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# International Cooperation Strategy 2025–2028

The Federal Council approved the dispatch on Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2025–2028 on 22 May 2024. The text has now been submitted to Parliament, which is expected to debate it by the end of 2024.

# Objectives

The four objectives identified in the previous 2021–24 strategy have proved their relevance in the face of current challenges, and they have thus been renewed.

For the period 2025–28, the Federal Council has set the following four objectives:



**Human development:** Saving lives, alleviating human suffering and supporting access to high-quality basic services for the most disadvantaged.



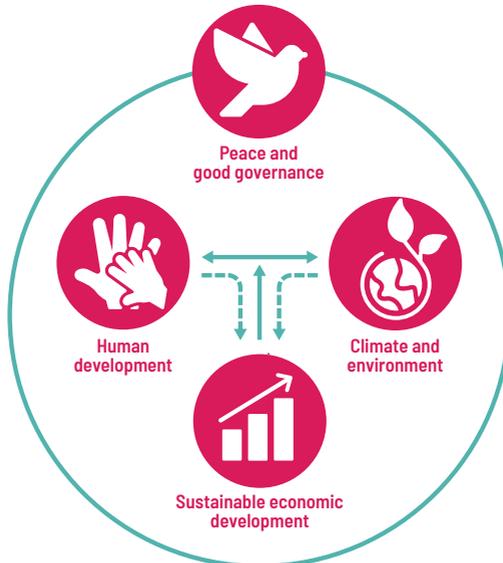
**Sustainable economic development:** Creating decent jobs through appropriate framework conditions, a dynamic local economy and the private sector.



**Climate and environment:** Guaranteeing environmentally-friendly development, resilient to climate change and natural disasters for the benefit of the most disadvantaged.



**Peace and governance:** Resolving conflicts, promoting peace, democracy and the rule of law, and upholding human rights.



These four **development objectives** are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. They are supplemented by **specific objectives** which serve as a guide for determining operational priorities. In all its activities, Switzerland is committed to promoting gender equality, good governance and a human rights-based approach.

# Strategy

The International Cooperation Strategy (ICS) 2021–24 has demonstrated its ability to respond flexibly to changing needs. This approach will be continued in 2025–28. The following adaptations have been made in the ICS 2025–28 to address current paradigm shifts:

- ▶ an increase in the guarantee credit for humanitarian aid, made necessary by the increase in needs and the duration of interventions in crisis regions;
- ▶ a special focus on certain issues, in particular the promotion of democracy, health, migration, the private sector and the fight against hunger;
- ▶ a multilateral commitment focused on global challenges (peace, security, climate, new technologies, etc.);
- ▶ activities that are as close as possible to people, managed as far as possible by local actors to ensure that they are relevant and sustainable;

- ▶ promotion of Swiss expertise, particularly in the fields of federalism, vocational training and technological innovation;
- ▶ leveraging of synergies between all actors (private sector, academia, NGOs, public administration) in financing and sustainability of global public goods (biodiversity, health, water, etc.).

Current geopolitical and financial uncertainties require the ICS 2025–28 to maintain flexible and agile approaches within a stable framework. This framework is the compass that guides our international cooperation activities.

While the war in Ukraine and its consequences are an important part of this strategy, Switzerland's humanitarian tradition requires that international cooperation (IC) maintains its commitment in the rest of the world. This is also in Switzerland's own interest.

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***The IC Strategy 2025–28 focuses geographically on regions where the population needs it most.***

***In a constantly changing world, the strategy pursues long-term goals while maintaining a high degree of flexibility in order to respond to the numerous current crises.***

# Impact

Major crises have altered the international context in recent years. The war in Ukraine, the escalation in the Middle East, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, the energy crisis, food insecurity, the debt burden, inflation and climate change all have a direct impact on developing countries, but also on Switzerland.

In an increasingly volatile world, IC strengthens Switzerland's credibility and influence on the international stage. It promotes values that are Switzerland's strengths: the rule of law and democracy, the market economy, human rights, dialogue, solidarity, and humanitarian law and principles.

## **Some of the results achieved thanks to IC between 2020 and 2022:**

- ▶ 8.9 million people enjoyed access to safe and affordable drinking water.
- ▶ Over 16.2 million people benefited from climate change adaptation measures and around 69 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were avoided.
- ▶ 1.3 million people took part in vocational skills development programmes.
- ▶ 510,000 jobs were created, maintained or improved (generation of higher incomes, formalisation or more decent working conditions).
- ▶ The Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit carried out 660 missions in 73 countries.
- ▶ Switzerland supported and made a significant contribution to 21 peace processes (including Colombia and Libya), and conducted ceasefire negotiations in seven countries, such as Myanmar and Nigeria.
- ▶ Between 2020 and 2022, 59% of expenditure (CHF 3.7 billion) related to projects promoting gender equality.

IC aims to end poverty and support sustainable development in its three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. It contributes to the UN's 2030 Agenda, with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

# Analysis criteria

Having proved their worth, the three criteria set out for the strategic orientation of the ICS 2021–24 will continue to apply in 2025–28.

- ▶ The needs of people in developing countries. Analysis of these needs takes into account the humanitarian situation, the level of poverty, the capacity of countries to mobilise their own resources and the challenges in terms of sustainable development.
- ▶ The added value of Swiss IC. This is based on our specific knowledge, skills, capacity for innovation and experience in the fields concerned.

- ▶ Switzerland's long-term interests. Peace, freedom, human rights, democracy, prosperity, sustainable development, and international security and stability are essential to our prosperity.



*The weighting of these three criteria varies according to the context and the type of instrument used.*

# Geographical focus

The four priority regions of the ICS 2021–24 – Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe – remain relevant and will be maintained for the 2025–28 period.

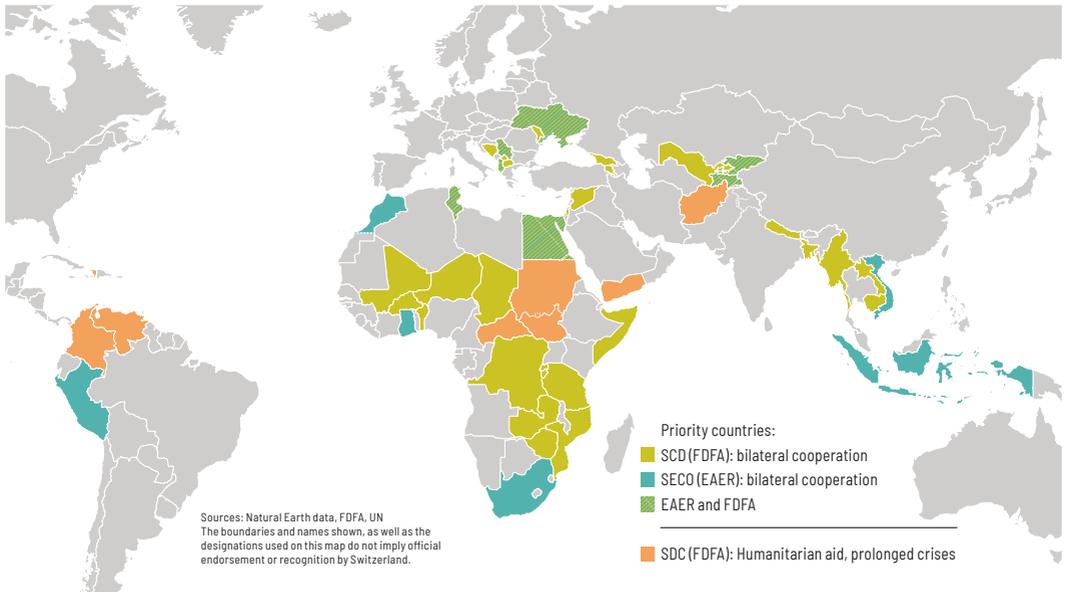
In the context of **bilateral development cooperation**, the SDC has reduced its long-term commitment from 35 to 34 priority countries. SECO will maintain its commitment in the 13 priority countries of the ICS 2021–24, with the exception of Colombia, where it plans to move towards other types of economic cooperation and withdraw from IC by the end of 2028. Morocco will become a priority country.

The mandate for **humanitarian aid** is universal. While the response to disasters (earthquakes, floods, famine, cholera, etc.) in 2025–28 cannot be predicted, it is clear that many protracted crises require a humanitarian commitment over several years.

Flexible and agile management of **peace policy** ensures that there is scope to adapt and to seize opportunities. The plan is to concentrate on a maximum of 20 contexts.

Switzerland's commitment is for the long term, in order to consolidate the results already achieved. However, the way in which Switzerland operates in priority countries can be adapted to rapidly changing circumstances.

The war in Ukraine represents a major paradigm shift on top of many other crises and armed conflicts. Through the ICS 2025–28, the Federal Council is responding to this changing international context.



The Federal Council has decided to allocate CHF 1.5 billion under this strategy to support Ukraine (13%). The remainder of the ICS 2025–28 budget (87%) will be mainly allocated to the four priority regions. This amount is divided, according to current planning, between bilateral development cooperation and promotion of peace, humanitarian aid, multilateral affairs, global thematic programmes and core contributions to Swiss NGOs in a similar proportion to the current strategy (2021–24). Swiss IC continues to support the world’s least developed countries (LDCs): of the 45 LDCs, 16 are SDC priority countries.

### Support for Ukraine

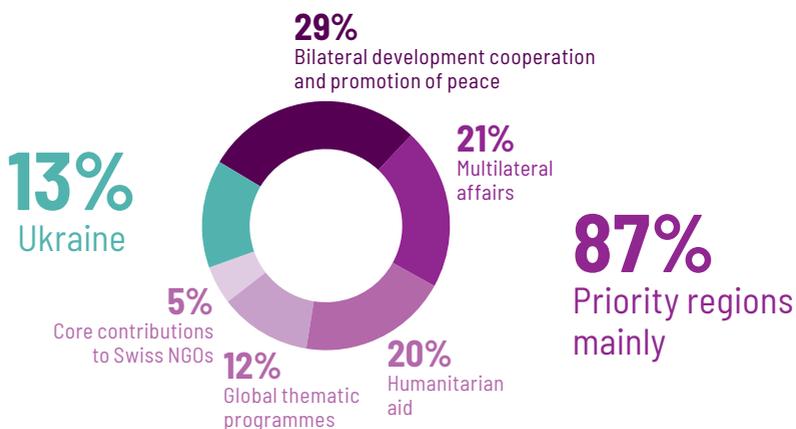
The level of destruction and loss of life in Ukraine is on a scale not seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Around a quarter of the Ukrainian population is displaced. The poverty rate was estimated by the World Bank to be

25% at the end of 2022 (compared with 5.5% in 2021). Reconstruction costs were estimated at USD 411 billion in August 2022.

As Ukraine has been a priority country for IC since 1999, Switzerland’s activities in the country are based on long-standing partnerships, focusing on two areas:

1. humanitarian aid, development cooperation and the promotion of peace, democracy and human rights;
2. reconstruction, which involves major infrastructure investments aimed at restoring and modernising infrastructure ('build back better') to enable sustainable economic activities.

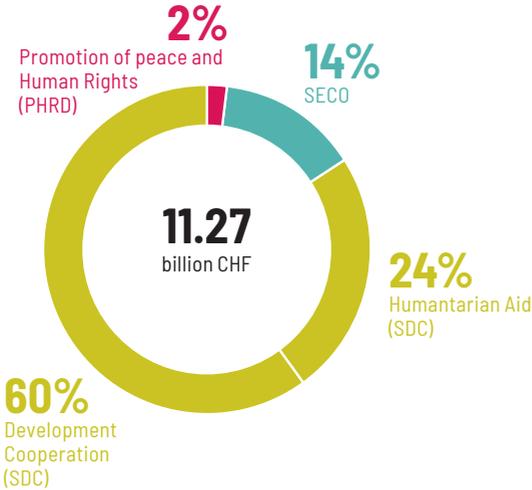
The uncertain outlook as to how the conflict will evolve, and the economic and social impact it might have, calls for a high degree of flexibility.



# Finance

This strategy proposes four guarantee credits totalling CHF 11.27 billion, representing the maximum amount the federal government can grant for the period 2025–28.

Of the total credits earmarked for the ICS 2025–28, CHF 1.5 billion will be devoted to Ukraine and CHF 1.6 billion to the climate.



*Adjustments may still be made to budgets during the annual federal budget debates in Parliament.*

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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA  
**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC**  
**Peace and Human Rights Division PHRD**

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Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research EAER  
**State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO**

**Further information:**  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch/CI2025-2028](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/CI2025-2028)  
[www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch](http://www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch)