

Human Rights Day 2017

In exactly one year from today, on 10 December 2018, Switzerland together with the international community will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which 70 years after its adoption, remains of unequivocal relevance. Human rights are a necessity for our societies, an invaluable ingredient to boost peace and stability and to foster sustainable development. Human rights are at the heart of the values represented by Switzerland and its political model, which is founded on the principles of democracy, non-discrimination, gender equality, peaceful coexistence, and mutual respect among people having different religious, linguistic, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Continued human rights violations and abuses all over the world

Every day, the world is witness to numerous, and sometimes horrendous human rights violations. Torture and ill treatment are still regularly used worldwide. Women continue to face discrimination and violence, although being granted equal rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A shrinking space for civil society is accompanied by increased harassment and persecution of human rights defenders in violation of their fundamental freedoms while 2018 will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. Recognizing the key role human rights defenders play in protecting and promoting human rights, Switzerland will continue to engage for their better protection and the strengthening of the civil society space.

Human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent

Human rights are a necessity for our societies, an invaluable ingredient to boost peace and stability and to foster sustainable development. More than 70 States have signed the so-called "Appeal of June 13th", initiated under the leadership of Switzerland, to put human rights at the heart of conflict prevention. The Appeal highlights the interlinkages between human rights and peace and security, explores the crucial contribution of human rights to strengthen conflict prevention, and advocates for maximizing the international community's engagement in this regard. In line with the Appeal and to strengthen the UN system's ability to prevent and respond to serious human rights violations and complex crises, Switzerland also supports the implementation of the Human Rights Upfront Action Plan by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development provides a new reference framework for Switzerland's international cooperation. Human rights are an essential component of the Agenda and its implementation, especially with regard to the promotion of peaceful, just and inclusive societies (SDG16).

Switzerland's commitment for human rights

Switzerland works to strengthen cooperation with other States in the conduct of its bilateral human rights and development cooperation. Beyond the cooperation with other governments, it is in Switzerland's interest to cooperate with all actors capable of contributing to the greater respect and adequate promotion of human rights.

Geneva plays a major role in the development of international human rights and humanitarian norms and standards. It offers multiple platforms for exchange between key actors in international human rights governance. The presence of OHCHR headquarter, the Human Rights Council and the dynamism of the local academic community as well as the more than hundred human rights NGOs based or represented in Geneva confirm Geneva's position as a leading center of human rights policy debate.

As host State of the headquarters of some of the largest multinational corporations and sports federations in the world Switzerland recognizes its particular duty to encourage the private sector to respect and protect human rights and to remedy for their abuses. Switzerland calls upon all entities domiciled on its territory to respect human rights including in their operations abroad, in particular in fragile or conflict affected contexts. To this effect, Switzerland encourages and facilitates dialogue between the private sector, civil society, academic institutions and governments, seeking ways to implement sustainable solutions for strengthening the contribution of business to the respect of international human rights and

humanitarian law, to peace and to stability, while maintaining a framework that is favourable to investment and sustainable development.