an inspiring approach which consciously combines science, technology and foreign policy.

Digital governance and cooperation: At international level, the structuring of digital governance – in other words defining the rules for the use and development of the internet and the digital space – are the subject of intense debate. With its participatory and solution-focused approach, Switzerland has successfully provided important impetus over the past two decades for the development of new sets of rules for the digital world in the 21st century. It is keen to continue to help shape the future of the digital space and, to this end, promotes dialogue among all stakeholders. The aim is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the individual state and private actors and to further develop the architecture of this governance. The focus is on people's needs. The rule of law and universal human rights – such as freedom of expression and information and the right to privacy – must also be guaranteed online. It is important to defend liberties such as press freedom. Switzerland aims to act as a bridge-builder and contribute to implementing the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation set up by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, by helping develop new governance models. It calls for more innovation and networks to ensure social and economic development in a digital space that is as free as possible.

Geneva as a hub for global digital and technology policy: International Geneva already plays a key role in global digital policy, as it is home to a number of leading organisations in the field, e.g. the Secretariat of the UN Internet Governance Forum. Through greater networking of stakeholders and interdisciplinary cooperation, this role can be strengthened further. The Federal Council supports a number

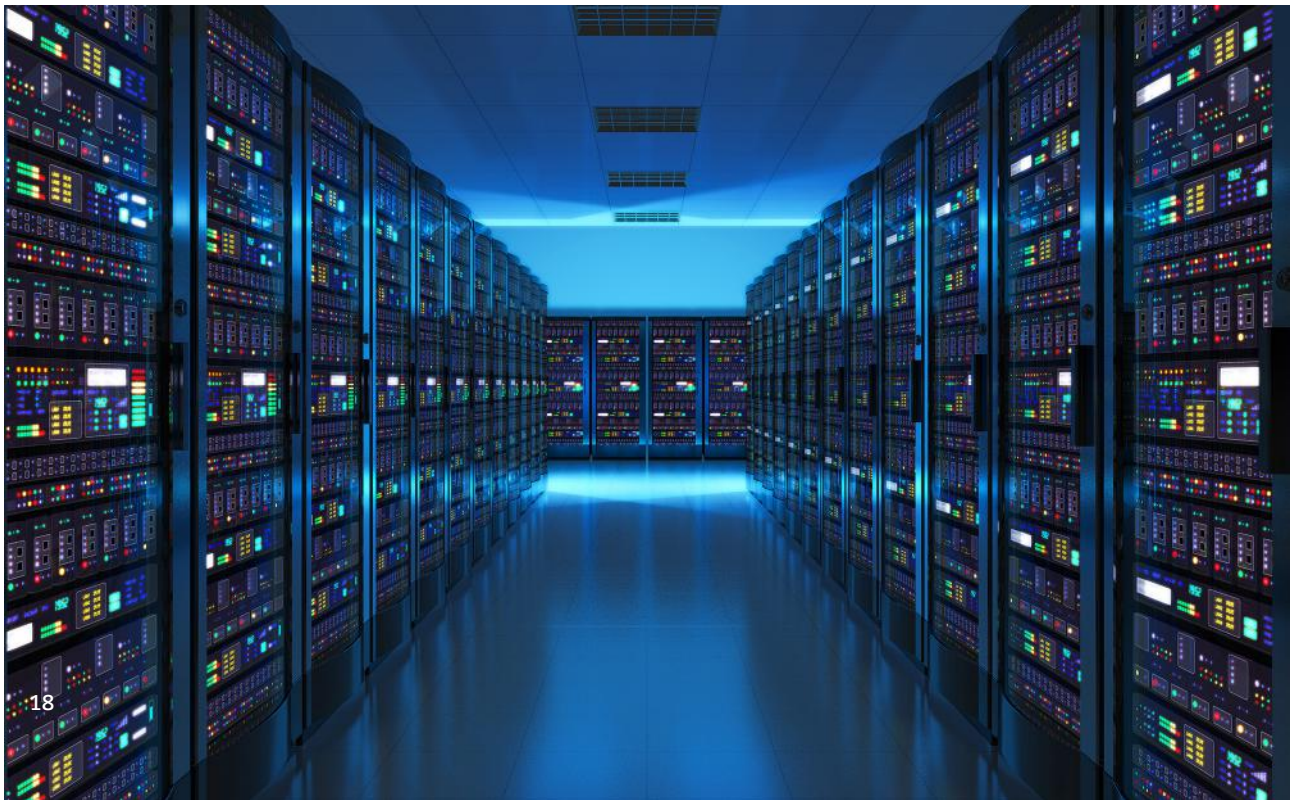


Photo: shutterstock

of initiatives to position Geneva as the location for global digitalisation and technology debate. Besides the Geneva Internet Platform as an information platform and dialogue forum for all aspects of digitalisation, the newly-established Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator is designed to anticipate the social challenges of a digitalised world and create the necessary multilateral framework with the UN. The Geneva Dialogue on Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace also brings together actors from the field of cyber diplomacy. The potential of these initiatives will be further exploited. Ideal framework conditions favour the establishment of future-oriented multi-stakeholder structures in digitalisation and new technologies throughout Switzerland.

Cyber diplomacy: Cyber espionage, attacks on critical infrastructures, cybercrime, disinformation and propaganda are on the rise. Cyberspace has opened up a new dimension in foreign security policy and, in armed conflicts, has become yet another area of operation. Switzerland must be able to protect its interests and values in cyberspace, too. To this end, it aims to step up its international commitment and further enhance its profile in cyber security and cyber diplomacy. Underpinning these efforts is respect for international law, i.e. human rights and international humanitarian law, including in cyberspace. Switzerland not only supports the development and expansion of its own capacities: it also advocates intergovernmental confidence-building and peacebuilding. It thus carries over its commitment from the offline to the online world. It also supports capacity development in third countries, thereby contributing to improved global cyber security.

Data safe haven: The volume of data is growing all the time. Meanwhile, companies are increasingly outsourcing their information systems, including their data. Protecting data and the security of information systems and data infrastructure are issues of increasing importance. Establishing Switzerland as a 'data safe haven' could become a new form of good offices and could boost the country's role as a location for business and technology. For humanitarian actors in particular, who manage the sensitive data of vulnerable persons, a secure data environment is essential. Switzerland therefore sets high standards for its own data protection regulations and coordinates these where necessary with major regulatory developments at international level, including within the EU. Switzerland's neutrality, political and economic stability, data protection rules and technical know-how provide an ideal basis for this commitment.

Digital self-determination: Compliance with international law lays the foundation for self-determination in the digital space. As an alternative to data concentration in large technology firms or in government, Switzerland advocates a digital ecosystem that is geared towards the fundamental values of our liberal society based on the rule of law. This is intended to reinforce democratic rights and create new opportunities for self-determined participation in the digital space and help shape digital public services. Switzerland therefore promotes high-quality data spaces that allow unrestricted and reliable data exchange between all stakeholders.

Digital technologies for sustainable development: Digital technologies and technical innovations allow a more efficient use of resources and also enhance international cooperation. International cooperation prioritises the use of new technologies to protect people in need, to reduce poverty, to promote sustainable economic growth and private sector initiatives and to tackle global challenges such as climate change (e.g. Tech4Good). At the same time, the negative effects of digitalisation on sustainable development are reduced. This concerns, in particular, the growing demand for commodities and energy. Finally, for the digital transformation of developing countries' economies, it is essential that all residents have equal and affordable access to the internet as part of a high-quality universal service.

Objectives

→ **4.1 Switzerland will bring together actors from all stakeholder groups to clarify responsibilities in the digital space and to develop new governance models. It will play a key role as a bridge-builder in the implementation of the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.**

→ **4.2 Switzerland will advocate appropriate framework conditions in a global digitalisation and data policy that promote access to and use of data for social and economic development. Democratic self-determination, the rule of law and respect for human rights must continue to be guaranteed. For this purpose, Switzerland will establish an international network to promote digital self-determination. It will further develop its cooperation with the EU and utilise the opportunities of a common European data space and a digital single market.**

→ **4.3 Switzerland will promote the role of Geneva as a hub for global digital and technology policy. It will strengthen existing forums, such as the Geneva Internet Platform, the GESDA foundation and the Geneva Dialogue. It will also step up cooperation with research institutes in other cantons.**

→ **4.4 Switzerland will enhance its digital diplomacy profile. It will support international confidence-building to minimise risks. The principle of 'law before power' also applies in the virtual world, which is why Switzerland is supporting initiatives to clarify the application of international law in cyberspace.**

→ **4.5 Switzerland will support developing countries in the use of new technologies and in handling the associated risks. It is committed to reducing the negative environmental impacts of commodities extraction and will promote the use of new technologies to prevent humanitarian crises. It will create the necessary vehicles to promote humanitarian innovation at all levels. In collaboration with selected partners such as the ICRC, it will develop a framework to protect digital humanitarian data.**

Geographical level

The thematic focus areas and objectives of this strategy will be implemented in all regions of the world and also multilaterally. The various priorities at the geographical level are outlined in the following sections.

5. Europe (EU)

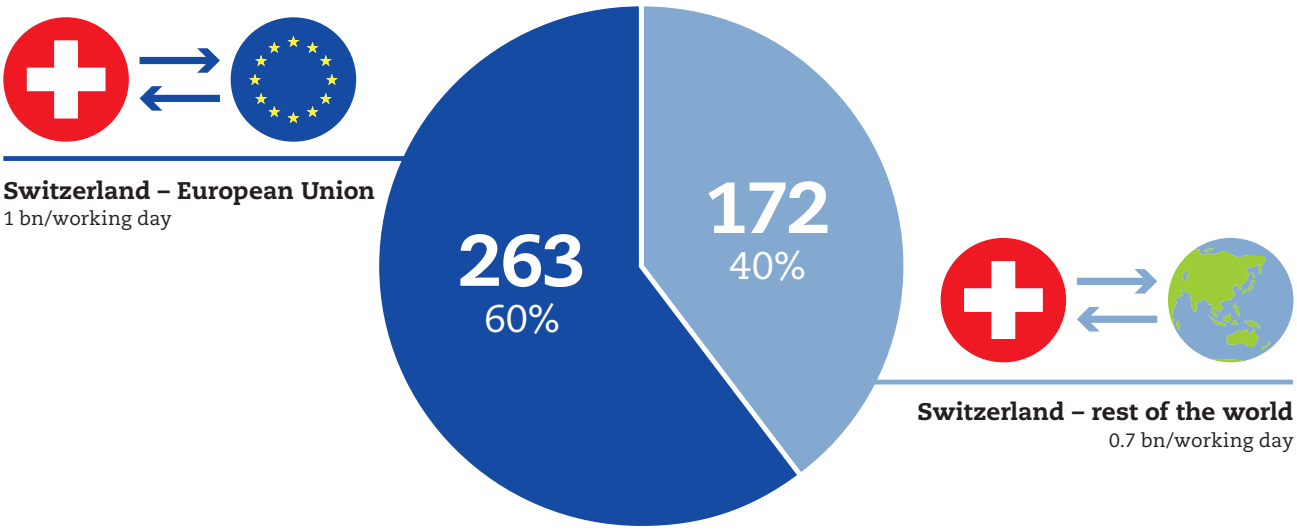
Switzerland is a European country, and the safeguarding of its interests around the world starts with Europe. It secures broad access to the single market and cooperates in many sectors with the EU, its individual member states and other European states such as the United Kingdom.

Switzerland's relations with Europe are the core issue of its foreign policy. For a country to successfully safeguard its interests, it needs to have strong strategic partnerships, particularly with its closest neighbours. Switzerland is located at the geographical heart of Europe, traditionally enjoys close ties with its neighbours in economic, scientific, demographic, social and cultural terms, and shares the same fundamental values. It is therefore in Switzerland's interest to contribute to a strong and stable Europe that stands united for prosperity and sustainable development, security, peace, democracy and human rights worldwide. Switzerland's relations with the EU and its member states have a special importance as the EU plays the leading role in setting European standards and in coordinating cooperation across the continent.

Switzerland's EU policy objectives remain securing and developing broad access to the single market, and cooperating with the EU in selected interest areas, while maintaining the greatest possible political autonomy. The EU remains Switzerland's most important economic partner by far. Participation in the single market will remain crucial going forward to ensure a strong, internationally competitive Swiss economy and thus to protect jobs. The bilateral approach based on sectoral agreements constitutes Switzerland's tailored approach to managing its relations with the EU.

Besides market access agreements, the bilateral approach includes other cooperation areas, ranging from education and research to security, migration, asylum and environmental

The EU: Switzerland's most important partner



Switzerland's volume of trade in 2018 in bn CHF/year. Source: Swiss-Impex

policy, and covers all areas of Swiss foreign policy. The importance of EU cooperation in the thematic focus areas set out in this strategy is emphasised through specific focuses in each area (peace and security, prosperity, sustainability and digitalisation).

Switzerland seeks participation in the next generation of EU programmes in the fields of research and innovation and is examining the possibility of participating in the field of education. Furthermore, Switzerland's growing power grid issues show that access to the EU's internal electricity market is necessary. As part of its Schengen/Dublin association, Switzerland advocates common European solutions in internal security and migration and a credible asylum policy at European level. It participates in instruments to combat terrorism and crime, concerted measures to protect the external Schengen border and improve returns, and in the common visa policy.

More than 20 years after the Bilaterals I agreements were signed, and given that no new market access agreements have been concluded with the EU in more than 15 years, access to the single market and the bilateral approach need to be consolidated and further developed. The existing draft Institutional Agreement (InstA) ensures that the same rules apply for all participants throughout the single market and that they are applied equally throughout. The InstA therefore guarantees sustainable access to the single market, increases legal and planning certainty and offers enhanced protection for Switzerland from discrimination in favour of EU competitors. In addition, conclusion of the InstA will lay the foundation for concluding new market access agreements. In three areas (wage protection, state aid and the Citizens' Rights Directive), Switzerland requires additional clarifications from the EU.

The main objective of Switzerland's EU policy will continue to be ensuring stable, rules-based relations with the EU that can be further developed. This includes developing broad-based domestic solutions in the three areas to be clarified, i.e. agreeing on an InstA with the EU, carrying out the internal approval procedure and implementing such an agreement. The accompanying domestic policy debate on the consolidation and future viability of the bilateral approach should be confident and ambitious. For the EU, the InstA is a prerequisite for concluding new agreements, particularly in the areas of electricity, food safety and public health. At the same time, the EU sees a link between making progress on the InstA and updating existing market access agreements, on the one hand, and participation in certain cooperation areas, such as EU programmes. Switzerland is therefore committed to proceeding with all dossiers while preparing for all eventualities.

Switzerland aims to be a reliable partner that stands in solidarity with the EU. It works closely with the EU and its member states to strengthen prosperity, security and democracy in Europe. Through a second contribution to selected EU states, Switzerland aims to help reduce economic and social inequalities in the EU and better tackle migration in Europe in the next few years. Where appropriate and in its interest, Switzerland coordinates its foreign policy instruments, e.g. in the areas of security, development cooperation, humanitarian policy and human rights and peace policy, with those of the EU and its member states.

Switzerland's neighbouring countries play an extremely important role as they account for one third of Switzerland's total foreign trade. Progress needs to be made on outstanding bilateral questions. Particular consideration will be given to the needs of border regions. Furthermore, new areas of cooperation geared towards common challenges are to be identified and further developed. Bilateral relations with selected EU member states will also be intensified and aligned with Switzerland's overall EU policy objectives. This particularly concerns the rotating EU Council presidency. Synergies are to be systematically utilised in bilateral relations with EU member states in order to safeguard Switzerland's interests coherently and effectively.

In view of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the EU, Switzerland aims to deepen relations with the United Kingdom and explore new spheres of interest on the basis of the existing Mind the Gap strategy.

In terms of an overarching strategic measure, Switzerland seeks to increase the coherence and consistency of its EU policy. Where appropriate, Switzerland's foreign policy instruments are to be examined with regard to how they relate to its core concern of consolidating relations with the EU.

Objectives

→ **5.1 Through the conclusion of an InstA, Switzerland will consolidate its access to the single market and the bilateral approach in general. Furthermore, it will allow for the development of this approach through the conclusion of new market access agreements. In the event that no agreement is reached on the InstA, Switzerland is developing timely and concrete measures in the sectors of cooperation with the EU in order to cushion any negative effects.**

→ **5.2 Switzerland will conclude the ongoing negotiations with the EU, in particular in the areas of electricity, food safety and public health, and will secure its participation in EU programmes, particularly in research and innovation.**

→ **5.3 Switzerland will utilise its Schengen/Dublin association to safeguard its interests in the fight against crime and irregular migration and in border control at European level. It will enhance the security of Switzerland and Europe by adopting and implementing further developments of the Schengen acquis.**

→ **5.4 To ensure the coherence and consistency of its EU policy, Switzerland will examine its foreign policies where appropriate in terms of how they relate to the core objectives of EU policy, establish instruments of coordination and engage in regular dialogue with the EU on all aspects of bilateral cooperation. In bilateral relations with EU member states, there will be greater coordination between the various dossiers, which will be systematically coordinated with the core objectives of EU policy.**

→ **5.5 Existing mutual rights and obligations between Switzerland and the United Kingdom will be legally safeguarded as far as possible within the scope of the Mind the Gap strategy. The bilateral relationship between Switzerland and the UK will be deepened and expanded (Mind the Gap+).**

6. Other regions and priority countries worldwide

In line with the principle of universality, Switzerland maintains good bilateral relations with all states of the world. It works with regional and multilateral organisations and with global partners. Its thematic focus areas also apply at the geographical level, particularly in the Federal Council's priority countries.

Switzerland also actively maintains good relations with countries outside the EU. It combines bilateral cooperation with closer ties to regional organisations, in Europe in particular and also with the OSCE and the Council of Europe, in Asia with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) states, in the Americas with the Organization of American States (OAS) and in Africa with the African Union (AU). In 2005, the Federal Council also decided to more systematically develop cooperation with priority countries outside the EU. Relations with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and the United States have since been strengthened on the basis of country strategies, often combined with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

Switzerland engages in formal dialogue with its priority countries. A number of country strategies will be updated in the new legislative period with a view to improving coherence. These will be implemented by interdepartmental coordination bodies, with special attention paid to security challenges. Cooperation with the eight priority countries is particularly close, but Switzerland actively maintains bilateral relations with all states – in line with the principle of universality. It focuses especially on countries that share similar interests and values. Switzerland plans to launch more diplomatic initiatives with like-minded states in the new legislative period.

South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and neighbouring regions:

Switzerland is held in high regard for its impartiality and humanitarian profile in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia – regions at the centre of different claims to power and spheres of influence. For example, this is reflected in the fact that since 2009 it has represented Georgia's interests in Russia and Russia's interests in Georgia in the framework of its good offices. Switzerland is also strengthening relations with countries at the crossroads of powers, and opened an embassy in Belarus in 2019. Armenia, Serbia and Kazakhstan are also important partner countries as they act as links between East and West. In the Western Balkans, the focus is on supporting stability and the countries' individual development and also on the process of EU integration. The EU is the main actor in the region in the framework of its enlargement policy. Through

FDFA

The eight priority countries of Switzerland's foreign policy

the instruments of international cooperation, Switzerland supports these countries in their rapprochement to European standards, and is involved in EU efforts to promote peace and security. It supplements these with its own initiatives, e.g. in the EU-facilitated talks between Belgrade and Pristina.

The focus is on the following priorities:

1. Peace and security: Switzerland supports the countries in the region in achieving an autonomous transition. Switzerland plays a stabilising role in the conflict contexts that dominate the daily operations of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. By engaging in intensive dialogue with key actors and by seconding staff, it supports the functioning of both organisations and strengthens their capacity to act, e.g. the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine. Its participation in the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme also helps achieve stability in the region. Switzerland takes part in peacekeeping operations conducted by the UN, the OSCE, the EU and NATO (KFOR in Kosovo).

2. Prosperity: Through its long-standing commitment and presence, and a large diaspora from the region, Switzerland uses political opportunities to intensify its economic cooperation. One of its main aims here is to promote good governance. It also maintains a special relationship bilaterally with the countries of Central Asia as the head of their voting constituency in the Bretton Woods Institutions.

3. Sustainability: In the complex field of transboundary water management in Central Asia, Switzerland promotes an integrated, regional approach. It supports the countries of Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and the Western Balkans in sustainably managing resources and in mitigating climate change and adapting to its effects.

4. Digital governance: Through its work in the OSCE and the Council of Europe, Switzerland contributes to the promotion of European values and legal order in new topics such as artificial intelligence and cyber security, as well as to increased security in Europe.

Priority country Russia: On account of its historical affiliation with Europe and its geopolitical aspirations, Russia is an important and challenging partner country for Switzerland. Tensions between Russia and the West, human rights issues and Russia's activities in the area of security have a very direct impact on Switzerland's interests. Except in cases of violations of human rights and international law, Switzerland assumes a mediating role. In a wide-ranging dialogue based on a Memorandum of Understanding dating back to 2007, it openly addresses all issues and takes measures where necessary, particularly in the areas of espionage and cyber security. The tensions between Russia and the West are accentuating conflicts in the region. Through its good offices, Switzerland helps minimise the consequences of these conflicts for those affected, identify solutions and establish trust. There are also opportunities in the fields of research, education and culture. Companies that have overcome the barriers to entry in the Russian market, and thus in the Eurasian Economic Union, can reach up to 180 million consumers.

Priority country Turkey: Turkey is a significant regional power and on account of its strategic location has a pivotal function that extends across the Balkans, the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa. Switzerland has a fundamental interest in consolidating Turkey's ties to the West and its associated values. In its cooperation with Turkey, Switzerland's priorities are security, migration and economic affairs. The situation in Turkey is characterised by declining respect for human rights and the rule of law. In addition, Turkey is involved in an internal conflict (the Kurdish issue), military operations in the region, and tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean (most notably the question of Cyprus). As a result, the economic situation has deteriorated and society has become more polarised. Nevertheless, we can assume that Turkey is set to cement its status as a regional power. The country has also become the main destination for refugees and continues to be a migration hub. Its role in the fight against terrorism from the Middle East remains important for Europe. Considering Switzerland's interests, it is vital to maintain intensive, critical and constructive dialogue with the Turkish government bilaterally, within the Council of Europe and in the OSCE.

Sub-Saharan Africa:

With 49 countries and a population of almost 1.2 billion, sub-Saharan Africa continues to grow in geopolitical significance. China as well as India, the Gulf states and Turkey are extending their influence over the continent. The region has great economic potential but in many places this is poorly or unevenly exploited due to unfavourable conditions and corruption. Sustainable growth – and not only in commodities – is vital to ensure that the rapidly-growing youth population can be integrated in the labour market and to reduce inequalities. Digitalisation offers particular opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa, and can be a growth driver in many countries. At the same time, the region is the scene of many conflicts and suffers from a lack of governance.

Switzerland has a great deal of credibility in sub-Saharan Africa. It was never a colonial power, and its neutrality and humanitarian tradition are valued and anchored in the region's consciousness. Switzerland intends to seize more opportunities and work with the region as a partner to help it tackle the challenges it faces. It is therefore compiling a strategy for cooperation with Africa.

The focus is on the following priorities:

1. Peace and security: Stability on the African continent also benefits Switzerland, which is why peacebuilding and combating violent extremism are important. Switzerland's high level of credibility often enables it to act as a bridge builder. For longer-term stability, democratic participation and protection of human rights will be crucial. Switzerland supports the rule of law and the fight against corruption as basic prerequisites for economic development. Through its humanitarian aid, it also helps mitigate the effects of disasters, conflicts and other emergencies.

2. Prosperity: The promotion of good basic services and sustainable economic growth is a prerequisite for poverty reduction, education, job creation and tackling the root causes of irregular migration. In particular it should improve prospects for young people and women. This key pillar of development can be supported with innovative approaches to international development. Improved framework conditions also increase economic opportunities through enhanced trade and investment.

3. Sustainability: The effects of climate change can be clearly felt in Africa. In the Sahel they are exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and stoking conflicts. Switzerland is responding with a multidimensional approach. As extreme weather events become more common, disaster preparedness and rehabilitation are priorities.

4. Digitalisation: The rapid pace of digitalisation also brings solutions that benefit development, such as access to financial services via mobile phone. Switzerland therefore utilises the opportunities offered by new technologies in its work on the ground.

Priority country South Africa: South Africa is the only African country in the G20. It is Switzerland's most important economic partner on the African continent. More than 100 Swiss companies operate in South Africa, and Switzerland is the 9th biggest foreign investor in the country. Conversely, South Africa is one of the few African countries to invest in Switzerland. South Africa is in the process of re-defining its economic policy, which has a direct impact on local companies. This realignment goes well beyond economic priorities. Switzerland and South Africa are engaging in dialogue on a wide range of issues, which shows the diversity and depth of bilateral relations. In the multilateral context (United Nations, African Union), where South Africa plays a leading role within the African continent, there are numerous areas of shared interest.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA):

The MENA region extends south of the Mediterranean Sea from Morocco to Egypt, and east from Yemen through the countries of the Arabian peninsula to Iran. The region is an important partner for Europe due to its geographical proximity and geopolitical significance, and Switzerland has a direct interest in its stability and economic advancement. While the Gulf states are some of the world's richest countries and key trading partners for Switzerland, other countries in the region are at war and reliant on humanitarian aid. Numerous ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as poor governance and corruption, are leading to poverty, displacement and irregular migration and jeopardising the development of the countries concerned. A lack of water and the effects of climate change are resulting in food shortages and internal displacement. Population growth and the higher demand this creates for energy and resources are major challenges for countries in this region.

In the race for regional supremacy, alliances have been re-defined in recent years. These alliances are not rigid, and the constellations are constantly changing. The wealthy Gulf states, among the world's largest donors in development cooperation, offer further potential for South-South cooperation in the MENA region. This includes supporting refugees from the region. Inclusive economic development is necessary to give young women and men prospects and to

further the development of functioning institutions. Start-ups in renewable energies, digitalisation and artificial intelligence are enjoying rapid growth, particularly in Israel and the Gulf region.

The focus is on the following priorities:

1. Peace and security: Mediation, protecting power mandates, the prevention of violent extremism and terrorism, and the promotion of human rights and international law are making a valuable contribution to stability in the region. Protecting power mandates in particular (for the US in Iran, between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and for Iran in Canada) are priority areas for action in Switzerland's good offices. A quarter of the world's 70 million refugees are in this region. Switzerland works to protect them on the ground and along the migration routes. In North Africa it has adopted an approach that includes both the Sahel region and the North African countries, and which seeks to formalise cooperation through a migration agreement.

2. Prosperity: Through economic development and development cooperation, Switzerland is working to improve prospects locally, particularly for young people, e.g. in vocational education and training, and job creation. It promotes good governance, democratic structures, gender equality and initiatives to tackle mismanagement and corruption. There is potential for economic, financial and scientific cooperation with a number of states in the MENA region. In these countries Switzerland promotes a favourable economic environment and works to ensure a stable financial and monetary system.

3. Sustainability: Climate change leads to conflict in the MENA region. Through international cooperation, Switzerland is working on sustainable solutions in climate protection and water diplomacy. As a member of IRENA, the International Renewable Energy Agency based in Abu Dhabi, it is working to promote the sustainable use of renewable energies. It supports the new donors in the Gulf states in professionalising their development cooperation and in establishing South-South cooperation.

4. Digitalisation: New technologies are spreading rapidly in this region. In North Africa and the Middle East, social media, digital companies and start-ups are boosting the economy and offering new opportunities particularly to young people. The Gulf states are focusing increasingly on digitalisation in the service sector, with new government departments and research centres on artificial intelligence, and are interested in exchanges with Switzerland in the field of data security.

Asia-Pacific region:

Asia has experienced impressive momentum in recent years, and this looks set to continue in the immediate future. The region is already home to more than half of the world's population, and is responsible for over a third of global economic output. By 2024, four of the world's five largest economies are expected to be in Asia: China, India, Indonesia and Japan. Asia is also becoming more important in geopolitical terms. Solutions to global problems in multilateral forums (e.g. the UN, WTO, Bretton Woods, the G20) are no longer conceivable without the participation of Asian countries and without taking account of their interests. China is increasingly seeking to restructure the world order based on its own needs. Asia's strong momentum brings with it considerable challenges, e.g. in sustainability and the growing inequalities within and between countries. There are also numerous issues regarding security policy, and these are exacerbated by the presence of several nuclear powers and the lack of a regional security architecture. Switzerland aims to take advantage of the opportunities brought by this momentum and tackle the challenges head-on.

The focus is on the following priorities:

1. Peace and security: Switzerland is committed to the prevention and mediation of armed conflicts, particularly on the Korean peninsula. It works to minimise the risks associated with nuclear weapons and to improve respect for human rights. In post-conflict situations, it helps to overcome divisions in society and politics and to strengthen constitutional structures.

2. Prosperity: Switzerland systematically develops its relations with its priority countries in Asia and with other emerging actors, and strives to maintain a balance. Regional organisations such as ASEAN and ASEM play a key role here. Switzerland utilises the goodwill that it enjoys on account of its economic power, its technology sector and its political neutrality to promote interests regarding market liberalisation, predictability and stability. Through its development cooperation, Switzerland improves the economic environment and works to ensure that public institutions and services benefit the entire population and that inequality is reduced.

3. Sustainability: Switzerland is contributing to implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It focuses on improving the framework conditions for sustainable development, promoting good governance and combating the causes and effects of climate change.

4. Digitalisation: Switzerland is keen to utilise the opportunities offered by digitalisation in tech-savvy Asia, particularly in the field of business and innovation. Meanwhile, the challenges in the cyber area and in the protection of privacy are particularly great in Asia. Asian countries and tech companies also have a key role to play in digital governance due to their dominant position on the internet.

Priority country China: China's growing economic and political weight has also seen Swiss-Chinese relations intensify. The free trade agreement signed in 2013 provides a framework for economic cooperation with Switzerland's third most important trading partner. In addition, there are bilateral cooperation arrangements in some 30 areas, which facilitate finding systematic solutions. In 2016, the two countries set up an innovative strategic partnership. There are challenges, particularly in terms of the different political systems, on human rights issues and in the area of security policy. The growing polarisation between the major powers is also challenging. Conflicts of interest are likely to be more frequent in future as the different value systems become more marked, particularly at multilateral level. The need for strategic coordination on the Swiss side – both between departments and between the federal government and cantons – is growing. With the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China continues to pursue its biggest foreign policy project to date. The Federal Council's policy seeks to use the opportunities presented by the BRI for Swiss interests and the economy. At the same time, it calls for compliance with universal values and rules to ensure that the BRI can be implemented sustainably – in economic, social and environmental terms – for the benefit of target countries. Sustainable development in China is crucial to the successful management of global environmental risks.

Priority country India: The 'world's largest democracy' and the soon-to-be most populous country in the world is likely to become more important geopolitically in the coming years. Switzerland's bilateral relations with India are diverse, as shown by the large number of agreements, e.g. in the areas of trade, aviation, finance and taxation, as well as development cooperation and science and technology cooperation. Switzerland is keen to intensify relations with India: at economic level to allow Swiss businesses to participate in India's economic success and to diversify economic interests; and at political level because India is traditionally committed to democratic values and aspires to play a role internationally. In recent years, however, sovereignty-oriented tendencies have been raising more questions, both regarding domestic policy developments and in the regional context. India is a key player in terms of environmental policy, as sustainable development in this emerging economy will be crucial to limiting global warming to 1.5°C and preserving natural resources.

Priority country Japan: Japan faces a strategically challenging environment: as an alliance partner of the United States with increasing economic dependency on China, it seeks a middle way between the polarised major powers. Territorial conflicts with its neighbours and the growing influence of China in the region are fuelling disputes. As the world's third-largest economy, Japan is an important economic and research partner for Switzerland. In addition, Japan and Switzerland often share the same views in multilateral bodies.

Americas:

The American continent features different dynamics in the north and south. The United States and Canada – both G7 countries – are stable democracies and competitive economies characterised by the rule of law, capacity for innovation and prosperity. However, despite significant developmental progress, Latin America has not managed to realise the potential of its abundant natural resources. The key obstacles are weak governance, corruption, administrative bureaucracy and inadequate education and health systems. The discontent over growing socioeconomic inequality and authoritarian governments is increasingly erupting into protests and riots. A lack of opportunities, combined with crime, violence and poverty lead to displacement and irregular migration in many places.

To meet these complex challenges in Latin America, Switzerland uses a variety of instruments, e.g. to build peace, reinforce economic and social structures, combat corruption, improve health and protect cultural heritage. The instruments of international cooperation, such as humanitarian aid, global programmes and economic development cooperation will continue to be deployed. Cooperation in economic affairs, science and research, education and training and environmental policy in Latin America can be stepped up further.

The focus is on the following priorities:

1. Peace and security: Switzerland works with the United States in specific areas to support a rules-based global security architecture. The impact of internal conflicts in Latin America will continue to necessitate good offices and humanitarian aid. Switzerland helps to alleviate need in the aftermath of natural disasters in the region.

2. Prosperity: Relations with regionally important states will be intensified thanks to the signing of agreements or the promotion of contacts and bottom-up initiatives, particularly in the areas of free trade, vocational education and training, science, and innovation. The career prospects of people in Latin America should be sustainably improved to curb poverty and crime.

3. Expansion of presence in and cooperation with regional organisations: Cooperation with the OAS, CARICOM and the Pacific Alliance will be strengthened. The priorities are governance, human rights, combating corruption and impunity, economic development and sustainability, disaster risk reduction, innovation and vocational education and training.

Priority country Brazil: As the largest and most populous country in Latin America, Brazil is a political and economic heavyweight and Switzerland's most important economic partner in the region. On the basis of an MoU from 2008, Switzerland engages in dialogue with Brazil in the areas of policy, economic affairs, science and research, taxation/finance, human rights and intellectual property. Successes have also been achieved through ad hoc dialogue in the areas of mutual legal assistance, combating corruption and taxation. The negotiations on the EFTA-Mercosur free trade agreement were completed in August 2019. As a leading voice among Latin American states, Brazil is a key partner for Switzerland in multilateral forums. Despite holding divergent positions at times, Switzerland quickly established contacts at the highest level within Brazil's new administration to continue bilateral and multilateral cooperation in a purposeful manner.

Priority country United States: Switzerland continues to take due account of the dominant position of the United States in the international system and its key role for European security. Bilateral relations are based on a solid historical foundation, broadly shared values and close cultural and personal ties. The sometimes diverging positions in recent times have not changed this. The United States is by far the most important destination for direct investment by Swiss firms and is Switzerland's second-largest trading partner. Cooperation in the field of education, research and innovation is very close. The continuous cultivation and expansion of close and diverse bilateral relations has proved successful. Regular talks are held in relation to politics, economic affairs, science and research, education, taxation, finance, customs issues and security, as well as interparliamentary dialogue. The idea of a free trade agreement has gained momentum and prompted exploratory discussions. An agreement on cooperation in vocational education and training signed in December 2018 is being implemented, while an agreement on military training cooperation is in the pipeline. Switzerland has been representing US interests in Iran since 1980. It is prepared to work with the United States to advocate peace and security where it is in both sides' interest. In the area of digital technologies, the United States is a key player with whom Switzerland maintains close dialogue. In order to assert its multilateral interests globally, Switzerland must also articulate them to Washington on a bilateral basis and seek cooperation.

Objectives

→ **6.1 South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe and neighbouring regions:** Switzerland will pursue a critical and constructive dialogue policy with Russia and Turkey. It will bolster its commitment in the countries of Eastern Europe with the aim of making these states more self-reliant. For as long as Russia and Georgia continue to have no diplomatic relations, Switzerland is prepared to uphold communication between the two states by way of a protecting power mandate.

→ **6.2 Sub-Saharan Africa:** Switzerland will formulate an Africa strategy. It will strengthen cooperation with the African Union, thus consolidating its partnerships with African countries – also with a view to its membership of the UN Security Council.

→ **6.3 MENA region:** Switzerland will develop a strategy for the region. Besides respect for international law and human rights, it will place greater emphasis on economic development and career prospects for young people at local level. It will also promote favourable conditions for Swiss companies. It will continue the work of its good offices throughout the region, particularly through its protecting power mandates on behalf of and with regard to Iran.

→ **6.4 Asia:** Switzerland will update its China strategy and set up interdepartmental coordination bodies to improve coherence. Within the scope of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), it will work to improve the general conditions for participation of Swiss companies in BRI projects. At the same time, it will commit to aligning the BRI with the values and objectives of established multilateral organisations and institutions. In addition, Switzerland will continue to enhance cooperation with ASEAN in some areas.

→ **6.5 Americas:** Switzerland will work to improve the legal framework (trade, investment, tax, innovation) with the aim of further developing the close economic relations it enjoys with some countries. It will work with like-minded countries on the multilateral stage to champion its own multilateral priorities.

7. Multilateralism

Besides Switzerland's commitment in various parts of the world, cooperation in multilateral institutions is essential to address global challenges, such as climate change, terrorism, poverty, economic crises and violent conflicts. Thanks to multilateral cooperation, the international community has successfully adopted key instruments in recent years, such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. For a country like Switzerland, active partnership with and participation in international organisations is indispensable.

Since the end of the Second World War, the international community has set up a multilateral system with institutions for many different areas: regional alliances dealing with values, economic and security affairs, such as the Council of Europe, the European Union and the OSCE; financial, economic and development organisations, such as the Bretton Woods Institutions; and – the only organisation with universal competence and a global membership – the United Nations. For Switzerland as a medium-sized, highly globalised economy, participation in and cooperation with multilateral organisations is vitally important. Switzerland advocates agile and effective multilateralism, which is an efficient way of counteracting increased unilateralism.

As head of a voting constituency in the **Bretton Woods Institutions** and as a member of the governing bodies of the regional development banks, Switzerland plays an active role in helping to shape the strategic, institutional and operational orientation of these organisations. As part of the **International Monetary Fund**, it contributes to the stability of the global monetary system and to cooperation on currencies and international payments as a precondition for sustainable and broad-based economic growth. Through the **World Bank** and the regional development banks, Switzerland also makes a contribution to alleviating poverty and increasing living standards in developing countries. As a member of the **World Trade Organization (WTO)**, it is committed to securing a reliable multilateral trading system. Switzerland's membership of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** and its close cooperation with the **G20** forum for the most important industrialised and emerging nations also play a very important role. Switzerland has been invited by the Saudi Arabian G20 Presidency to attend the G20 summit as a guest in 2020, and will take part in the Finance Track for the fifth time in a row, and in the Sherpa Track for the first time (dealing with topics such as trade, the environment, education, health and tackling corruption). As a member of the governing bodies of the **multilateral development banks**, it plays an active role in helping to shape the strategic, institutional and operational orientation of these organisations. Taking into account its independence, Switzerland also maintains close ties with **humanitarian actors**, in particular the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**, which is headquartered in Geneva. In the fight against impunity, Switzerland is committed to an effective **International Criminal Court (ICC)**.

The **UN** plays a key role in Switzerland's foreign policy. For it to function effectively, reforms need to be implemented

UN Headquarters in Geneva

Photo: FDFA

to help countries achieve their sustainability goals and to guarantee the UN's relevance in new thematic areas. Within the UN development system, a range of measures are already being implemented in the area of peace and security and in management. Coherence between the individual spheres of activity is crucial to their success. The UN needs to pool its strengths more to ensure it can fulfil its core mandate, in particular the prevention of violent conflicts. Responsibility for this lies not only with the UN, but also with the member states themselves. They are the ones who make progress possible through their active involvement, political will and willingness to compromise within the governing bodies, committees and processes.

As a **host state**, Switzerland benefits from the presence of various international organisations across the country. Geneva plays a special role here as the European headquarters of the United Nations and innovative lab for reformed multilateralism. Through its approach based on dialogue and cooperation between government, business, civil society and the scientific community, Geneva has successfully positioned itself as a leading venue for debate on current and future challenges. The CERN headquarters in Geneva strengthens the city's potential as a global forum for sharing science and technology applications. The network of contacts, which can be used to create thematic coalitions, is also valuable for Switzerland's foreign policy. With its expertise and institutions, such as the three Geneva Centres, Geneva provides important impetus in Switzerland's priority areas of the enforcement of human rights and respect for international humanitarian law.

At a multilateral level, opportunities also arise to coordinate foreign policy with **like-minded states and groups of states**, develop strategic partnerships and enter into new cooperation arrangements in order to achieve the necessary majorities to get Switzerland's concerns heard. Greater use should be made of the potential for more strategic cooperation with states of comparable size and with similar foreign policy positions to secure accomplishments such as the rule of law, democracy and human rights in the rules-based multilateral order.

Objectives

→ **7.1 Switzerland will strengthen the UN reform efforts. It will work in specific alliances that strive to protect civilian populations in armed conflicts and that call for greater accountability and transparency in the Security Council's working methods.**

→ **7.2 Switzerland will utilise its strategic partnership with the ICRC to enforce international humanitarian law and will support an effective International Criminal Court. It will campaign for increased cooperation between the World Bank and the UN to counter the root causes of fragility and violence.**

→ **7.3 Switzerland will utilise the opportunity to contribute to the work of the G20 as a guest country and strengthen its ties to this forum.**

→ **7.4 Switzerland will strengthen its attractiveness and competitiveness as a host state. The focus will be on the universalisation of diplomatic representations, the holding of international conferences and peace talks and on Switzerland's positioning as a venue for discussing future challenges.**

→ **7.5 Switzerland will pursue more thematic, issue-specific and regional diplomatic initiatives with like-minded states and groups of states.**

Resources

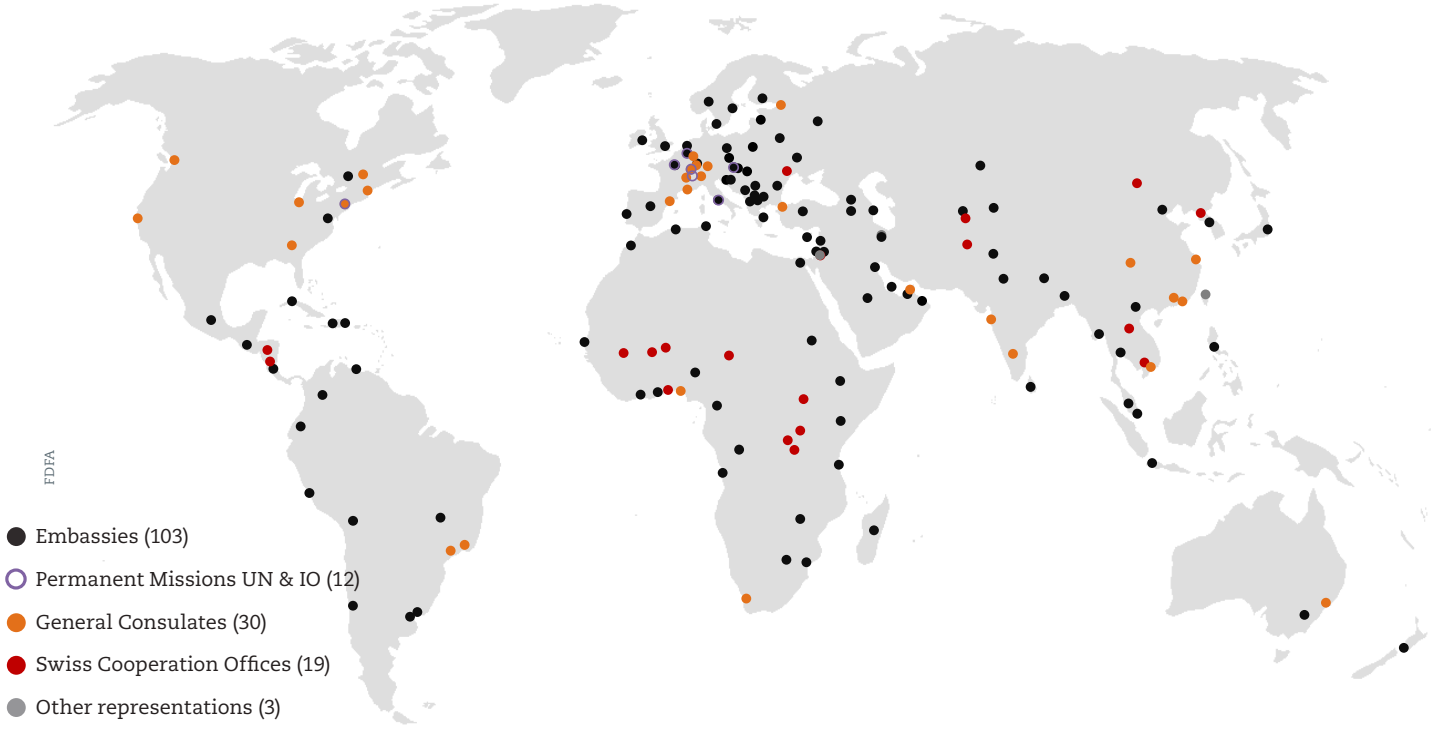
8. External network and citizen-oriented services

Switzerland maintains a solid external network, with around 170 representations worldwide. These offer external actors an innovative platform and systematically promote synergies in keeping with the principle of 'One Switzerland'. Their staff are well qualified and work efficiently in varied – sometimes fragile – contexts. The services provided to citizens abroad are adapted to meet rising demand and are easy to access. Modern crisis management in the representations is prepared for all eventualities.

External network: Successful foreign policy is based on a modular, flexible and innovative external network. It is guided by the principles of universality, coherence and effectiveness. The representations protect Switzerland's interests and contribute to the country's visibility throughout the world. They serve as platforms to raise awareness of Switzerland's strengths – such as specialist knowledge and innovation – and encourage dialogue. The locations and tasks of representations are regularly evaluated and adapted to meet changing needs.

Maintaining a universally-oriented external network as a link between Switzerland and its partner countries ensures proximity with actors on the ground. This is a critical foundation of Switzerland's independent policy. As a neutral state that is not a member of the EU, NATO or the G20, Switzerland is reliant on the votes of other countries, particularly in multilateral bodies. A strong external network also reduces the need for the Federal Administration to travel. In this way, the federal government is making a concrete contribution to reducing carbon emissions. The representations pay attention to the sustainable use of resources, and Switzerland promotes the model of sustainable representations as a way of showcasing the Swiss economy's commitment to sustainability.

'One Switzerland': Credible foreign policy requires coherence. This is encouraged through close coordination between all actors within the Federal Administration, external stakeholders and activities. In terms of its image, diversity and effectiveness, Switzerland's external network aims to be exemplary. The representations incorporate staff from all departments, from military and police attachés to trade



diplomats and migration experts. Representations also act as platforms for other actors, such as the Swiss Business Hubs, swissnex and offices of Switzerland Tourism and Pro Helvetia. Several federal offices jointly represent Switzerland at some 80 locations, and external partners are integrated into Switzerland's representations at around 50 locations. Switzerland's representations abroad raise the country's profile as a location for business and research, and promote it as a destination for culture and tourism. The cooperation is reinforced by the motto: 'One Switzerland = one foreign policy = one local representation'. Exploiting synergies increases the visibility and effectiveness of Switzerland's commitment.

Staff: Well-qualified employees with the right profiles deployed in the right place are crucial factors in successful foreign policy and an optimal presence abroad. As a progressive employer, the FDFA promotes long-term skills development in its staff, permeability of career paths and equal opportunities.

Security and crisis management: The security situation is volatile in many parts of the world. The risks for Switzerland's representations abroad, its staff, Swiss citizens abroad and travellers are growing. The federal government therefore emphasises enhanced crisis management competencies and support services in crisis situations. This service is coordinated by the FDFA in close collaboration with federal and cantonal partners.

Prevention and public awareness-raising work is also key. Travel advice issued by the federal government can reduce the risks for citizens, tour operators and companies. The federal government increasingly relies on the use of new technologies to allow services to be accessed more quickly. In terms of crisis communication and travel advice, it is necessary to use the channels that reach the most people concerned.

The safety and security of staff abroad is the cornerstone for successful foreign policy in a world with growing security challenges. For deployments in fragile contexts in particular, staff are needed with the right profiles and the relevant skills. Thanks to specialised training, expert guidance and standardised and user-friendly security instruments, employees can implement risk management in the country of deployment efficiently and effectively.

Consular services: The federal government has been continuously expanding its public service offering in this area in recent years. Constant optimisation and modernisation of the service offering will remain a priority going forward. Consular services should be geared more heavily to the needs of the different 'customer groups'. These primarily involve Swiss citizens embarking on foreign trips or living abroad. At the same time, however, visa application processes are constantly being optimised, given the growing importance of tourists and representatives of politics, business, science and culture from a domestic and foreign policy perspective.

Objectives

→ **8.1 Switzerland will maintain an ideally-positioned external network as a basis for its foreign policy. It will regularly review the locations and tasks of the 170 or so representations. Cooperation with all stakeholders, whether from the fields of culture, business, science or other areas, will be systematically promoted within the external network in line with the 'One Switzerland' approach.**

→ **8.2 The federal government will ensure its staff represent a good cross-section of Swiss society at all hierarchical levels. Flexible working models and a work-life balance will be supported, and staff will receive regular further training. The permeability between different career paths will be improved.**

→ **8.3 Switzerland will promote the concept of 'sustainable representations'. The Federal Council is committed to reducing carbon emissions through increased use of videoconferencing, a well-established external network and cutting back on the number of flights. The Federal Council will also promote its environmental goals in its foreign policy, and will consider its environmental footprint.**

→ **8.4 The FDFA's Crisis Management Centre will strengthen its crisis management capacity and security culture on an ongoing basis, with a focus also on staff training. The safety and security of representations will be regularly reviewed and supported by new technologies. In particularly difficult situations, safety and security experts will be deployed.**

→ **8.5 As an important location for science and innovation, Switzerland will maintain a range of services alone or with partners that systematically makes use of the opportunities of digitalisation. The range of online and mobile consular services will be continuously expanded. Secure and reliable electronic identification of customers will be key. Switzerland will organise its consular services so that the service provided to the public is also customer friendly when a digital solution is not suitable.**

9. Communication

Switzerland explains its foreign policy through coordinated and appropriate communication that is geared to the target group in Switzerland and abroad. This helps Swiss citizens to freely form their own opinions and promotes awareness and understanding of Switzerland's positions, interests and values abroad. Strategic communication therefore contributes to an effective foreign policy.

Understanding of foreign policy in Switzerland: Foreign policy is also domestic policy – this is why communicating foreign policy issues in a readily understandable way in Switzerland is essential. Through active communication, the Federal Council helps the Swiss population form opinions on foreign policy topics and empowers them to make informed decisions at all political levels. To achieve this, the departments communicate in a coordinated, transparent, timely, proactive and quality-assured manner, and take care to ensure their communication is consistent. The Federal Council supports the media in performing its role in a democracy. The information market has become more competitive due to technical developments. Switzerland uses appropriate measures to help ensure its messages reach the intended audience. The Federal Council is therefore increasingly communicating via online channels. Providing the public with credible information and maintaining dialogue also protect against disinformation.

Understanding of foreign policy abroad: Domestic policy is also foreign policy. In an increasingly competitive and interconnected international environment, Switzerland cannot afford to leave it to chance or external actors to determine whether and how it is perceived. Switzerland's communication abroad serves to actively help shape how the country is perceived externally. Targeted communication activities explain Switzerland, its positions and its strengths, as well as its domestic and foreign policy actions. Ensuring Switzerland enjoys a positive image abroad is not an end in itself. It affects factors such as diplomatic room for manoeuvre, the attractiveness of Switzerland as a business location, economic and scientific hub, and tourism. The country's image is a key asset in the global competition for attention, influence and appeal. Communication abroad is a pivotal and strategically important instrument in safeguarding the country's interests. In the age of digitalisation, Switzerland needs to deploy its communication abroad in a swift, targeted and flexible manner to optimally position itself. Switzerland's communication abroad improves understanding of selected basic topics and of how the country works and can support Federal Council communication in the case of specific concerns.

Communication abroad aims to safeguard Switzerland's interests abroad using public relations tools to help ensure a positive and differentiated perception of the country. Switzerland primarily wants to be seen as an attractive location with a high quality of life – a country which is innovative and competitive and which shows solidarity and takes responsibility. In terms of content, communication abroad focuses on topics with the potential to influence positive perceptions. When necessary, it also counteracts potential negative perceptions. It anticipates developments and identifies promising subject areas. The Federal Council will set out the substantive priorities for the legislative period in the Strategy for Communication Abroad 2020–23.

'Meet the Ambassadors' in Bellinzona, Ticino

Photo: FDFA

Photo: FDFA

Swiss Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015

To achieve the goals of communication abroad and to convey its messages, various platforms and channels will be used, e.g. Swiss presence at many events with international reach, support of projects run by Swiss representations abroad, delegation trips, digital platforms, social media and communication products. More campaigns are to be run in the period from 2020 to 2023. The focus will be on exploiting the potential of partnerships with private and public actors who can also influence the perception of Switzerland abroad, particularly in the areas of politics, education, research and innovation, business including export and location promotion, tourism, sport and culture.

Objectives

→ **9.1 The Federal Council will provide transparent, timely, proactive and quality-assured communication on its foreign policy and will ensure communication is coherent and consistent in Switzerland and abroad.**

→ **9.2 The communication potential of social media will be more systematically exploited, both in Switzerland and in the external network. This will satisfy the need for explanation in Switzerland and support local communication needs, as well as implementation of the foreign policy strategy and the strategy for communication abroad.**

→ **9.3 The FDFA will cultivate a dialogue with the public on Swiss foreign policy and diplomacy. To this end, it will continue the pilot project 'Meet the Ambassadors' launched in 2019.**

→ **9.4 Switzerland's presence at major international events will involve partners from the spheres of politics, business, science, tourism, sport, culture and society. In particular, these include the House of Switzerland at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo and at the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing, and participation in Expo 2020 in Dubai. Following the successful project in 2019, greater use will be made of the World Economic Forum as a platform for Switzerland's communication abroad.**

→ **9.5 In close cooperation with partners, communication campaigns abroad will be devised on topics such as Swiss–EU relations, Switzerland as a key innovation hub, the country's candidacy for the UN Security Council and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. These campaigns will supplement and reinforce the applicable strategies in the respective thematic areas.**

Conclusion

Happiness is hard to measure – but it is no accident that Switzerland is among the highest-ranking countries in the World Happiness Report. Switzerland is one of the safest, most prosperous countries in the world. Our young people enjoy good prospects. Citizens' trust in their institutions is high by international comparison.

There are many reasons for Switzerland's success story. Foreign policy has its part to play, as do factors such as government institutions that are responsive to citizens, political stability and geography. In seeking a balance between openness and independence, Switzerland has hit on a proven formula that points the way to the future.

The Federal Council's new Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 also builds on proven formulas. Given the continued fragmentation in world politics, the demand for Switzerland's good offices is likely to remain high. Switzerland's role as a credible, discreet and reliable bridge-builder has a promising future. However, the Federal Council is also using this strategy to further develop foreign policy in areas where there are new challenges to address and opportunities to embrace. Switzerland's digital foreign policy and ambition to position Geneva as a global hub for the shaping of digital governance is one such opportunity.

In its dispatch on the legislative programme for 2019–23, the Federal Council states that Switzerland's influence abroad will play an even greater role in safeguarding Swiss interests at home in future. The Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 thus includes for the first time thematic and regional focus areas in addition to overall priorities.

Clear foreign policy objectives are one thing. If Switzerland is to continue its success story, it must translate strategy into coherent action. Today, there is virtually no domestic issue that does not also have a strong international dimension. The Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23 was therefore developed interdepartmentally and is backed by the Federal Council as a whole.

The Federal Council wants to increase the foreign policy involvement of civil society actors outside of the federal institutions and also the cantons. Switzerland's foreign policy has the greatest impact when it has broad support, based on a 'whole of Switzerland' approach.

List of abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
AU	African Union
Brexit	The United Kingdom's departure from the European Union
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
Cst.	Swiss Federal Constitution (SR 101)
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ERI	Education, research and innovation
EU	European Union
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
G7	Group of seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States)
G20	Group of twenty (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States)
GESDA	Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator
IC	International cooperation
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
InstA	Institutional Agreement
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MERCOSUR	Southern Common Market
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OAS	Organisation of American States
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PfP	Partnership for Peace
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
USA	United States of America
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Trade Organization

Glossary

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals forms a global frame of reference regarding the three inextricably-linked dimensions of the economy, the environment and society. Switzerland recognises the 2030 Agenda as an important orientation framework. While it is not a legally binding framework, it is a means of setting policy objectives and forming opinions, both for domestic and for foreign policy.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): The main aspect of the BRI lies in the creation of infrastructure (transport, energy, communication) in third countries, which is predominantly financed and built by China. The BRI is China's first own, globally-oriented development model with which it seeks to substantiate its growing economic – but above all geopolitical – presence on the international stage. The Federal Council's policy involves making the most of the opportunities of the BRI for Swiss interests and the economy, and at the same time calling for compliance with universal values and rules to ensure that the BRI can be implemented in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner for the benefit of target countries.

Bilateral approach: Since 1993, Switzerland has developed relations with the EU based on the bilateral approach. This policy led to negotiations and the conclusion of the two rounds of agreements Bilaterals I and II, as well as other agreements.

Bilateralism: The practice of discussing or negotiating foreign policy issues between two parties. If there are more than two parties involved, it is multilateralism (see 'Multilateralism').

Bretton Woods Institutions: The finance ministers of the Allied nations met at a conference in Bretton Woods (United States) in 1944 to agree on a new set of rules for international reconstruction and monetary policy in the post-war period. This led to the creation of the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund. Although their remit has changed, these institutions are still important players in development cooperation and development financing.

Civil society: This comprises the parts of society that are distinct from the government and private sector. It is made up of groups who have common interests, goals or values. These include NGOs, associations and foundations, citizen groups, religious organisations, political parties, professional associations, unions, social movements and interest groups.

Coherence: This term denotes the greatest possible consistency between a country's different policy areas.

Consular services: This comprises the services that the FDFA provides as a one-stop shop alone or with other authorities, partner states or external service providers for the benefit of Swiss nationals abroad. This includes assistance in the event of emergencies abroad where those affected cannot reasonably be expected or are not able to defend their interests themselves or with the help of third parties. Other consular services are those of an administrative nature (e.g. authentications), emigration and return migration advice, issues relating to civil status, citizenship and identity documents, and many more. They comprise a range of services that is comparable to that offered to Swiss nationals

living in Switzerland by authorities at communal level and are based on, among other things, the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations and the Swiss Abroad Act. Consular services also include the processing of visa applications submitted through a Swiss representation abroad.

Cyber diplomacy: Cyber diplomacy safeguards Switzerland's interests and values in cyberspace. Cyberspace comprises the network infrastructure, as well as software and social components (human interaction). The continuing integration of all areas of life in cyberspace presents both opportunities and risks. Switzerland therefore works to enforce international law (i.e. human rights and international humanitarian law) in cyberspace and is committed to intergovernmental confidence-building. Switzerland is also exploring new avenues, promoting science diplomacy and provides good offices in relation to cyberspace (see 'Good offices').

Cyber security: Cyber security concerns all aspects of security in information and communications technology. This includes all information technology associated with the internet and comparable networks, and incorporates communication, applications, processes and information processed on this basis. International cooperation of state- and non-state actors in the area of cyber security aims to develop and protect an open, free and stable cyberspace. It can also reduce the risks of cyberattacks between states.

Digital self-determination: The individual should be at the heart of digitalisation (see 'Digitalisation'). People should be able to control and use their data and decide who can access them. This approach also guarantees fundamental values such as privacy and freedom of choice in the digital space. The aim is to establish high-quality data spaces which benefit society and reinforce democratic values.

Digitalisation: Digitalisation involves the integration of digital technologies in society, government and business. Digitalisation comprises a wide range of digital applications, such as new communication technologies, robotics, cloud computing, big data analytics, artificial intelligence, the internet of things and 3D printing. It also permeates other areas of our day-to-day lives, in some cases fundamentally altering them.

Equality of opportunity: An equal opportunity society guarantees all members – particularly at the beginning of their lives – unobstructed access to life's opportunities, in particular the same educational and career opportunities, and the opportunity to reach their full potential. No person may be discriminated against, in particular on grounds of origin, race, gender, age, language, social position, way of life, religious, ideological, or political convictions, or because of a physical, mental or psychological disability (Cst. Art. 8 para. 2).

Extreme poverty: Since 2015 the World Bank has defined extreme poverty as income of less than USD 1.90 a day. The definition is regularly adapted to reflect changes in living costs.

Facilitation and mediation: A third party who mediates between parties to a conflict is known as either a facilitator or a mediator. A facilitator supports and promotes contact between parties to a conflict without substantively contributing to the negotiations. They are chosen by the parties to a conflict, as also in a mediation situation, and allow them to meet at a suitable location, discuss possible ways of resolving the conflict, conduct negotiations and sign an agreement. A mediator is a third party who also substantively supports the negotiating parties in finding solutions without imposing them. Facilitation and mediation are part of Switzerland's good offices.

Foreign policy: Foreign policy shapes the relations of a state with other states and international organisations, and safeguards the state's interests abroad. It comprises various policy areas, such as trade policy, environment policy, security policy, development policy and cultural policy. In Switzerland, the Federal Council is responsible for foreign policy. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is responsible for coordinating foreign policy and ensuring coherence with other departments (see section on 'Coherence').

Fragility: The OECD defines fragility as a combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies.

G20: The group of twenty is an informal alliance of 19 states and the EU, which represents the most important developed and emerging economies. It addresses financial and economic cooperation and can set international standards.

Geneva Conventions: The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their two Additional Protocols of 1977, as well as the Additional Protocol of 2005, form the core of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts (see 'International humanitarian law'). Among other things, they protect people who are not or are no longer taking part in hostilities and govern the conduct of war.

Global governance: This term refers to the development of an institutional and regulatory system and of mechanisms for international cooperation to tackle global problems and cross-border matters. It involves the UN system, international organisations, state- and non-state actors and regional organisations. Switzerland traditionally plays a key role in this, and International Geneva is one of the key centres (see 'International Geneva').

Global priority countries: In 2005, the Federal Council decided to be more systematic about developing cooperation with priority countries outside the EU. Relations with Brazil, China, India, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Turkey and the United States have since been strengthened on the basis of country strategies. Within the scope of international cooperation, this term is used for countries in which the majority of bilateral development cooperation aid is deployed. These are not the same countries.

Good offices: This is an umbrella term to describe the efforts of a third party to peacefully settle a conflict between two or more states. Switzerland's good offices consist of three areas: protecting power mandates (see 'Protecting power mandates'), Switzerland as a host state for peace negotiations and Switzerland as a mediator and facilitator and as a supporter of mediation and negotiation processes (see 'Facilitation and mediation'). Good offices range from technical and organisational support (e.g. providing a conference venue) to mediation services and participation in international peace processes.

Host state: This term describes a country that hosts foreign representations (embassies, missions, consulates) or international organisations. Switzerland – and Geneva in particular (see 'International Geneva') – hosts a multitude of international organisations.

Human rights: Human rights are inherent and inalienable rights that all people enjoy without distinction by virtue of their being human. They are crucial to the protection of human dignity, physical and psychological integrity and are an important foundation for the development of every individual. They are the basis of the peaceful coexistence of nations. They are guarantors of a society based on the obligation to respect the rights of the individual. They apply in both international relations and domestic policy, but also at the place of residence of every individual. Human rights are universal, indivisible and interrelated. Every state is obliged to respect, protect and implement human rights.

Humanitarian principles: Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence are key values and principles of humanitarian action. They were laid down in the Code of Conduct of the Red Cross Movement, and by the UN General Assembly.

Institutional issues: Within the framework of Switzerland's relations with the EU, institutional issues concern the uniform application of market access agreements between Switzerland and the EU. Institutional procedures are designed to establish how the contracting parties will apply these agreements, in particular with provisions on legal development, the monitoring and interpretation of the agreements and dispute resolution.

Interests and values: The core mission of Switzerland's foreign policy is to promote the country's interests and values, which are two inextricably linked sides of the same coin and are based on the Federal Constitution.

International cooperation: International cooperation comprises the activities of humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding (see 'Peacebuilding') and human security.

International Geneva: Geneva is the heart of the multilateral system and the location of the UN's European headquarters. Thirty-eight international organisations, programmes and funds, as well as 179 states and 750 NGOs are represented there. International Geneva provides 45,000 jobs and contributes more than 11% to the GDP of the canton (1% of Swiss GDP). Around 3,300 international conferences are held in Geneva every year, the main themes of which are: 1) peace, security, disarmament; 2) humanitarian aid and international humanitarian law, human rights, migration; 3) labour, economy, trade, science, telecommunications; 4) health; 5) the environment and sustainable development.

International humanitarian law: International humanitarian law governs the conduct of hostilities and protects the victims of armed conflicts. It applies in all international and non-international armed conflicts, regardless of the legitimacy or cause of the use of force.

International law: International law is the result of collaboration between states and regulates how they coexist. It underpins peace and security and aims to ensure the protection and well-being of persons. International law comprises different areas, such as the prohibition of the use of force, protection of individuals during wars and conflicts (see international humanitarian law), prevention and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, transnational organised crime and terrorism. It also regulates other areas, such as the environment, trade, development, telecommunications and transport. On account of the sovereignty of states, international law only applies for each state insofar as it has agreed to adopt certain international obligations. This excludes mandatory international law, which comprises basic standards that no state may override, such as the prohibition of genocide.

Irregular migration: Movement of persons that takes place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the state of origin, transit or destination.

Multilateralism: Multilateralism is when issues of public interest are discussed and negotiated between more than two states (cf. 'Bilateralism'). International organisations and bodies such as the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are platforms for such discussions. Multilateralism allows Switzerland to achieve leverage through alliances and thus increase its influence.

Neutrality: Switzerland's rights and obligations as a neutral state are derived from international law (see 'International law'). The core of these obligations involves Switzerland not being allowed to offer military support in the event of an inter-state conflict. At national level, neutrality is mentioned in the Federal Constitution as an instrument to safeguard Switzerland's independence. The neutrality policy ensures the effectiveness and credibility of Switzerland's neutrality.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs): Any private, non-profit organisation that operates at local, national or international level to pursue common goals and ideals with no significant state-controlled involvement or representation. NGOs are part of civil society (see 'Civil society').

Official development assistance (ODA): The OECD defines ODA as "all flows to developing countries and territories on the OECD list and to multilateral development organisations that: (1) are provided by official agencies; (2) are administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as their main objective; and (3) are concessional in character".

Peacebuilding: Civilian peacebuilding includes contributions to the prevention, mitigation and resolution of violent conflicts, in particular through confidence-building, mediation and the promotion of international humanitarian law and human rights (see 'Facilitation and mediation', 'International humanitarian law' and 'Human rights'). Post-conflict peacebuilding activities comprise a range of activities, including dealing with the past, contributions to promoting democratic processes and elections, and strengthening human rights. Peacebuilding creates and reinforces the framework conditions necessary for sustainable development. It comprises both civilian and military measures.

Principles: Switzerland's foreign policy is guided in particular by the constitutional principles of freedom, the rule of law, equality of opportunity, and sustainability. Regarding implementation, the key principles are universality, multilateralism and neutrality.

Protecting power: A protecting power comes into effect when a state breaks off diplomatic and/or consular relations with another state. If all the parties involved agree, the protecting power takes on the functions agreed with the sending state, grants protection to citizens of that state and/or represents its interests in the host state. Protecting power mandates allow states to maintain low-level relations. At the end of 2019, Switzerland had seven protecting power mandates: it represents Iran in Egypt, the United States in Iran, Georgia in Russia, Russia in Georgia, Iran in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia in Iran and Iran in Canada.

Refugees: A refugee is someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol regulate the status of refugees. The principle of non-refoulement is particularly important. It forbids a country receiving refugees to expel or return ('refouler') them to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened.

Rule of law: The rule of law refers to the supremacy of law over the rule of might. At national level, the fundamental objective of the rule of law is to safeguard the primacy of the law at all levels of government and to protect the associated freedom of citizens. In terms of foreign policy, the rule of law is crucial to international peace and security, economic and social progress, development and the protection of rights and human freedoms. It is primarily achieved by strengthening international law, which guarantees political stability and the reliability of international relations (see 'International law').

Science diplomacy: This terms refers to, for example, the use of scientific collaboration between states to address common problems and to develop international partnerships. At the interface between science, technology and foreign policy, articulating issues and objectives from a scientific perspective can support confidence-building and stimulate both bilateral and multilateral discussions.

Soft law: The term soft law is used to denote a multitude of different international instruments. What they all have in common is that they are not legally binding (soft) but that they prescribe a certain conduct (law). Unlike international law, soft law in no way constitutes international legal obligations, which is why states cannot be made legally accountable if it is breached (see 'International law').

Sustainability: Switzerland promotes sustainable development on the basis of the Federal Constitution. It uses the definition formulated by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". The principle was substantiated in the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 (see '2030 Agenda').

Sustainable finance: Sustainable finance refers to any form of financial service integrating environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria into business or investment decisions.

Switzerland's communication abroad: Communication abroad aims to help safeguard Switzerland's interests abroad using public relations tools. It actively helps shape the perception of Switzerland abroad by explaining Switzerland, its positions and its strengths, as well as its domestic and foreign policy action through targeted communication activities.

Tech4Good: Digital technologies and technical innovations offer many opportunities to improve living conditions worldwide. Switzerland promotes their use in international cooperation in order to deliver on the sustainable development goals more quickly or in a more broad-based and cost effective manner. For example, new technologies can help alleviate need and poverty, tackle global challenges such as climate change, and contribute to better governance. New technologies also involve risks, which is why Switzerland combines its innovation transfer with training measures, for example.

Terrorism: Terrorism denotes violent criminal acts that seek to intimidate the public or a state, or to coerce an international organisation. At universal level, international agreements and UN resolutions describe various measures designed to support countries in the prevention and prosecution of terrorist acts. It is recognised that such counterterrorism measures must respect international law, in particular human rights, international humanitarian law and the international law on refugees.

UN Security Council resolution 1325: This resolution adopted in 2000 on women, peace and security calls for the incorporation of gender perspectives in the prevention of violent conflicts, peace processes and in the rebuilding of state institutions. The resolution also calls for more comprehensive protection of women and girls, who are particularly affected by sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflicts. Switzerland adopted its first national action plan on women, peace and security (NAP 1325) in 2007 to implement the resolution. Switzerland's 4th NAP 1325 has been in effect since 2018.

Universality: This means maintaining good relations with all states of the world. This does not mean, however, that foreign policy instruments are deployed in all countries in the same way or that Switzerland has a representation in every country. Rather, Switzerland represents its interests in a modular fashion and according to political priority. It does so both bilaterally and multilaterally, and as a member of international organisations.

Cascading strategy

A common understanding of the various strategic management documents is a key prerequisite for a coherent foreign policy. The diagram below illustrates such a process:

<table>
<tr><td>Federal Council</td><td colspan="6">Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Federal Council or departments</td><td colspan="3">Thematic</td><td colspan="3">Geographical</td></tr>
<tr><td>IC</td><td>Host state</td><td>Communication abroad</td><td>MENA</td><td>China</td><td>Africa</td></tr>
<tr><td>Departments or federal offices</td><td colspan="6">Guidelines
Programme
Benchmark figures
Mission statement
Roadmap
Package of measures
Action plan/implementation plan</td></tr>
</table>

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