



## Switzerland's priorities for the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly

The 72nd session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) marks the 15th anniversary of Switzerland's membership to the UN. Since joining the UN in September 2002, Switzerland has consistently committed itself to the implementation of the goals of the UN Charter as an active and impartial member of the organisation. First and foremost, this means the peaceful settlement of disputes and the prevention of future conflicts and crises. Through the UN, Switzerland can contribute to solving global problems and play its part in ensuring that developments in world events take a positive course.

Switzerland's foreign policy interests and values are largely identical to the basic principles of the UN. This makes the UN a central instrument for Switzerland to implement its foreign policy objectives as well as to safeguard and promote its interests and values as set out in the Federal Constitution. The Swiss Foreign Policy Strategy 2016–19 forms the framework for the priorities of Switzerland at the 72nd session of the UNGA. The Swiss priorities also build on those of previous years. Continuity is important since Switzerland's overarching objectives, interests and values remain constant as well. The priorities are based on Switzerland's two main strategic areas for the 2012–22 ten-year period – peace and security, and reform of the UN.

Switzerland wants a strong, modern and efficient UN that can achieve its ambitious goals effectively and comprehensively. For the UN to be able to fulfil its important role, it needs to be revitalised, strengthened and adapted to new challenges on an ongoing basis. Switzerland supports the new UN Secretary-General's efforts for reforms at all levels, although it is important to keep expectations realistic. In addition, Switzerland is committed to the reforms that have already been agreed upon and is working to continue the sustainable implementation and operationalisation of these projects for the long term. Switzerland advocates a systematic approach to reforms whereby the different reform initiatives must be accompanied by general improvements in the management structures. One of Switzerland's main concerns remains improving coordination between the different actors and reforms in the field of humanitarian aid, development cooperation, peacebuilding and human rights.

Switzerland has set the following priorities for the UNGA's 72nd session:

### **Peace and security**

Switzerland will continue to strengthen its engagement for peace and security at the 72nd session of the UNGA. It is supporting the Secretary-General's reform efforts in this area, particularly in terms of strengthening conflict prevention and mediation capacities. The Appeal of 13 June, which aims to reinforce conflict prevention by systematically anchoring human rights in security policy debates, remains one of Switzerland's priorities. The upcoming UNGA will focus on implementing the appeal and a newly created group of interested states will identify practical courses of action, including cooperation between the UN Human Rights Council and the Security Council. Geneva's role in peace talks and conflict prevention is also expected to be further reinforced. In addition, Switzerland is committed to strengthening the relevant partnerships with regional organisations, particularly closer cooperation between the UN and the OSCE. The global fight against corruption continues to be a focus of Switzerland's engagement.

Switzerland will actively participate at the UNGA's high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, aiming to ensure that the potential of peacebuilding as a tool for prevention be harnessed and used more effectively, and to guarantee the funds required for this. Switzerland will also continue its chairmanship of the Burundi Configuration in the UN's Peacebuilding Commission. Concrete goals are to continue discussions on socio-economic aspects, monitor the human rights situation and mobilise support for the East African Community's mediation process. In addition, Switzerland's commitment to dealing with the past

and the prevention of atrocities will continue, including as chair of the Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes initiative (GAAMAC).

Switzerland continues its efforts in the field of water, peace and security, including the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Global High-Level Panel for Water and Peace. With regard to counterterrorism and preventing violent extremism, Switzerland supports the newly created position of Under-Secretary-General and the Office of Counter-Terrorism, particularly in terms of tackling root causes, prevention, protection of human rights and strengthening the rule of law in this context. To this end, Switzerland will also play an active role at the sixth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in summer 2018.

Switzerland continues to be committed to improving protection for civilians via UN peace missions. At the UNGA's 72nd session it will also strongly advocate that the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse in UN field missions be implemented effectively throughout the entire system. In the negotiations on banning nuclear weapons, Switzerland supports the creation of an instrument which can advance disarmament and reinforce the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a cornerstone of the international security regime.<sup>1</sup> As a member of the ACT (Accountability, Coherence and Transparency) group Switzerland will continue to be involved in proposing reforms to the UN Security Council's working methods.

### **Human rights**

Since 1 January 2016, Switzerland is again member of the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the 2016–18 period. It will continue to promote efforts to strengthen the HRC and human rights throughout the UN system and advocate for adequate financial resources to this end. Switzerland's engagement is all the more important in view of the polarised debates taking place in the UN's human rights bodies, as well as in the long-term interest of promoting International Geneva as a global centre of expertise in human rights. In November 2017, Switzerland will undergo its third Universal Periodic Review by the HRC.

The aims and principles of Switzerland's efforts to promote human rights within the UN are laid out in the Human Rights Strategy of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs 2016–2019. In the coming session of the UNGA, key issues for Switzerland will be: abolition of the death penalty, prevention of torture and more humane conditions of detention, women's rights, children's rights, migrants' rights, protection of minorities, protection of human rights defenders, strengthening of civil society, fight against impunity as well as specific situations in individual countries.

### **Sustainable development**

The 72nd session of the UNGA will focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted at the UN summit in September 2015. The Secretary-General has entrusted the Deputy Secretary-General with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the reform of the UN development system. Switzerland supports these reform efforts under the new UN leadership. It will continue to bring to the table practical suggestions on implementing the 2030 Agenda efficiently and coherently, and on ensuring an effective division of labour within the UN.

To this end, Switzerland is paying close attention in particular to the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) recommendations of December 2016. Switzerland is also committed to ensuring that the synergies between the UNGA, its committees and ECOSOC are used more effectively and that overlaps are reduced. In the framework of the ECOSOC review Switzerland will focus on creating more consistency between the individual segments within the ECOSOC cycle. In addition, Switzerland continues its engagement for improving the water governance in the UN system.

Switzerland will present a comprehensive country report on its implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the UN's High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in summer

---

<sup>1</sup> On 7 July 2017, the nuclear weapons ban – after several weeks of negotiations initiated by the 71st session of the UNGA – was adopted by 122 votes to 1 (Netherlands) and one abstention (Singapore).

2018. The report will illustrate the current status of Switzerland's implementation of the agenda and its strategic priorities for the next four-year implementation period. In addition, Switzerland will continue its efforts to ensure that the 2030 Agenda is implemented efficiently and effectively through its representation in the offices of the UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS executive boards. Switzerland is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development coherently throughout the whole UN system.

## **Migration**

Migration will be a topic of particular importance at the 72nd UNGA. Following the adoption of a declaration at last year's summit meeting on refugees and migrants, the international community is aiming to substantiate the political decisions set out in the declaration by creating a global compact for migration. It is also set to tackle the challenges and opportunities linked to migration at the international level. The president of the UNGA has tasked Switzerland's permanent representative to the UN in New York, Ambassador Jürg Lauber, and his Mexican counterpart, Juan José Gómez Camacho, to coordinate the drafting of the international framework on migration. The objective is to reach an agreement on a solution-oriented and workable framework based on existing norms and obligations that will help make global migration more safe, orderly and regular in the future. Switzerland is also involved in developing the global compact for refugees and is working to ensure that optimal use is made of the expertise available in Geneva in these processes. In addition, Switzerland continues to advocate for a comprehensive approach to countering forced displacement, which also affects people who have been displaced internally because of a natural disaster or climate change.

## **Humanitarian efforts**

Switzerland is committed to strengthening and reforming humanitarian aid and the humanitarian ecosystem, which continue to be under great pressure owing to the numerous conflicts and crises throughout the world. The gap between humanitarian needs and the measures to meet them are growing further apart, and the humanitarian sector is coming up against its operational and financial limits. That is why Switzerland is calling on the UN to closely examine the options for working with new actors, ideas and methods in order to meet the world's humanitarian needs more effectively. It would like to see more efficient systems of aid and protection for people in need, and stronger coordination and cooperation among the humanitarian players. Switzerland also advocates improving coordination between humanitarian and development activities, and involving to a greater extent the governments and people of the countries concerned.

Thematic priorities for Switzerland are protection of civilians, including protection from sexual and gender-based violence, and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to people in need. In addition, Switzerland is continuing to work actively to ensure respect for and compliance with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles, such as the protection of medical missions or compliance with the obligations for armed non-state actors. Disaster risk reduction and strengthening prevention and resilience – which are also central principles for sustainable development – remain central to Switzerland's engagement. Switzerland is continuing its support for the traditional UN partners – on the executive board of the World Food Programme (WFP) and as chair of the OCHA Donor Support Group, the UNRWA Advisory Committee and the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) – where it also actively promotes practical reforms.

## **Management and budget**

Switzerland wants a UN that can implement its mandate as effectively and efficiently as possible. This requires strong leadership and organisational management as well as adequate financing. The targeted reforms in the peace and security pillar and in the development system will only be successful if they are accompanied by effective management reforms.

Switzerland is committed to establishing a modern management culture at all levels of the UN. This means that the UN Secretary-General should be authorised to tackle and implement reforms without having to involve member states in the details. In return, complete transparency and accountability towards member states must be guaranteed. Furthermore, Switzerland is advocating for the continuation and long-term implementation of the reform projects that are

already under way, such as in the area of human resources, institutional reforms or ICT and to further strengthen Geneva as a hub of the UN system.

The upcoming UNGA, which will deal with the UN's regular budget for the 2018–19 biennium, is set to take place against a backdrop of increasing demands on the organisation and, at the same time, increasing budgetary pressure. Switzerland is calling on member states to ensure that the UN has enough resources to fulfil its mandates effectively, and for the UN to use these resources as efficiently as possible.

### **International Geneva**

Promoting International Geneva as centre of global governance is a transversal aspect of Switzerland's UN policy as a whole. Switzerland is currently in the implementation phase of the Federal Council's dispatch on measures to strengthen the role of Switzerland as a host state which covers the 2016–19 period. A main objective is to further strengthen the unique concentration of international actors, organisations and expertise available in Geneva in order to help solving the increasingly complex global challenges, and to effectively integrate these competencies in the ongoing UN reform processes. In particular, Switzerland is strongly advocating for Geneva – with its diversity and range of actors – to serve as the hub for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and for its role as a venue for peace talks to be further expanded. Geneva will also host the Internet Governance Forum in December 2017.

Modernising the buildings of the international organisations in Geneva is another key aspect of the measures. In summer 2017, the renovation works of the Palais des Nations was started under the Strategic Heritage Plan, a project that had been adopted by the UNGA in 2015 and which will run for almost a decade (planning phase: 2014–16; renovation work: 2017–23) with a total budget of CHF 836.5 million. At the end of 2017, the UNGA will have to decide on the financing modalities of the project. Switzerland will work to ensuring that the necessary funds are approved by the UNGA in line with the scope and schedule approved by member states.

Other important international organisations, such as WHO, ILO, ICRC, ITU and International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement are planning building and renovation work amounting to over CHF 1.5 billion. Switzerland (the Confederation and the Canton and City of Geneva) is supporting these projects by providing loans amounting to almost CHF 700 million which have been approved by the Parliament. Discussions regarding salary adjustments for UN staff in Geneva are also closely followed by Switzerland.