



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft

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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

SWISS PEACE MEDIATION



Preface

Dear reader,

Switzerland has a longstanding tradition of peace mediation, which is deeply rooted in its political culture of dialogue and consensus building, as well as in the tradition of good offices and humanitarian aid enshrined in its constitution. These attributes uniquely position Switzerland to offer effective support in facilitating peaceful resolutions to conflicts worldwide.

With this brochure we aim to provide an overview of the Swiss approach to mediation, outlining its core principles and added value.

We live in challenging times. The number of violent conflicts worldwide is rising, and these conflicts last longer and have become more complex. Space for dialogue is shrinking and mediated settlements to conflict have become increasingly elusive.

While we must adapt to a world in perpetual motion, we remain convinced that negotiation and dialogue are essential ingredients to find pathways towards peace in today's complex world.

We hope that this brochure serves as both a useful reference and an invitation to all who share our commitment to resolving conflict through mediation and dialogue.



Tim Enderlin
Ambassador
Peace and Human Rights Division

Why does Switzerland engage in mediation?

- Mediation is part of Switzerland's political DNA. Due to its independent position, Switzerland has often played a pivotal role in international affairs. It was the birthplace of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in the 19th century, hosted the seat of the League of Nations after the First World War and continues to serve as the European headquarters of the United Nations to this day.
- Switzerland is a culturally, linguistically, and religiously diverse country. Dialogue, consensus building, and finding compromise between different positions are inherent characteristics of the Swiss political system. Its government, the Federal Council, applies the principles of collegiality and consensus in its decision-making process.



The chamber of the National Council in the Parliament Building in Bern
© Parlamentsdienste / Rob Lewis

- Even though Switzerland is not a country with geostrategic influence it is one of the twenty largest economies and heavily integrated into world markets. In light of these circumstances, we have an interest in a global order based on the respect for international law, peace and stability.
- Switzerland's mandate for peace mediation enjoys broad support from the Swiss population. Recent surveys suggest that three out of four Swiss citizens would like us to do even more.¹ Furthermore, it is a foreign policy priority, with funding provided through a credit line approved by parliament every four years.

In a nutshell, mediation is a significant contribution Switzerland can make towards a more peaceful world. We are dedicated to keeping up our efforts, both because it is in our best interest and because it is the right thing to do.

“Let me compare our good offices to a Swiss Army Knife: versatile, discreet, and surprisingly useful thanks to its many tools – while still fitting in a trouser pocket. Our good offices are meant to assist states that seek to resolve conflicts discreetly and competently. We intervene only when asked – and only when we can add value. Switzerland may not be a superpower, but it is, without a doubt, a trustworthy power.”

*Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis
(Hong-Kong, 30 May 2025)*

¹ 76% of the electorate supports increased conflict mediation by Switzerland (Tresch et al: 'Study "Security 2024"', p. 16).

Swiss approach to mediation

The good offices – a unique platform for peace

Mediation is one of the tools in the 'good offices' foreign policy toolkit. Good offices are designed to reduce international tensions and build bridges between conflicting parties. There are three main parts to the good offices:

1. Protecting power mandates: upon request, Switzerland can act as a messenger between adversary countries that no longer maintain diplomatic relationships. Switzerland currently holds eight such mandates: e.g. Switzerland has represented US interests in Iran since 1980 and the Russian Federation's interests in Georgia and vice versa since 2009.

2. Host state: Switzerland hosts international conferences and high-level meetings such as the Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (1972–1975), on the basis of which the OSCE was founded, and the 2021 Russia-U.S. Summit, where U.S. President Biden and Russian President Putin met in Geneva.

3. Mediation: Switzerland directly facilitates dialogue and negotiations between conflicting parties as an impartial third party (e.g. mediation in Mozambique until 2019).

Switzerland is ready to offer its good offices if our expertise provides added value, if they are requested by one or more conflicting parties, and if they serve the promotion of peace, security, or social or economic welfare, both domestically and internationally.



Swiss peace promotion: locally rooted, trusted across the globe

Switzerland has a dense network of embassies, cooperation offices, and consulates, with over 170 offices in more than 100 countries. This strong presence enables Switzerland to support its foreign policy priorities effectively, including its commitment to peacebuilding, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and diplomacy.

In approximately 20 countries, we place a particular emphasis on peace promotion. There, we deploy 'Human Security Advisers', peace specialists who ensure that Swiss efforts to foster dialogue and facilitate peace processes are grounded in local realities.

The Peace and Human Rights Division at the FDFA headquarters is home to a unit of seasoned mediation and dialogue practitioners. They design, support and lead processes as peace envoys as well as providing effective support to our diplomatic representations, offering tailored thematic expertise, process-design skills and state-of-the-art knowledge of current developments in peace mediation.

A trustworthy partner with a principled approach

Switzerland aligns with the United Nations in defining mediation as a process whereby a third party, with the consent of all parties involved, assists in preventing, managing, or resolving a conflict by helping to develop mutually acceptable agreements. The following principles shape the profile of Swiss mediation:

- We value confidentiality and discretion. We do not seek the spotlight. Some of our most important contributions to peace go unreported.
- We are open to engaging with all relevant parties to a conflict in the interest of conflict resolution and peace.
- We are persistent and recognise the need for patience and the willingness to take risks in resolving protracted conflicts through mediation.

- We are an 'honest broker' with no hidden agenda, committed to impartiality. We are committed to treating all conflicting parties fairly and avoid bias against or in favour of any of them.
- We are pragmatic and agile, recognising that conflicts are volatile and require constant adaptation on the part of the mediator.
- We are committed to international law, as well as legal frameworks at international, regional, and national levels.
- We are interculturally sensitive. We are aware that, as a third party, we bring our own world views to the table and understand that these are not necessarily universally shared.
- We are convinced that the meaningful participation of women and inclusion of civil society are prerequisites for lasting agreements.
- We believe that in-depth skills, competencies and adequate resources are necessary to be effective as mediators. We put a strong emphasis on training, and partnerships.

"We have a culture of dialogue, we don't want to impose ourselves, we prefer to discuss."

Mirko Manzoni
'Quite an adventure': How the Swiss brought peace to Mozambique. (2019)

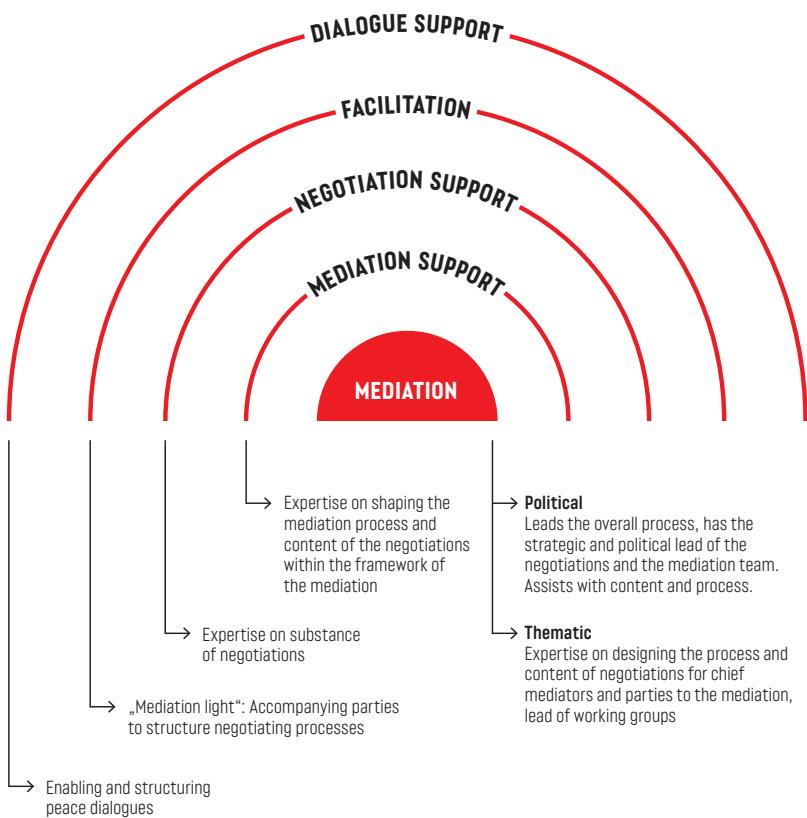
What can Switzerland offer?

A variety of roles with a common purpose

Mediation is not limited to formal plenary negotiations facilitated by a mediator. It also encompasses the preparation of negotiations, the fostering of confidence and trust between parties, shuttle diplomacy, and support for the implementation of peace agreements. Mediation may be used across

all stages of a peace process, as a tool for the prevention, mitigation or resolution of violent conflict.

The concrete needs and opportunities differ in every context and we are ready to meet them. Switzerland has developed a conceptual framework that outlines the different roles it can play to advance a peace process.



a. Mediation at the core: Switzerland leads the mediation process, offers thematic expertise, and works with the negotiating parties to develop substantive options for solutions.

b. Mediation support: Switzerland supports mediation processes led by other actors, such as the United Nations, the African Union, or other states through advice, expertise, financial support or hosting.

c. Negotiation support: Switzerland accompanies conflicting parties to better prepare them for negotiations and offers substantive advice.

d. Facilitation: Switzerland provides parties with the tools to structure negotiation processes.

e. Dialogue support: Switzerland facilitates and structures peace dialogues with the aim of enhancing mutual understanding between conflicting parties.

This list provides a summary of the typical roles Switzerland plays. In reality, Swiss involvement is highly flexible and can adapt to the specificities of the context, the needs of the parties, and the varying stages of the peace process.

Guided by understanding, grounded in expertise

Switzerland knows that mediation has both political and technical dimensions. A deep understanding of conflict contexts, causes, dynamics, cultures, and actors is essential. Technical expertise, which draws on best-practice knowledge, lessons learned,

techniques, tactics, and skills, is also crucial.

In terms of technical expertise, Switzerland offers support to conflicting parties in the following ways:

- Conflict analysis
- Strategic planning
- Process design
- Expertise on substantive issues such as
 - ceasefires
 - power-sharing and inclusion
 - transitional justice arrangements and guarantees of non-recurrence
 - humanitarian issues
 - engaging parties with different worldviews and radical actors
- Drafting of quality peace agreements
- Assistance with the implementation of agreements

This is not an exhaustive list, but it illustrates the various areas of expertise and experience which Switzerland has accumulated over the years. We always contextualise our inputs to develop tailor-made solutions that respond to the needs of the parties and the specificities of the situation whenever Switzerland engages.

“Small states have unique comparative advantages in the field of mediation, as they are generally more nimble than larger mediation entities such as the UN, regional organisations or powerful states.”

David Lanz and Simon Mason

“Switzerland’s experiences in peace mediation.” (2012)

Adapting to a changing mediation landscape

Conflicts are becoming more complex, and mediation is an increasingly dynamic field with many state and non-state actors involved. Switzerland remains at the forefront, continuously adapting and providing cutting-edge expertise and world-class training for conflicting parties, diplomats, and peace professionals.

Switzerland is one of the largest providers of mediation training, offering practice-oriented skills development and courses on process design, ceasefires, religion and mediation, and dealing with the past, among other topics. In collaboration with Germany and Finland, we co-founded the Master of Advanced Studies of Mediation in Peace Processes at ETH Zurich, a practice-oriented programme that builds essential skills for mediators worldwide.

Strategic partnerships and flexible support

Beyond direct mediation, Switzerland provides flexible funding to international organisations, governments, and civil society actors. These funds enable rapid responses to evolving conflicts, support long-term peace infrastructure, and foster innovative approaches. Sometimes, we provide seed money for new initiatives; in other cases, we commit to sustained support for trusted partners.

We recognise that strong partnerships amplify impact. International and regional organisations as well as NGOs can provide legitimacy, critical access or local knowledge and expertise. Switzerland actively engages in coordination mechanisms to enhance collaboration and prevent harmful competition in mediation efforts.

“Swiss PMC is one of the longest-running and most comprehensive trainings available to mid-senior experts and practitioners to develop their negotiation, mediation and process design skills. It was the best learning journey I have ever taken in my professional life”.

Özkan Duman

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2025)

A fertile ecosystem for peace mediation

Switzerland, particularly International Geneva, is a global hub for peace mediation, home to numerous international organisations, NGOs, and research institutions. This ecosystem fosters collaboration, innovation, and knowledge-sharing among diplomats, practitioners, and policymakers. By drawing on decades of expertise and cutting-edge research, we increase the quality of our mediation efforts and ensure that different perspectives are taken into account.

Geneva's dense diplomatic network makes it a premier location for peace efforts. Its world-class infrastructure, and efficient visa procedures are easily accessible and provide valuable services not only for Swiss mediation, but the mediation community at large.



*Broken Chair, Memorial to the Victims of Landmines, Place des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.
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