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FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGY

2024-27

On 11 May 2011, the Federal Council commissioned the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) to compile a strategy paper for each legislative period, setting out the future priorities of Swiss foreign policy and strategic prospective considerations. The Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27 is the fourth of these strategies. It is the overarching foreign policy document for both the geographical and the thematic follow-up strategies that the Federal Council will adopt in line with its plans for the legislative period 2023–27.

Foreword

How will future generations look back at the early 2020s?

I presume that they will also see this period as a historical turning point, just as many people do today. We are indeed experiencing epoch-defining changes: new centres of power are emerging. The Western claim to the universality of values is increasingly being called into question, and geopolitics is pushing back the application of rules at a global level. New forms of artificial intelligence will shape society similarly to the ways that the internet and smartphones have. The climate crisis is triggering profound changes.

And let us not forget the pandemic. We do not know whether COVID-19 and the war against Ukraine are harbingers of the future that awaits us. It remains unclear where the current upheavals will lead us.

Strategies play a key role in mitigating uncertainty. They enable foreign policy thinking and action against the backdrop of an unknown future. They provide a categorisation and a common framework: a **compass** for Switzerland in a volatile world.

How is Switzerland positioning itself in this world? What matters to us? How do we intend to achieve it?

These questions are being debated broadly and intensely throughout our country. We do not see eye to eye on everything. But Switzerland would not be Switzerland if it was unable to create a viable basis for the future with its culture of dialogue, listening and readiness to compromise. I have noticed in countless conversations that our civic nation is more vibrant than ever, thanks also to its firmly anchored democracy and its robust economy. Switzerland's **domestic strengths** underpin its foreign policy and make it future-proof.

The present strategy was drawn up in this spirit. It sets out our foreign policy **priorities and objectives** for the next four years. At the same time, it defines what Switzerland stands for in the world and what added value its foreign policy offers. All departments contributed to this process. The foreign affairs committees, the cantons, think-tanks and other stakeholders also took part in the discussions at various points.



The result is based on a sober stocktaking of the current situation. If we want to safeguard the interests of our country, we need to see the world as it is and not as we would like it to be. This strategy points out that simply maintaining the status quo would not be an adequate foreign policy response to this historical turning point. It also stresses, however, that Switzerland does not need to make radical changes, despite the altered outlook. Its best option is to **remain true to itself**.

Here again, it will be up to future generations to decide whether Switzerland charted a sound course during this pivotal epoch of global politics. The Federal Council's duty is to devise the best response, from today's perspective, to these uncertain times. This strategy plays a role in that. I would therefore like to thank everyone who was involved in this work. And I would like to encourage our citizens to continue to discuss these issues. Because I believe that if Switzerland maintains an open, **constructive dialogue** with itself, it will be able to find the right responses to the major challenges it faces and seize the opportunities they present.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cassis', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ignazio Cassis
Federal Councillor
Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Summary

Switzerland faces growing challenges in its regional environment. The violent conflicts in Ukraine, the Middle East, the South Caucasus and the Sahel, as well as the tensions in the Western Balkans have also consolidated existing global trends: Strategic competition between the major powers has become more accentuated, and the influence of autocratic states is growing. The international framework is shaped by the struggle concerning the nature of the international order as well as global political and economic fragmentation. On top of this, we are seeing far-reaching ecological and technological transformations and a large number of crises, some of which are overlapping.

The **Foreign Policy Strategy (FPS) 2024–27** describes how Switzerland aims to safeguard its security, prosperity and independence against this challenging backdrop.

In line with Switzerland's foreign policy identity, this strategy reaffirms Switzerland's shared responsibility in Europe as well as its role as an advocate of global understanding:

- A stable and prosperous **Europe** will be even more important than in the previous strategy and is the first priority. It will be indispensable to clarify the open questions in the relations with the EU. Switzerland will step up its contributions to European security and attach strategic importance to the reconstruction of Ukraine.
- Aside from the strengthened European dimension, foreign policy will retain its global focus. The transition to a world that is less shaped by the West underlines the importance of constructive relations with **every region of the world**. The G20 states are important in this regard.
- Effective, focused **multilateralism** and a strong Swiss presence in the relevant forums are vital for safeguarding Switzerland's interests. Switzerland aims to play a part in reforming the multilateral system and boosting its efficiency and to position International Geneva in a forward-looking manner.
- **Peace and security** remain a priority. As well as enhancing security cooperation with the EU and NATO, the primary focus is on adapting good offices and peace promotion to the changed international framework conditions, including in the multilateral arena and by using new instruments, such as science diplomacy.
- Preserving Switzerland's **prosperity** is becoming more challenging. In today's more contested world, there is a greater need to bolster **competitiveness**. Key issues include constant optimisation of the framework conditions, resilience and diversification. Switzerland's contributions to sustainable development and the global fight against poverty are also part of this priority.
- The **environment** is a new priority for foreign policy. Mitigating climate change and adapting to its effects are becoming urgent tasks. Further key issues are biodiversity, pollution and sustainable energy provision.
- This strategy also places a new emphasis on **democracy**. Switzerland is thus adding to its established profile in promoting peace, international law and human rights, as well as advocating good **governance**, including in the digital space (digital foreign policy).

A series of measures will be introduced to make foreign policy more coherent. Moreover, a broad network and instruments geared to current requirements are essential to safeguard interests effectively. One such instrument is neutrality. Neutrality does not mean indifference. It leaves room for the sort of cooperative foreign and security policy that is outlined here and also for extensive solidarity with partners as far as the law of neutrality permits. The Federal Council situates neutrality in the world's current political landscape within the framework of this strategy and categorises the issues arising in this regard. During this legislative period, it will take further decisions on the future approach to neutrality.

This strategy provides the central guidelines for Switzerland's foreign policy in this legislative period. The Federal Council will define objectives and measures for key geographical and thematic areas as part of follow-up strategies. In its annual foreign policy reports, it gives an account of the extent to which it has achieved its objectives.

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1 Introduction

There are times when international relations seem to be static and the global picture changes very slowly. And there are times of upheaval with lots of rapidly mushrooming events. Today, we are living in one of these **very eventful phases**.

The world has been marked by **crises** for a number of years now. Not one but two globally incisive events – the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine – occurred within a short time span. Their impact goes far beyond the realms of health and security respectively. The challenges include energy supply, mounting public debt and food crises. Numerous armed conflicts, breaches of international humanitarian law, increasing humanitarian distress and a record number of displaced people are contributing to a difficult environment. Additional issues include climate change, whose effects are becoming noticeable to everyone, and concerns that technological innovations, for example in the area of artificial intelligence, will entail growing security risks in view of the current geopolitical fault lines.

Assumed certainties, such as lasting peace in Europe, have turned out to be false. Conversely, some things have materialised that had not been expected: Switzerland had to learn to cope with drastic health policy measures, which even included lockdowns. It is having to prepare for potential power shortages. Plans in case of a nuclear incident in connection with the war against Ukraine are also needed. Such developments are demonstrating how fragile interconnected societies are.

The accelerated pace of change is fuelling **greater uncertainty**. The world is becoming less global, less influenced by the West and less democratic. It is increasingly fragmented and dangerous. And it is volatile. These are challenging conditions for a country like Switzerland, which is committed to freedom and the rule of law, relies on open markets, and has an independent foreign policy.

Switzerland has a **good basis** to help shape today’s changes in line with its foreign policy interests. According to the [2022 rankings produced by the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#), Switzerland is the world’s most highly developed country. It is still one of the world’s largest 20 economies, with a high GDP per capita. Its public debt has risen since the pandemic but remains relatively modest. Unemployment is low. The Swiss economy is one of the most competitive and innovative worldwide, partly because Switzerland is an excellent centre for research and education. This excellence needs to be safeguarded. Citizens’ trust in politics and state institutions remains high by international comparison. Its foreign policy stands for a culture of dialogue and compromise, which is crucial in tackling today’s challenges. Switzerland has also stressed that it is committed to

shared responsibility for peace and security and that it is a credible advocate of international law by assuming a seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Nevertheless, it is by no means a given that Switzerland will be able to continue its success story. **Safeguarding its interests is becoming more difficult**. Polarisation in politics worldwide is placing it under greater pressure to take sides. Since the start of Russia’s war against Ukraine, Western countries have expected Switzerland to support their positions and join them in standing up for shared Western values. Conversely, some other countries have been formulating contrary expectations. **Conflicts of objectives** in foreign policy are becoming more frequent.

Some of Switzerland’s partners now hardly perceive its **neutrality** as a contribution to stability on the continent. The Federal Council’s decisions not to allow the re-export of war materiel to Ukraine, which it took based on the War Materiel Act, led to criticism. Yet Switzerland has also unequivocally condemned Russia’s war of aggression and adopted the EU’s sanctions, and it shows solidarity with Ukraine and its people. It has a great deal of international soft power in every region of the world, partly thanks to its foreign policy profile. Neutral states that act to counter polarisation will remain in demand.

What does the changing international environment mean for Swiss foreign policy? In a fragmenting and increasingly harsh world, **the European frame of reference for Swiss foreign policy** and close coordination with partners are becoming more important. Even more than before, Swiss interests begin in and with Europe. As a European country that is not an EU member state, Switzerland will nonetheless continue to pursue a **foreign policy with a global scope**. Closer cooperation in foreign and security policy to promote security and prosperity in Europe and thus also in Switzerland goes hand in hand with Switzerland’s role as an advocate for global understanding and its globally oriented foreign economic policy.

The Federal Council aims to maintain Swiss foreign policy within this framework. It favours a **focused** foreign policy in view of Switzerland’s limited resources and impact-orientated approach. Moreover, foreign policy needs to be **coherent** so that the country can effectively safeguard its interests. The strategic framework for foreign policy must also leave room for **flexibility**, given the current uncertainties. It is becoming more important to continually **anticipate** future developments and plan policies based on various options. A certain degree of modesty is also called for, given the many uncertain factors. Finally, it has become clear that Switzerland

needs to **communicate** its policies and its stances **even more clearly**. It has a lot to offer the world, such as its good offices,¹ International Geneva and humanitarian aid, as well as being an innovative player at the interface between diplomacy and science.

In this Foreign Policy Strategy, the Federal Council defines its **priorities and objectives for the years 2024–27**. It is thus continuing the method that it first applied in its FPS 2020–2023 of setting objectives for four years. In the interest of increased prioritisation, it now defines significantly fewer objectives. As in the past, the annual Foreign Policy Report will give an account of the extent to which the strategy has been implemented and objectives have been achieved.² This strategy also represents the Federal Council's response to postulate [22.3276](#) from National Councillor Stefan Müller-Altermatt. The postulate requested the Federal Council to draw up a report indicating the means and measures it intends to use to promote peace and prosperity in Eurasia in the coming years.

[Section 2](#) describes how Switzerland's international environment is changing. Building on this description, [section 3](#) outlines the bases for foreign policy and places them in their current context. It derives the priorities for future foreign policy accordingly. It also examines the question of Switzerland's foreign policy profile. [Sections 4 and 5](#) set out the geographical and thematic priorities as well as the corresponding objectives. Europe moves to the top of these priorities as a result of the global political situation. [Section 6](#) describes Switzerland's foreign policy instruments and places neutrality in the current geopolitical context. Finally, [section 7](#) presents the partners with which Switzerland implements its foreign policy. It can only achieve its objectives by means of collaboration and networking. As well as working with other states and international organisations, it is increasingly cooperating with non-state actors, such as companies, NGOs and scientific bodies.

1 Examples include its protecting power mandate for the United States in Iran and the Swiss-based [Fund for the Afghan People](#).

2 The Foreign Policy Report 2023 contains a review of the FPS 2020–23.

2 Context

The past three decades were marked by globalisation. This was accompanied by a broader distribution of prosperity and a worldwide reduction in extreme poverty. As a result, the global economic balance shifted: the G7 countries' share of global GDP dropped from 68% to 44% between 1992 and 2022. The share accounted for by the other G20 countries nearly tripled and is now 36%. East Asia has risen to become a top-ranking world economic centre.

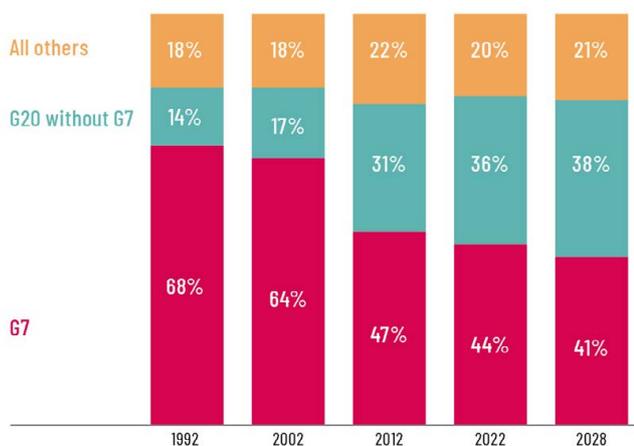


Figure 1: Share of global GDP, USD (at 2020 prices) (source: [World Economic Outlook, IMF, 2023](#)).

Geopolitics and systemic competition

Alongside the **global shifts in power**, the global political framework is also changing. Differences in values and interests have widened. States with authoritarian government systems have gained influence, while democracy is coming under pressure worldwide. However, the divide between democracies and autocracies on its own is insufficient to explain the current situation. Instead, it is striking that some democratic emerging and developing countries in the Global South too are increasingly calling into question the West's leadership role and its self-perception as role model.

We are currently **transitioning to a world that is less shaped by the West**. The most important element to date is the rise of **China**. The Communist Party of China is propagating a model of statehood and development that is based on prosperity without political pluralism as an alternative to the Western model. Authoritarianism and social surveillance have increased in recent years. With its steadily growing economic, technological, political and military weight, China

is setting out to change the world. Its share of global GDP has risen from 3% to 19% since 1992. Chinese companies are among the largest investors in developing countries today, and they play a key role in global value chains. The People's Republic has become the largest source of credit for many countries, resulting in corresponding dependencies. Through its endeavours to create a Sinocentric world, its self-assured foreign and security policy, and its narrative geared to national security, China is currently positioning itself in a way that the United States perceives as a systemic challenge to its claim to global leadership.

Strategic **competition between the major powers** and related wrangling over the nature of the international order are shaping global politics. Power politics and geopolitics have moved back into the foreground. The existing order, which is strongly shaped by Western ideas and has brought prosperity and security to Switzerland, is under great pressure. Informal discussion formats such as the enlarged BRICS are becoming more attractive and may contribute to further fragmentation in international governance. Here, the enlargement of the BRICS format illustrates the courting of the Global South in geopolitical competition. At the same time, the rulers in China and Russia, and also in numerous other states, are re-interpreting universal norms, such as human rights, to suit their own purposes. This is finding fertile ground in particular in conservative societies that call into question the Western value model.

Russia's break with the West

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has heightened geopolitical polarisation. Over the past decade, the Russian government increasingly turned its back on the West, breaking with it profoundly on 24 February 2022. Its actions are not just about subjugating Ukraine. Even before February 2022, President Putin issued an ultimatum calling for a new European security order with a recognised Russian zone of influence. With its revisionist agenda, its war of aggression in violation of international law and its nuclear threats, the UN veto power is threatening democracy, freedom and security in Europe. Russia is violating fundamental principles of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. Moreover, it has systematically ramped up domestic repression within its own borders.

The outcome of the war will shape the international order for years to come. The war is already having far-reaching consequences. It is marking out a new geostrategic situation in Europe and accelerating trends worldwide.

Europe's new situation

Switzerland's regional environment has deteriorated since the last FPS. Although European security has been considered to be in a crisis for years, Russia's war of aggression has created a rupture. The pan-European cooperative security order, built up over decades with the inclusion of Russia and with Switzerland's active participation, has eroded. The West's response to the demarcation imposed by Moscow unsurprisingly prioritises security from Russia rather than with Russia. There is a sharp rise in military expenditure and comprehensive Western support for Ukraine that has been promised for the long term.

A lot has been set in motion in Europe: **NATO** has been fortified again as the anchor of European security and has expanded to the north; the **United States** remains Europe's most important guarantor of security, and the **United Kingdom** has been playing a key role too. The **EU** has sharpened its security policy profile, and has so far coped remarkably well with this geopolitical stress test. It has also rapidly reduced its dependence on Russia for energy. The **OSCE** faces an uncertain future, but it remains an indispensable pillar of multilateral dialogue thanks to its comprehensive concept of security. After Russia's withdrawal, the remaining 46 members of the **Council of Europe** held a summit meeting for the first time in nearly 20 years to reinforce their commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Additionally, the **European Political Community**, a new platform for top-level dialogue, has been created with nearly 50 European countries participating. It is as yet unclear to what extent the European continent will continue to grow together in distinction to Russia. New dynamics are

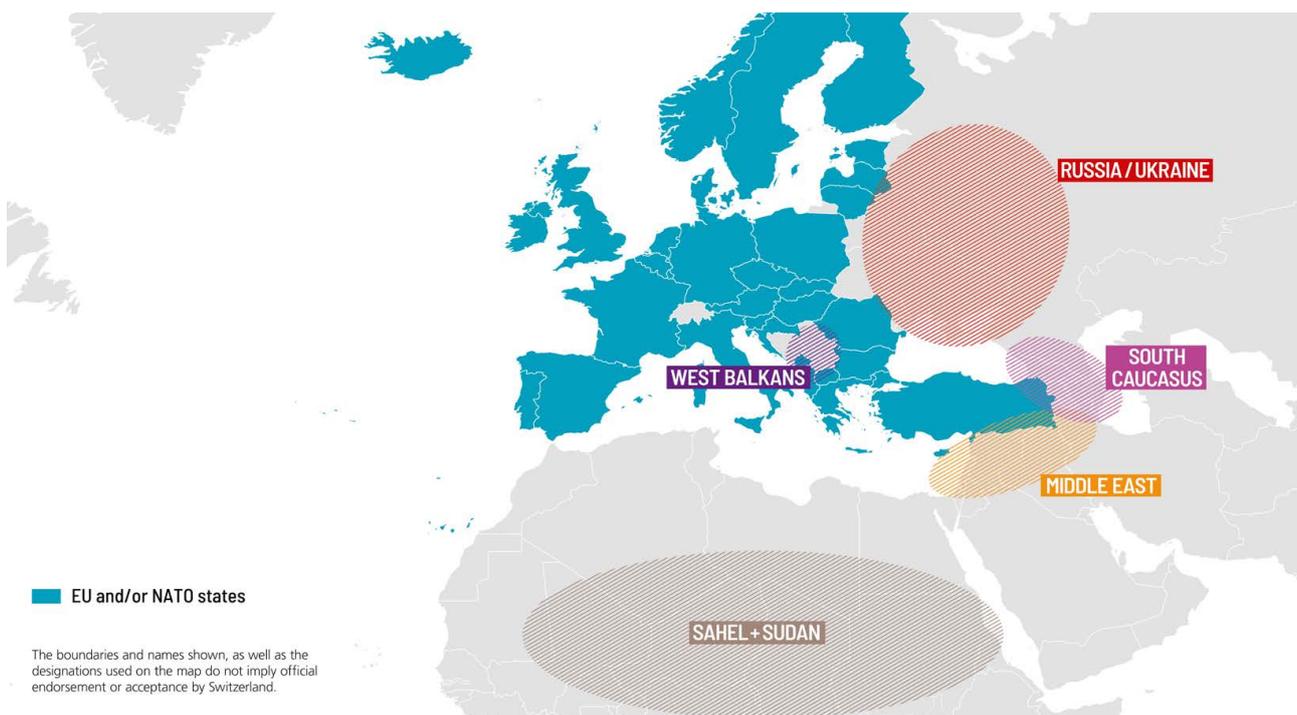
in evidence, but it is also possible that rifts will deepen in the European and Western camp on how to engage with Russia, especially as Moscow has switched to a wartime economy and seems to be gearing up for a long military conflict.

Arc of crises

The **reconstruction of Ukraine** is of strategic importance for the continent's stability. Yet the deterioration of Switzerland's regional environment is not only due to Russia's war of aggression. Recently, there has been a whole series of new escalations of violence on Europe's periphery and in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods. The picture that emerges is one of an arc of crises stretching from Eurasia to the Middle East, the Sahel and Sudan. Conflicts, some of which have been going on for years, are intensifying again, with the parties turning to violence instead of dialogue. While all of these escalations of violence have specific local causes, they are similar in that they are all unfolding within a global political context characterised by polarisation and fragmentation without a broadly accepted power that exercises leadership. The civilian population often suffers the most, and the need for humanitarian aid is enormous.

The **Western Balkans** remain unstable. Tensions between Serbia and Kosovo have intensified and are jeopardising the process of normalisation. Tensions within Bosnia and Herzegovina also persist. A lack of prospects in the region is causing young people in particular to emigrate. In the **South Caucasus**, Azerbaijan militarily forced an end to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. This caused a large-scale refugee movement and came after decades of diplomatic mediation

Figure 2: Trouble spots and unresolved conflicts in the regions surrounding Europe (source: FDFA).



by the OSCE, Russia and, most recently, the EU and the US. On the positive side, Armenia and Azerbaijan have so far remained in dialogue. Yet the road to lasting peace in the region is long.

In the **Middle East**, Hamas's terrorist attacks on 7 October 2023 marked a breaking point. The massacres and taking of hostages abruptly stripped Israel's society of its sense of security and are deeply branded on the country's collective memory. The high death toll and enormous humanitarian needs caused by Israel's military response have traumatised Palestinian society and provoked outrage not only in Arab countries but elsewhere in the world. Within the context of this war, countries in the MENA region and much of the Global South are taking more and more distance from Western states. The latter are facing mounting accusations of having double standards.

A look at the situation in the **Sahel** and Sudan completes the map of the arc of crises wrapped around Europe. During the last legislative period, there were eight unconstitutional changes of government in six countries. The civil war that broke out in Sudan in 2023 has triggered large-scale forced displacement. Another example of failed stabilisation efforts is the forced end of the UN stabilisation mission in Mali and the withdrawal of French and other European troops. Here too, the West's influence wanes as that of Russia and China grows, with the Sahel facing dangerous Islamist groups and seeing state structures edging closer to the brink of collapse.

Beyond this arc of crises, the outlook is bleak in many countries in Europe's extended neighbourhood. This situation is due to a lack of economic opportunities, numerous conflicts, increasing autocratisation and the consequences of climate change. These conditions could impact Europe more heavily in the coming years in the form of increasingly exacerbated migratory pressures. In addition, societal tensions in Europe have intensified due to the war in the Middle East. Therefore, the shaping of Europe's security must also take into account

the challenges posed by the arc of crises. And at the same time, in many cases these challenges cannot be overcome mainly by military means.

Acceleration of global trends

The two key challengers of the existing international order – Russia and China – have moved closer to each other. They are both positioning themselves as alternatives to the West, with Moscow depending increasingly on Beijing. Meanwhile, Europe and the United States presented a more unified front in recent years than they have done for a long time. Nonetheless, the future orientation of US foreign policy is unclear, and Europe remains dependent on the United States to a certain extent with respect to security, technology, energy and capital. Russia's war against Ukraine has made evident that the **reach of Western influence is diminishing**. In many places, the war is not perceived from the point of view of international law, but rather as a European problem. Russia is less isolated globally than in Europe.

The security arenas of **Europe and East Asia** are becoming more intertwined in geostrategic terms. The tensions in East Asia also centre on zones of influence and systemic competition. The China-US opposition intensified even before the war against Ukraine. China is closely monitoring developments in Ukraine, with Taiwan in mind. Conversely, the United States is supporting Ukraine while keeping one eye on the tension in East Asia. The political profile of the G7 has risen. Cooperation between the Atlantic democracies and some Pacific democracies, such as Australia, Japan and South Korea, is deepening. The situation regarding **Taiwan** and unresolved territorial issues in the South and East China Seas has high potential for escalation. A confrontation in the Asia-Pacific region would play out against the backdrop of highly interconnected national economies and complex international supply chains and could have ramifications far beyond those of the war against Ukraine.

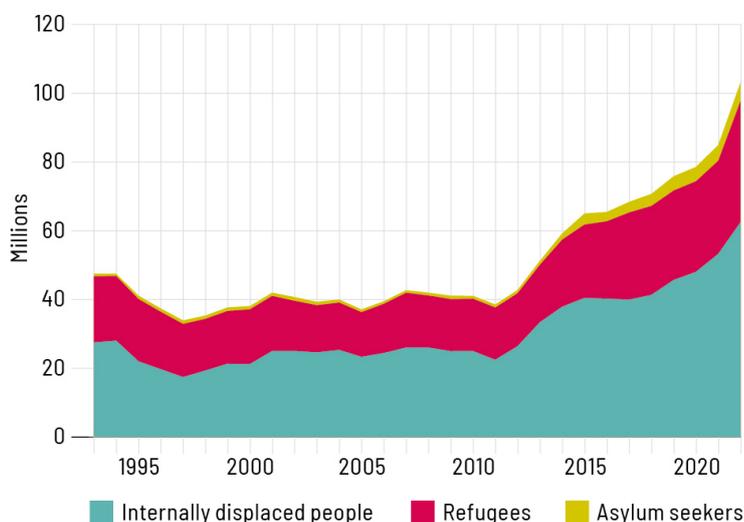


Figure 3: Number of internally displaced persons, refugees (incl. Palestinian refugees), and asylum-seekers 1993–2022 (source and explanations: [UNHCR](#)).

Room for manoeuvre between the centres of power

Bloc-building trends can be discerned today. Yet to speak of a world split in two between China and the United States would be to belie the facts of the current situation. Indeed, it is striking that numerous states do not wish to be aligned with one specific centre of power and are trying instead to optimise their room for manoeuvre between the major powers by pursuing variable foreign policies. Prominent examples of such '**middle-ground powers**' include Brazil, India, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Türkiye. The fluid international constellation of power is underpinned by the fact that **technology companies** are becoming an increasingly important factor in international relations. They already control key aspects of national security, the economy and social interaction.

The **regionalisation of conflict and problem resolution** currently in evidence also fits the picture of fragmented global politics. Regional cooperation dynamics are strengthening, for example in South East Asia, Africa and in some cases the Middle East. China's new positioning as a mediating and stabilising power is also influencing regional power relations and cooperation arrangements.

Multiple crises

The war against Ukraine has heightened the impression that the world is facing an unusual **accumulation of crises**. The pandemic was a once-in-a-century event with far-reaching effects on all the countries of the world. According to the UN, within the space of two years, COVID-19 cancelled out the development progress that had been made in the previous five years. The war against Ukraine has not only compounded the security situation but also triggered additional crises, such as growing food insecurity and energy supply issues. Moreover, the triple crisis of climate change, loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution is intensifying.

Due to crisis management programmes, many states' **debts** have soared. Inflation is also creating high macroeconomic costs. Income inequality is increasing. In some industrialised countries, confidence in institutions is diminishing. The concurrent nature of various crises and the rapid global changes are putting a strain on politics, the economy and society. Yet the resolution of the COVID-19 crisis also demonstrates the resilience of liberal democracies, such as Switzerland.

Politicisation of the economy

Like global politics, the global economy is also being marked by fragmentation and regionalisation. Confidence in the global division of labour has been shaken. The **resilience** of supply chains has become more important than pure efficiency considerations. Securing domestic research and production capacity for new technologies, microchips and semiconductors goes hand in hand with efforts to decrease dependencies. Concepts such as '**de-risking**', 'reshoring', 'nearshoring' and 'friendshoring', 'diversification', and 'economic deterrence' are shaping the current debate.

The economic, trade and finance policies of many states are increasingly geared towards security policy and shaped by sanctions regimes. The **global markets are becoming increasingly politicised**. Protectionism and industrial politics are on the rise again, even among Switzerland's most important trading partners. The battle for taxable income is intensifying in the context of power politics and cross-border digital economic activities.

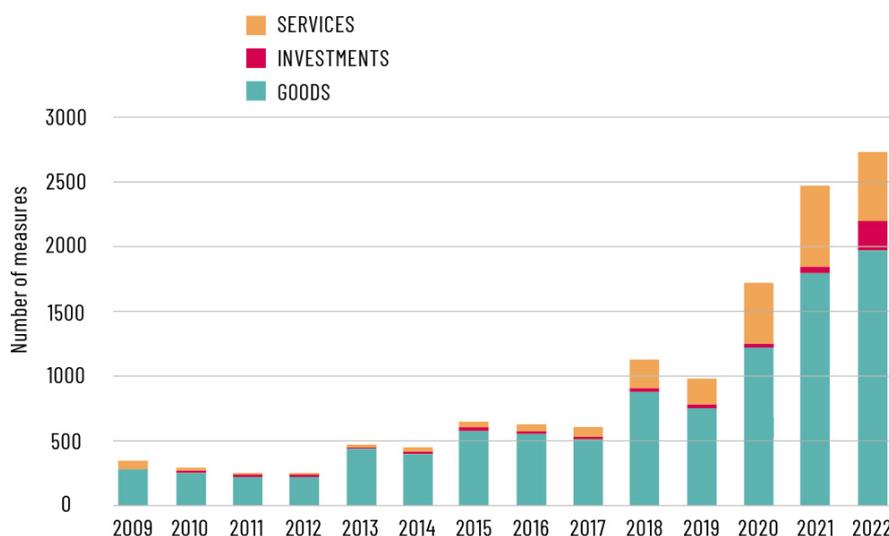
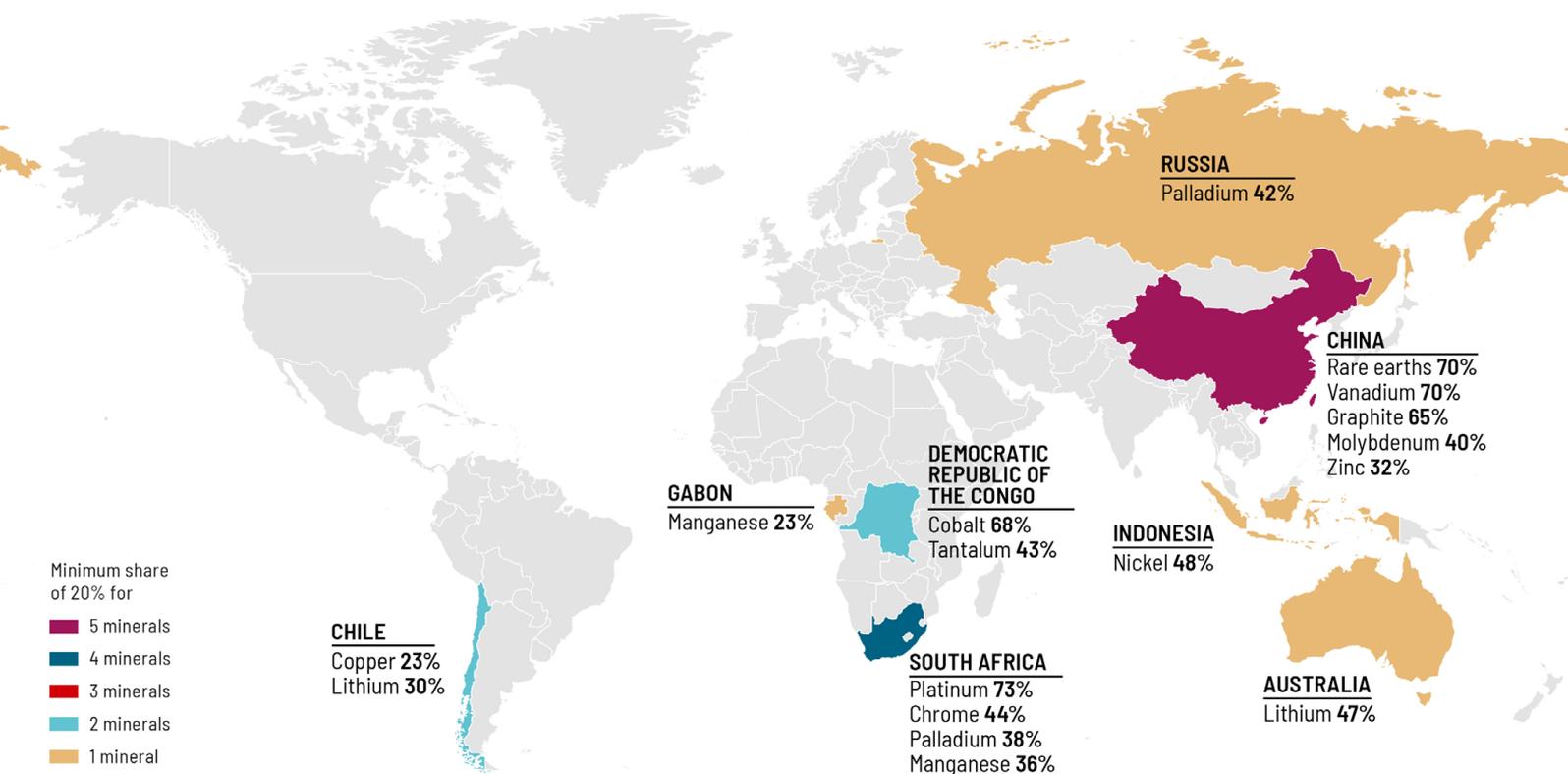


Figure 4: Unilateral trade restrictions (number of measures) (source: [World Economic Outlook, IMF, 2023](#)).



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Switzerland.

Figure 5: Geographical concentration of the global extraction of minerals that are important for the energy transition (source: U.S. Geological Survey).

Ecological and technological transformations

Alongside these geopolitical changes, the world is seeing fundamental ecological and technological transformations. Such changes – and approaches to dealing with them – are in turn influenced by the global political polarisation. For example, **climate change** is recognised as one of the greatest global risks today. The need for economic growth to be lower on emissions is broadly accepted. Yet only a few countries produce the **critical minerals** for green and digital technologies. The production of critical minerals is much more concentrated than that of crude oil and natural gas. Supply chains are not very diversified, which carries the risk of new dependencies on authoritarian states.

In general, it can be said that **new technologies** open up huge opportunities. But while they played a key role in overcoming the pandemic and they offer considerable potential with respect to sustainability goals, they have also become a key dimension in the competition between the major powers. Whoever goes into the lead here gains power. Technological developments can also bear dangers unrelated to power politics: new forms of **artificial intelligence (AI)** are among the most powerful innovations of recent decades and are likely to have a similar influence on humankind as the internet once did. Foreseeable breakthroughs in **quantum computing** could speed up the digital revolution even further. There are, however, justified fears that these developments could pose substantial risks to a free society and even to the very existence of humankind. To preserve security, prosperity and

sustainability, it is essential to harness such forward-looking technologies for the common good and to ensure that they are under human control.

Demography

Finally, **demography** is a key driver of global economic and political trends. Today, the G7 countries only account for 10% of the world's population. Over a third of humanity now lives in China or India. However, like Europe, China is affected by demographic aging, which is leading to a labour shortage and challenges for its social security systems. India is set to have 300 million inhabitants more than China by 2050, according to UN forecasts. Sub-Saharan Africa will account for around half of global population growth by then. The UN predicts that 8 out of 10 people will be living in Africa or Asia by 2100.

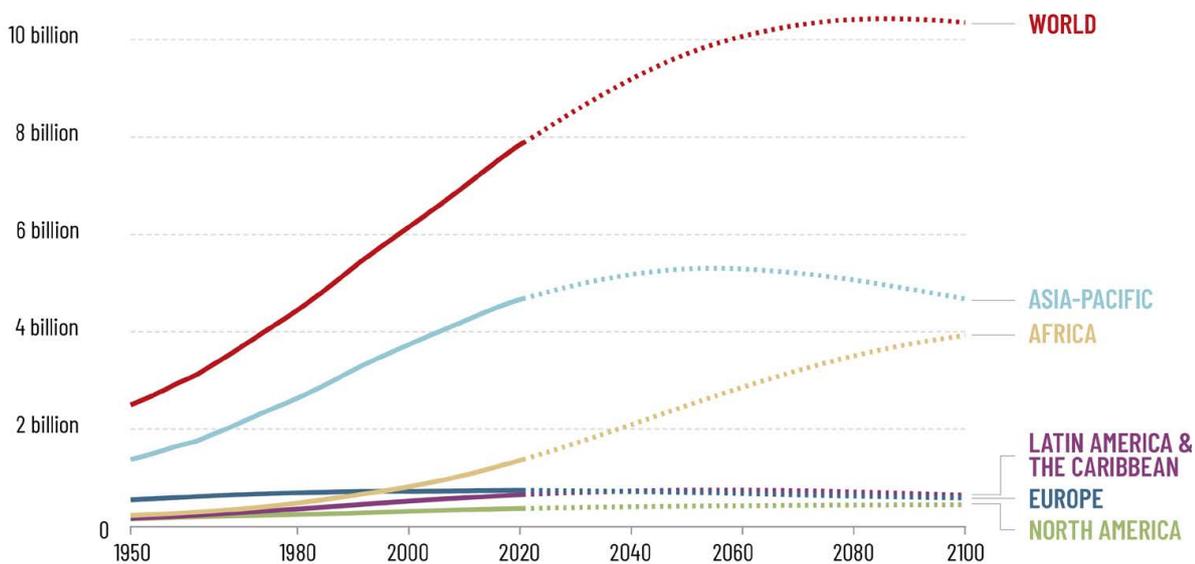


Figure 6: Predicted demographic trend by region
 (source: [UN World Population Prospects 2022](#)).

Indispensable multilateralism

After making some initial progress, the implementation of **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, which Switzerland played a substantial part in shaping, has suffered from setbacks since 2020. Negative trends can be seen in numerous areas, such as in the renewed increase in extreme poverty or the deterioration of women’s rights. Nonetheless, international acceptance of the Agenda has increased at the same time.

Effective multilateralism is essential for finding common responses to global challenges. However, multilateralism is under pressure: institutions that were designed to build consensus have increasingly become the stage for competition between political powers. Internal organisational dynamics and the fact that structures and mandates that have developed over decades are not always suited to today’s realities contribute to their limited ability to act. **Reforms** are necessary but difficult in the current environment. Mitigating the global crisis of confidence that has gripped the UN and other international bodies is a prerequisite for being able to orient the multilateral system towards the future. Governance and international norms threaten to fragment further unless this happens.

Lack of predictability

We are living in a transitional phase with no sign of a stable new international order emerging. The existing order is on the brink of ceding to global disorder, with power politics pushing international law and collective security further aside, conflicts breaking out into the open, and actors of all kinds testing the limits on what they can do. There is much to suggest that we are merely at the start of a historical turning point. Our time is characterised by **high volatility** and low predictability. Accordingly, warning periods are often brief. The future cannot be foreseen. Yet Switzerland still needs to prepare for it in the best possible way, to be able to safeguard its interests even in a difficult environment. This is what the following sections are about.

3 Basic principles

3.1 Core mission

Foreign policy is about **interests**.³ This includes promoting values. Interests and values are interdependent and, in Switzerland, are rooted in the Federal Constitution. Accordingly, the latter provides a stable frame of reference for foreign policy. Nonetheless, it leaves a great deal of latitude for shaping foreign policy. The Federal Council uses its Foreign Policy Strategies to concretise the design of its foreign policy.

In our polity governed by the rule of law, the **Federal Constitution** is the starting point for any Foreign Policy Strategy. Combined with an analysis of the current context, it provides the basis for drawing up strategic priorities. The core mission is rooted in **Article 2** of the Federal Constitution. It centres on Switzerland's security, welfare and independence. The Confederation also ensures the greatest possible equality of opportunity among its citizens, and it is committed to the long-term preservation of natural resources and to a just and peaceful international order.

With respect to foreign affairs, **Article 54 paragraph 2** of the Constitution stipulates non-exhaustively: "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." foreign policy competency is also substantiated in **Article 101**, which states that the Confederation "shall safeguard the interests of the Swiss economy abroad".⁴ Finally, the bases of foreign policy also include the relevant federal laws. For example, the [Swiss Abroad Act](#) specifies that the Federal Council must consider the interests of Swiss persons and institutions abroad when defining its foreign policy strategy (Art. 8).

Security, prosperity, independence: a glance around the world makes it clear that Switzerland is more strongly challenged in these areas today than it has been for a long time.

Security: The dominance of power politics and competition between the major powers are having a negative impact on Switzerland's security. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its geopolitical quest for a sphere of influence present a threat, making the regional environment more unstable. Security thus needs to be given a correspondingly high weighting in foreign policy. As a result, cooperation in foreign and security policy with the EU, NATO and within the OSCE is becoming even more important. It enables Switzerland to strengthen its own defence capability and contribute to security and stability in Europe at the same time. The comprehensive security approach that typifies Swiss foreign and security policy remains a guiding principle, not least in view of the stabilisation efforts in the arc of crises.

Prosperity: Considerable attention will be given to securing prosperity in the coming years. Global economic developments, as well as the effects of climate disasters and pandemics, harbour the risk of a loss of competitiveness for Switzerland. Competition between business locations is heightening. Despite the difficult geopolitical environment, Switzerland aims to enhance its attractiveness as a location for investment, education, research, innovation and jobs and to further improve the framework conditions for the national economy, including its role as a financial centre. Market access is to be consolidated and diversified. This will enable Switzerland to boost the resilience of its economy. New opportunities are opening up thanks to the country's strong industry and knowledge basis, forward-looking educational system, high quality of life, good infrastructure and strong innovative capacity.

Independence: Switzerland's independence – understood as the greatest possible degree of self-determination with respect to its own future and of its freedom to act – depends on Switzerland being able to help shape the framework conditions that affect it. This is harder against the current backdrop of polarisation and fragmentation than in a world marked by globalisation and multilateralism. Switzerland must counter the risk that decisions will increasingly be taken by others. Measures to achieve this include making a comprehensive contribution to norm-defining institutions, maintaining a strong network and cooperating with partners, as well as playing a part in effective multilateralism.

3 The [1993 White Paper](#) – Switzerland's first written foreign policy strategy – already described safeguarding interests as the main task of foreign policy, calling it "an all-pervasive theme, in a way the justification and purpose for all foreign policy activity".

4 See the explanatory statement from the Federal Council in its [Dispatch regarding a new Federal Constitution](#) of 20 November 1996 with respect to both articles.

Conclusions for strategic priorities

Based on the above points concerning its core mission and an analysis of the current context, the Federal Council has determined the following strategic priorities for its foreign policy for 2024–27:

Geographical:

- **Europe:** This region is once again gaining importance for Switzerland in today's fragmented world. A stable, prosperous Europe is crucial for Switzerland's security, prosperity and independence, and is thus the first priority. Switzerland is part of the European economic, security, and cultural space and needs to strengthen its relations with its neighbours and with the European countries in general, as well as with the EU and NATO. It is indispensable to clarify all open questions with respect to the EU. Europe is interpreted broadly in geographical and thematic terms and also includes European security and the reconstruction of Ukraine (section 4.1).
- **Other world regions:** The current transition to a world that is less shaped by the West underlines the importance of constructive relations with every region of the world. Developments such as the rise of the Asia-Pacific region, new dynamics in sub-Saharan Africa and to some extent in the MENA region, the considerable importance of the United States for Switzerland's prosperity and security, and the growing Swiss community abroad show why it makes sense to have a globally oriented foreign policy. Switzerland has a great deal of soft power worldwide: its strengths, including in international cooperation, are valued, and utilised to promote global understanding (section 4.2).
- **Multilateralism:** Effective, focused multilateralism and a strong Swiss presence in the relevant forums are crucial for safeguarding Switzerland's interests. Switzerland aims to play a part in reforming the multilateral system and boosting its efficiency. It can also contribute to global solutions with International Geneva, the three Geneva Centres and initiatives such as the foundation Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) (section 4.3).

Thematic:

- **Peace and security:** The current significance of this traditional foreign policy priority is clear. The main aim is to adapt Switzerland's good offices and peace promotion to the changed international conditions, as well as to strengthen security cooperation with the EU and NATO. Additional key themes include arms control, which faces an uncertain future, and cyberdiplomacy. Lastly, this priority also encompasses the themes of forced displacement and migration, humanitarian aid and sanctions (section 5.1).
- **Prosperity and competitiveness:** Preserving prosperity is growing more challenging. In today's more contested world, there is a greater need to bolster competitiveness. Important issues include improving the corresponding framework conditions, boosting the resilience of the economy and society, promoting education, research and innovation, diversifying investment and trade partners, and dealing with the consequences of the growing significance of geo-economic instruments for Switzerland. Contributions to sustainable, inclusive economic and human development as well as to the global fight against poverty as part of international cooperation also belong to this priority and underpin the building of corresponding partnerships (section 5.2).
- **The environment:** The ecological dimension of sustainability is to be a new priority in foreign policy. Mitigating climate change and adapting to its effects are becoming urgent tasks. It is essential to raise awareness of the capacity limits of global ecosystems and to reinforce the role of education, research and innovation as drivers of environmental protection. The Federal Council is deliberately combining the task of improving energy supply security and biodiversity-friendly access to decarbonised energy with this priority (section 5.3).
- **Democracy and governance:** In view of international developments, a new strategic focus on promoting democracy is necessary. This is a constitutional obligation and an area in which Switzerland has a lot to offer. It rounds out Switzerland's well-established profile in promoting peace, international law and human rights, anticipatory science diplomacy, equality and good governance, including in the digital space (digital foreign policy) (section 5.4).

In contrast to the previous FPS, sustainability and digitalisation will no longer be designated as specific priorities. As clearly cross-cutting themes that permeate all thematic areas of foreign policy, they can no longer be reduced to single areas. They are firmly anchored with their own strategies and are covered in section 5 of the FPS 2024–27 both in general terms and within the relevant priority areas.

3.2 What does Switzerland stand for in the world?

Switzerland's foreign policy identity is closely related to its polity. The country's political culture shapes the character of its foreign policy, too. Yet Switzerland's self-image in the international arena is not static. It is continually developing, in parallel to its foreign policy and to Switzerland itself.

Reactions to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine reveal a divergence in some instances between how Switzerland sees itself and how others see it. This is evident above all with respect to neutrality issues. Debate about Switzerland's foreign policy profile is also increasing domestically. This comes as no surprise, given the rapid change in the international environment, and is to be welcomed. Developments both inside and outside Switzerland show how important it is to repeatedly review and adjust foreign policy and reposition it in international discourse.

Shared responsibility within Europe

Switzerland is a thoroughly **European country**. It is a European-style liberal democracy based on the rule of law. It shares its culture, religion and history with the rest of the European continent. At the same time, Switzerland is one of the few European countries not seeking EU membership. Through the bilateral approach, it cultivates close, customised relations with the EU. This approach towards the EU, which has broad domestic support, influences its foreign policy. **Institutionally, Switzerland does not belong to any of the global centres of power.**

Even though Switzerland is structured differently from the nation-states around it and follows its own path, it clearly sees itself as **part of the European community of shared values**. It is much closer to the EU and its member states than to other centres of power. European countries – including the United Kingdom and the EFTA states – and other Western countries such as the United States are Switzerland's most important partners. Switzerland recognises the major contribution made by the EU to peace, security and prosperity. The same applies to NATO's role in European security.

Switzerland sees itself as a constructive **partner and an advocate of European cooperation**. It acknowledges its shared responsibility for drawing up and implementing European solutions. It works together with its European partners in foreign and security policy and aims to further strengthen corresponding collaboration efforts and partnerships. It plays a part in reducing inequalities in the enlarged EU and supports other countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus in promoting the social market economy and strengthening democracy and the rule of law. With its political institutions, Switzerland stands for freedom and stability in Europe like hardly any other country.

A voice for global understanding

Despite its strong roots in Europe, Swiss foreign policy remains independent and **globally oriented**. Switzerland maintains an efficient worldwide network of representations, also with a view towards the needs of Swiss citizens and Swiss companies. In the service of **universality**, it aims in principle for diplomatic relations with all the countries of the world. It is committed to ensuring that all countries receive equal treatment and are able to play a part in resolving regional and global problems to the best of their abilities in a fair and internationally accepted manner.

Switzerland sees itself as a **bridge-builder**. Geopolitical polarisation and China–US bloc building are not in its interest. It wishes to help rebuild trust at the international level. It expects in turn that its independent positioning will be respected internationally and that it will not be confronted with 'either/or' demands. When dealing with authoritarian states, Switzerland assumes a position that does not play off values and *realpolitik* against each other. It shows political backbone whenever international law and fundamental rights are massively violated or the universal principles of the UN are **twisted**. At the same time, Switzerland cannot ignore the growing political and economic might of authoritarian states. It will continue to rely on dialogue and collaboration, wherever this is appropriate. In the event of doubt, it will stand up for freedom.

For Europe to be able to hold its own in global competition, it must also reach an understanding with those states that swing between the centres of geopolitical power. As a European state, Switzerland will be able to contribute even more to this kind of understanding in the coming years, thanks to its foreign policy profile. The way in which these countries position themselves in the medium term will influence the international order.

International Geneva will play a key role in this, as it offers a global hub for dialogue and collaboration in the centre of Europe. A practically universal presence of the UN member states in Geneva and the involvement of relevant non-state actors in discussions should help ensure that Switzerland remains an important location for international governance in the future. For this to happen, Switzerland must continue to enjoy worldwide the trust that is essential for a host state, and to act with the necessary level-headedness.

Domestic and foreign policy strengths

Switzerland's foreign policy profile has specific strengths that contribute to Switzerland's soft power in the international arena. They arise from the key features of Switzerland's polity. Foreign policy and domestic policy are closely intertwined in Switzerland. The Swiss parliament, cantons and people participate in foreign policy to a greater extent than in many other countries. Switzerland's foreign policy is **close to its citizens**. This is also reflected in the importance attached to services for the Swiss community abroad.

Switzerland stands for dialogue, inclusive solutions, power-sharing, subsidiarity, stability and innovation. These are important foundations for its self-image as a partner for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Switzerland's **good offices** and its role as a location for peace talks are credible because Switzerland never had colonies, it is independent, it does not have a hidden agenda, and it has developed a great deal of expertise in peace promotion, among other reasons. Switzerland is also an internationally recognised advocate for **international law**, for a strong UN, and for effective **multilateralism**. In future, it aims to more effectively promote its comprehensive approach to security as extending beyond military aspects in the international arena. Against a backdrop of increasing bloc building and instability, these tasks are challenging but remain important.

Supporting people in need is an essential part of Switzerland's identity. Switzerland provides **humanitarian aid** quickly, in a targeted manner, and in line with international humanitarian law and with humanitarian principles. Observance and further development of international humanitarian law as a basis for protecting civilian populations are key concerns for Switzerland, not least because it is the depositary state for the Geneva conventions.

Switzerland helps countries to **combat poverty** and develop sustainably. In doing so, it concentrates on the needs of their populations, its long-term interests and the added value it can offer compared to others. It acts with a clear thematic and geographical focus. Its long-term development cooperation with partner countries, its strong presence on site, and its support for local networks and solutions typify its approach.

Switzerland's promotion of liberal values and the **rule of law** is also an integral component of its identity and its foreign policy. This includes advocacy for the universal protection of **human rights**. Respect for fundamental rights and protection for minorities are key focuses for Switzerland, as are women's rights and gender equality. By promoting **democracy**, Switzerland aims to leverage a further domestic strength even more in its future foreign policy. As a medium-sized economy with few natural resources and a small domestic market, it stands up for a **liberal economic and financial order**. It is an **attractive location** for internationally active companies and financial institutions.

Finally, **innovation** and research are also keystones of Switzerland's foreign policy profile. They contribute to the achievement of sustainability goals, increase companies' competitiveness and create jobs. Switzerland promotes the involvement of both scientific bodies and the private sector in foreign policy and in the shaping of international governance. As a location for research and industry, it leverages its pronounced innovative power in forward-looking partnerships. One example is GESDA, which provides international discussion and knowledge platforms at the intersection between science and diplomacy (section 5.4).

Figure 7: Switzerland's foreign policy profile (source: FDFA).



Neutrality and solidarity

Switzerland's history is closely tied up with its neutrality. Without neutrality, this culturally and linguistically diverse civic nation would not have withstood the dynastic and nationalist wars in Europe. Switzerland's permanent neutrality has been recognised repeatedly in international law, for example at the Paris Peace Conference in 1815 as a result of the Congress of Vienna, in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, and in the context of Switzerland's accession to the League of Nations in 1920. Switzerland became a member of the UN in 2002 based on a declaration of neutrality in its application for accession. Over the course of history, neutrality has become part of Switzerland's identity, underpinning its foreign policy roles as an intermediary, a humanitarian player and a host state. Its protective function in security policy has varied in significance over time and is less in focus in the current European environment. Neutrality has a fixed place in Switzerland's self-image. The Swiss population's agreement to maintaining neutrality averaged 95% in annual [surveys](#) by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich) between 2013 and 2023.

Switzerland's permanent neutrality means that it is subject to obligations under the law of neutrality in international armed conflicts. **Neutrality does not mean indifference, however.** Switzerland made this clear once again in its reaction to the Russian aggression against Ukraine (section 4.1). Although neutrality limits Switzerland's room for manoeuvre militarily, it allows the country to show extensive solidarity, which is reflected in its foreign policy profile. Such solidarity, like its neutrality, is a fixed component of Switzerland's understanding of its role in the world. The instrument of neutrality leaves room for a cooperative foreign and security policy with

European partners and other close partners of Switzerland (section 6.2). The Federal Council aims to consolidate this in the coming years.

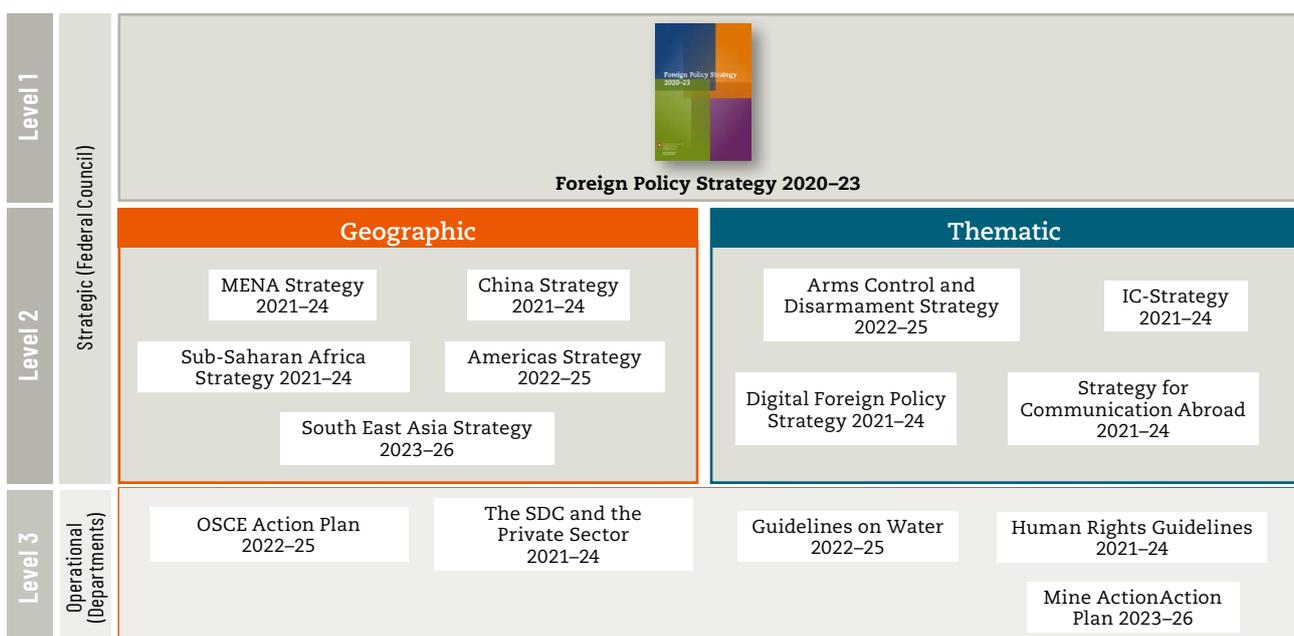
3.3 Coherence

Effective foreign policy requires coherence in policy-making. All departments deal with foreign policy issues today. The current change in the political environment shows how important coherence is. Faced with crises and positioning issues, Switzerland needs to act and communicate in a unified way in order to safeguard its interests.

Thanks to the political importance attached to coherence, progress was made in this area in the past legislative period. The method involving a foreign policy **strategy cascade** contributed to this achievement. For the first time, the Federal Council adopted a series of geographical and thematic follow-up strategies to the FPS, fleshing out the respective strategic guidelines. One of the novelties was the definition of objectives and measures for four years, which were drafted, implemented and monitored on an interdepartmental basis. This method gives foreign policy more focus and promotes a culture of collaboration within the Confederation. It is being continued. Further Federal Council strategies⁵ relevant to foreign policy, together with its programme for the legislative period 2023–27, contribute to the coherent framework of its foreign policy.

⁵ e.g. [Switzerland's foreign economic policy strategy \(2021\)](#); [2030 Sustainable Development Strategy \(2022\)](#); [Security policy report 2021 and Supplementary report 2022](#); [Switzerland's International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation \(2018\)](#); [Space Policy 2023](#).

Figure 8: Cascading foreign policy strategy for the legislative period 2019–23 (source: [FDFA](#)).



Aside from the cascading strategy, **additional progress** was made regarding coherence: Within the framework of Switzerland's international cooperation, the interconnections between humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peacebuilding were improved thanks to a clearer strategy and reorganisation. The seat on the UN Security Council also entailed greater thematic coherence. Interdepartmental collaboration on migration is more closely coordinated today. Foreign and domestic policy coherence with respect to the 2030 Agenda was strengthened, too. Likewise, synergies between actors in Switzerland's external network were increased, and bilateral and multilateral activities were better harmonised.

Further efforts are needed in the following areas:

- **Strategic management:** Switzerland's government system has historically been focused on domestic policy. Measures to strengthen the Federal Council's leading role in foreign policy are necessary, including more retreats and more frequent anticipatory debates, as have been held for example on China.
- **Positioning:** Challenging decisions regarding Switzerland's positioning in the interplay between Europe, the United States and China should be discussed and prepared at a high level on an interdepartmental basis. To this end, a committee of state secretaries and the respective chairs of interdepartmental working groups will be created. Additionally, it must be checked whether international interconnections of economic and security issues are being taken sufficiently into account by the Confederation's existing coordination bodies.

→ **Strategic communication:** Uniform, strategic communication is becoming increasingly important. Switzerland must play an active part in shaping the way in which it is perceived in the global competition. Corresponding measures need to be taken (section 6.1).

→ **Dealing with conflicting objectives:** Conflicts of objectives are an expression of a pluralistic society. They are part of daily life in foreign policy. However, they could become more virulent in a polarised environment. This means that it is important to consider trade-offs in a comprehensive, clear and interdepartmental manner. The Federal Constitution, relevant laws and the strategies adopted by the Federal Council lead the way in this area.

→ **Executive – legislative:** Trust-based collaboration between the Federal Council, Parliament and the cantons is growing ever more important. The FDFA provides regular foreign policy updates to the relevant committees and bodies. In the past legislative period, the Federal Council presented proposals on involving the foreign affairs committees (FACs) with respect to the seat on the UN Security Council, on dealing with the FACs' consultation rights and on Parliament's role in soft law. The Federal Council has the legitimate expectation that its scope of action as set out in the definition of competencies in the Federal Constitution will not be unnecessarily restricted. At the same time, safeguarding the rights to involvement of the Parliament and the cantons, within the framework of this definition of competencies, helps establish solid domestic political support for Swiss foreign policy.

4 Geographical priorities

4.1 Europe

A stable, prosperous Europe is becoming even more important for Switzerland's security, prosperity and independence, given the changed global political and economic context (section 3). Thus, Switzerland intends to strengthen the European dimension of its foreign policy in the coming years. It wishes to stabilise and further develop its relations with the EU. Moreover, it aims to reinforce its bilateral relations with its European partners (including the United Kingdom) and to make a substantial contribution to a secure and stable Europe. Its priorities include reconstruction in Ukraine and stability in the Western Balkans.

As a solution-oriented, independent country with close connections to its partners, Switzerland plays a constructive role in European institutions and initiatives. With its readiness to host a summit meeting of the **European Political Community** during this legislative period, Switzerland strengthens its position as a reliable partner in Europe and a location for dialogue. The **Council of Europe** remains the most important organisation for the promotion of democracy, the rule of law and human rights for Switzerland. This institution is gaining in significance in the area of digital governance, and it also has key soft-power instruments, especially in the cultural arena, which can help reduce social polarisation.

Stable relations with the EU that can be further developed

The geopolitical situation underlines the importance of stable relations between Switzerland and the EU that can be further developed. Switzerland is the EU's fourth most important trading partner and its third most important partner for services and direct investments. At the same time, the EU is Switzerland's most important trading partner. Sectoral participation in the EU's single market is therefore essential to keep the Swiss economy strong and internationally competitive over the long term and thus also to preserve and expand employment opportunities – all the more so given the uncertainty of future global economic developments. Securing and further developing extensive access to the single market as well as collaborating with the EU in selected areas while maintaining as much political independence as possible are therefore core issues of Switzerland's European policy.

Switzerland has concluded bilateral agreements with the EU that currently permit it to take part in the single market on a sectoral basis. In other areas, cooperation agreements are in the long-term interest of both parties. Relations with the EU are multifaceted and close, and they encompass the full range of sectoral interests. Switzerland is therefore striving to **further develop its bilateral approach to the EU**. Its main focus is on updating existing single market agreements,

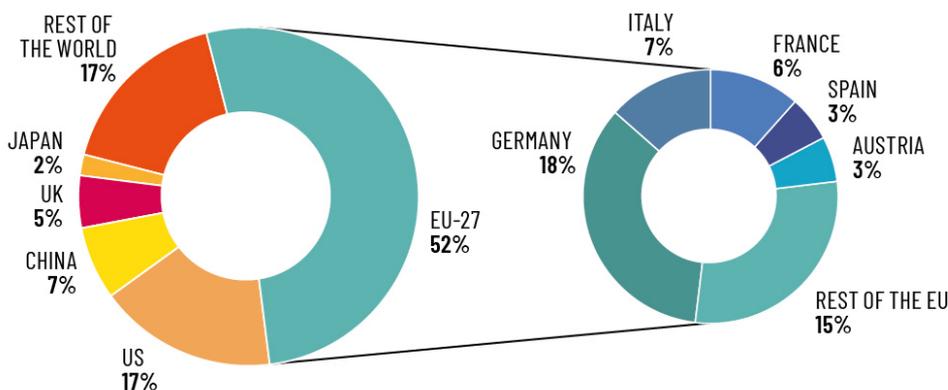


Figure 9: Switzerland's most important trading partners in 2022, by volume of trade (goods and services). The data do not include trade in precious metals (source: in-house calculation based on figures from the [Federal Customs Administration](#), [Swiss-Impex](#), and [SNB](#)).

concluding new agreements in the areas of electricity, public health and food security, securing the participation in EU programmes, in particular in the area of education, research and innovation, as well as resolving institutional issues in individual single market agreements. In this context, the Federal Council is also ready to continue to contribute to a secure, stable and prosperous Europe by means of a regular contribution. European policy influences numerous aspects of daily life in Switzerland. Consequently, the Federal Council heavily involves the cantons, Parliament and other stakeholders in shaping European policy and developing relations with the EU.

The opportunity to recruit employees from EU/EFTA states as a complement to the potential of the domestic workforce has played a key role in enabling the Swiss economy to meet its need for both skilled and unskilled workers in the past. In view of demographic changes in particular, it must be assumed that this need will still be there in the future. This is another reason why stable relations with the EU are important.

In the field of **digitalisation**, the EU is breaking new regulatory ground in various areas also beyond Europe. As a European country, Switzerland follows a digital policy that aims to make it possible to harness the economic and social potential of technology while safeguarding individual rights as best possible.

Switzerland is a reliable **partner that stands in solidarity** with the EU. Through the second Swiss contribution to selected EU member states, it is helping to lower economic and social inequalities in the EU and to better manage migration flows. This also goes hand in hand with closer relations with the partner countries. As part of the same community of values, Switzerland and the EU work together to promote prosperity, security and democracy worldwide, and they stand up for international law and the achievements of the international order. Switzerland strives to intensify its foreign policy dialogue and its corresponding collaboration with the EU and its member states.

Switzerland has been an associate member of **Schengen/Dublin** since 2008. The resulting collaboration is a fundamental instrument for Switzerland in the area of domestic security. It ensures that asylum requests are processed by one Dublin member only. Associate membership offers economic and financial advantages. It is also useful for Swiss representations abroad in the areas of consular services and crisis management. A Schengen visa saves time and money for travellers and tourists, as well as for researchers and International Geneva. This makes Switzerland an even more attractive place for business and tourism. The close cooperation in the areas of Schengen and Dublin will be continued.

Bilateral relations

Switzerland's neighbouring countries are its most important partners. Switzerland's interconnectedness with **Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Liechtenstein** is extremely high in all areas of life. The border regions alone account for almost a third of goods exchanged between Switzerland and the EU. They have a corresponding influence on their respective governments' attitudes towards Switzerland. Additionally, three of Switzerland's neighbours – Germany, France and Italy – are G7 states and founding members of the EU. Most of Switzerland's global trade passes through these countries, as they all have access to the sea. Switzerland's relations with its neighbouring countries are generally very close and good, but they have occasionally been clouded in recent years by unresolved issues with the EU and by specific issues in individual dossiers. Clarifying open questions and finding constructive solutions is a priority. Cross-border cooperation and the corresponding dialogues, in addition to community initiatives and strategies, such as Interreg und EUSALP, are suitable vehicles for promoting practical solutions and reinforcing mutual trust.

The Federal Council aims to further consolidate and strategically use its bilateral relations with neighbouring countries and with **EU member states** in general. The quality of such relations also affects Switzerland's relations to the EU – and vice versa. Contact with the respective presidency of the EU Council is therefore crucial. The **United Kingdom** is also an important partner of Switzerland. Since its departure from the EU, relations have been deepened and extended. Based on the Federal Council's Mind the Gap Plus strategy and the joint declaration signed by Switzerland and the United Kingdom in 2022, additional steps will be taken to further develop the bilateral relationship, for example in the areas of free trade, financial services, migration, as well as education, research and innovation.

Further development of contributions to European security

European security has been a key foreign policy theme since the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in the 1970s. Promoting cooperative security through the OSCE has also been a priority in the past decade, as tension between Russia and the West has heightened. In light of the changed situation in Europe, European security has been gaining increasing significance for Swiss foreign policy. While the OSCE remains important, Switzerland also aims to develop its security policy cooperation with the EU and NATO, as well as with bilateral partners.

The **EU** aims to meet its responsibility for security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic region to a greater extent. It is expanding its security policy instruments and is prepared to enhance its partnerships. Switzerland is seizing this opportunity. It is developing its security policy consultations with the EU, bolstering its participation in EU peacekeeping missions with high-quality contributions, and identifying additional cooperation opportunities, such as tackling disasters and emergencies. **NATO** has reverted to defending its alliance and is shaping its partnerships more individually than before. Switzerland aims to amplify its political dialogue with NATO, to improve the interoperability of its army, to consider taking part in more of the alliance's exercises, and to continue sending personnel to NATO's staff offices and centres. It also wishes to extend its **bilateral security policy network** in Europe in order to promote both its own security and European security. To this end, it is intensifying its security policy discussions with its partner states, especially its neighbouring states.

Despite all the difficulties the **OSCE** faces, it continues to make a valuable contribution to security, for example in the form of field missions and election monitoring. Switzerland wishes to ensure that the OSCE will retain its ability to act and its inclusiveness, and it will advocate a return to cooperative security approaches if and when the security policy environment allows this again.

Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova

The partnership with **Ukraine** in the framework of international cooperation goes back to the 1990s. From 2014, efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Ukraine were a priority for Swiss diplomacy. Ever since Russia launched its war of aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, Switzerland has positioned itself on the side of international law and supported Ukraine as far as possible under the law of neutrality (section 1). It will continue to do so. Ukraine's future will considerably affect Europe's future and Switzerland's security.

Russia's war of aggression has caused enormous suffering in Ukraine. The number of victims is high, more than a third of the population needs humanitarian aid, and large tracts of territory are contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war. The total costs of reconstruction are estimated at hundreds of billions of Swiss francs. Switzerland is helping to mitigate the consequences of the fighting. Since the start of the war, it has continually adapted its projects and programmes in line with new developments. Initially, a rapid response team provided emergency relief. This team was then replaced by a permanent team from the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit. Building on its long-standing development cooperation, Switzerland is working to improve Ukraine's public health system and its economic prospects, as well as to further democratise its institutions. It provides financial support to international aid organisations and sends specialists to Ukraine. Furthermore, its humanitarian demining operations are also making a key contribution to peace, security and development in the country.

Switzerland is committed to fair, lasting peace in Ukraine. Together with Ukraine, it organised a national security advisers' meeting concerning the Ukrainian president's peace formula and has agreed to his request to organise a high-level conference on peace in Ukraine. It is backing investigations into the most egregious crimes committed as part of the war in Ukraine, and it is a member of the Council of Europe's Register of Damage. Switzerland has offered its good offices to the belligerent states. Ukraine has made use of this offer (including the negotiation of a protecting power mandate in 2022), but Russia has rejected it until now. Switzerland is also supporting the reintegration of Ukrainian nationals, wherever the security situation in their home regions permits this.

Reconstructing Ukraine as a free, sovereign and democratic state is in Switzerland's interest. By hosting the Ukraine Recovery Conference 2022, it carried out important preparatory work. It aims to put the Lugano Principles for sustainable, inclusive reconstruction into practice. To this end, it is providing financial support that goes beyond its international cooperation financing and that also involves the private sector and civil society organisations. In Ukraine's neighbouring country **Moldova**, Switzerland is also reinforcing its support in order to help cushion the negative impact of the war against Ukraine and contribute to the region's stability. Furthermore, the free trade agreement signed between the EFTA states and Moldova in 2023 will strengthen bilateral economic relations.



Figure 10: The Lugano Principles (source: [FDFA](#)).

European perspective for the Western Balkans

The new security situation in Europe is making it more essential to reinforce peace, stability and prosperity in the Western Balkans, too. A European perspective for the region therefore remains the best approach. Challenges include a renewed rise in tensions and violent incidents in some areas, as well as the difficult economic and demographic situation. In the future, Switzerland wishes to use its foreign policy instruments and contributions in an even more coordinated manner, as part of a comprehensive regional approach. Its focus is on bolstering economic growth and supporting reform processes to boost transparency and democracy. Switzerland has a broad network of relationships with private actors, international organisations and civil society. The large diaspora in Switzerland also has a key role to play in this regard. Switzerland continues to promote the process of dealing with the past in order to foster reconciliation between the various communities. It supports a normalisation of relations between **Serbia** and **Kosovo**. Its migration partnerships are strengthening migration governance in the region and countering irregular migration. Finally, Switzerland is providing two military contingents for the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Multilateral EU Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR Althea) missions. They are contributing to stability and security in the region, without which sustainable development would not be possible.

Türkiye and the South Caucasus

Switzerland has an interest in promoting peaceful conflict resolution, democracy, human rights and economic development in Türkiye and the countries of the South Caucasus. A member of NATO and the G20, **Türkiye** is a significant regional power with a pivotal function between several regions. Ankara has also been positioning itself as a mediator. Promoting respect for human rights and the principles of the rule of law on both the bilateral and the multilateral levels is still a priority to reinforce Türkiye's linkages to Western countries and values. Migration also remains a central theme. In **Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia**, Switzerland has long been active with cooperation programmes. It aims to remain a reliable partner in the coming years. It reaffirms its commitment to making further contributions to resolving the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and to the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Türkiye. Switzerland is responsible for the mutual representation of interests in Russia and Georgia. It will continue its cooperation with Georgia within the framework of its migration partnership.

Russia and Belarus

Switzerland's relationship with **Russia** is under severe strain due to the latter's war of aggression against Ukraine and its domestic repression. On 28 February 2022, the Federal Council decided to adopt the EU sanctions against Russia. Bilateral dialogue has thus been greatly restricted but not completely stopped. Selective cooperation in the multilateral context (for example in the UN Security Council) will continue with the aim of helping to draw up global solutions. Switzerland is committed to making sure that the mechanisms for monitoring the human rights situation in Russia

are strengthened. The future shape of relations with Russia will depend on the future direction of the war and on its domestic political developments. **Belarus** has participated in Russia's military aggression. Switzerland has adopted the EU sanctions in this case too. It is maintaining its contact with official agencies and with the opposition. Moreover, it is working to secure the release of all political prisoners in Belarus and Russia.

Objectives

1. **Switzerland–Europe:** Switzerland will stabilise and further develop its bilateral approach to the EU in order to secure existing agreements, conclude new agreements, and ensure its participation in EU programmes. It will promote the development of networks with EU/EFTA states and the United Kingdom, ensure cross-dossier coherence and take action informed by a strategic overview.
2. **Neighbouring states:** In cooperation with the cantons, the Confederation will strengthen Switzerland's partnerships with its neighbours and cultivate trust-based collaboration in its border regions.
3. **Schengen/Dublin:** Switzerland will use its Schengen/Dublin association to help combat crime and irregular migration, as well as to protect the area's external borders and to promote an efficient Dublin system at the European level. By adopting and implementing further developments of Schengen, it will strengthen the security of Switzerland and Europe.
4. **European security:** Switzerland will promote European security by means of enhanced cooperation with the EU and NATO as well as with partners on a bilateral basis. It will reinforce its participation in military peace promotion missions with high-value contributions and be ready to host a summit meeting of the European Political Community. It will also support the OSCE and offer dialogue formats for exchanges on security policy.
5. **Ukraine:** Switzerland will attach strategic importance to supporting and reconstructing the country. It will show solidarity by contributing to Ukraine's reconstruction as part of its international cooperation work and with the help of other instruments. It will work to secure a fair, lasting peace.
6. **Western Balkans:** Switzerland will promote the stability and European integration of the region. To this end, it will deploy its instruments in a regionally coordinated manner and bolster its collaboration with the countries of the Western Balkans, including with civil society (this encompasses the diaspora), with the private sector and with other donor countries.

4.2 Other world regions

Based on its solid anchoring in Europe, Switzerland's foreign policy remains globally oriented. In line with the principle of universality, Switzerland maintains relations with all states. It seeks to shape bilateral relations with a flexible rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Outside Europe, Switzerland attaches particular importance to members of the **G20**, the forum where the most significant industrialised and emerging countries discuss financial and economic issues (section 4.3). Relations with some of these countries offer opportunities for Switzerland to diversify its economic activities abroad and to fortify its economy's resilience, for example. Switzerland will take account of the significance of these non-European G20 countries within the context of its diplomatic visits and by boosting interdepartmental coordination in the safeguarding of its interests. Regional **middle-ground powers**, such as Türkiye, some Gulf States and Singapore, as well as some aspiring **regional heavyweights** outside the G20, such as Egypt, Nigeria and Israel deserve particular attention too. Switzerland also gives consideration to the growing significance of **regional organisations**, regional economic communities and groups of states, such as the expanded BRICS format. Additionally, it enters into **thematic and context-specific partnerships**. Such partnerships exist, for example, as part of bilateral development cooperation and foreign policy on migration, as well as in formats such as the Small Advanced Economies Initiative. Finally, Switzerland intends to give greater priority to innovative trilateral and plurilateral forms of cooperation in the safeguarding of its interests.

The Americas

Switzerland enjoys a very good reputation across the countries of the American continent. The vast majority of them are siding with the West when it comes to values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights, as well as the economic order. In some countries, good governance is facing major challenges from growing income differences and the polarisation of domestic politics. These issues are also tied up with uncertainties about future geopolitical positioning.

The **United States** and **Canada**, both G7 countries, are among Switzerland's most important partners outside Europe. Their high-performing economies, stable institutions and leading technological and scientific capabilities make them attractive worldwide. The significance of the United States for Switzerland's prosperity and security has increased further. Close collaboration on bilateral dossiers and in international organisations is crucial for Switzerland. If precious metals are added to trade in goods and services, the United States is currently Switzerland's largest national trading partner. It is also by far the most important destination for Swiss direct investment abroad (around 20%). Switzerland holds regular talks with the United States on security, cyber, economic and financial issues, guarantees fair conditions for the implementation of international tax standards and promotes collaboration in education, research and innovation with its science diplomacy, in particular regarding digitalisation and new technologies. In line with its [Americas Strategy 2022–25](#), Switzerland is working to ensure that Swiss economic actors will continue to have good access to the North American markets.



Figure 11: G20 countries outside Europe (source: FDFA).

The countries of **Latin America** are for the most part democracies and have considerable natural resources. They are also very important for the global environment and biodiversity. The energy transition presents a strategic opportunity for them. However, the region also faces notable challenges with respect to security and crime, growing inequality and climate change. As a result, the region is also seeing large flows of migrants. Switzerland maintains close ties with this region, supporting democracy and the rule of law, and continuing to promote sustainable development, even after its withdrawal from bilateral development cooperation. The largest regional economies, Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, which are also members of the G20, offer opportunities to strengthen political and economic relations, especially in the framework of MERCOSUR. Collaboration in the areas of the economy, science, education and the environment, which is already well established, will be developed further. Brazil's presidency of the G20 (2024) and of the COP30 (2025) offers concrete opportunities to deepen bilateral relations.

Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region continues to move towards the centre of global power structures. It is the world economy's growth engine and is increasingly a frontrunner in the field of technology. As a result, it is also producing higher levels of CO₂ emissions: more than half of the world's emissions now come from this region. Pressure on democracy is also heightening there. A number of hotspots where escalating tension would have global consequences are attracting increasing attention to the region. Asia-Pacific is becoming more important for Swiss foreign policy. It is vital to deepen collaboration and diversify interests in this complex, promising region. Relevant competencies are thus being developed.

East Asia accounts for more than a quarter of the world's economic output. China is a key actor, with which Switzerland intends to maintain priority relations in spite of growing challenges and differences, for example on human rights issues. Switzerland will review and update its [China Strategy in 2024–25](#). It is striving to modernise its existing free trade agreements with Japan and the Republic of Korea, which are both G20 members, and to step up its collaboration with these countries in the areas of research and innovation. It also wishes to intensify cooperation in multilateral forums. Moreover, Switzerland is maintaining its commitment to peace and security, for example by providing dialogue platforms and as a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) on the Korean peninsula. It is ending its bilateral development work with Mongolia in 2024.

South Asia is the most highly populated sub-region, with around 1.9 billion inhabitants. Switzerland would like to tap its economic and scientific potential, for example by means of the free trade agreement that it aims to conclude with G20 member India. Aside from the economic dimension, it wishes to deepen relations with India on a broad basis. In the emerging country Bangladesh, Switzerland is promoting sustainable economic and social development. It is also providing humanitarian aid for the refugee movements fleeing the crisis in Afghanistan. In Nepal and Sri Lanka, which have emerged from civil wars, Switzerland's support in dealing with the past is a key aspect of bilateral relations.

In **Central Asia**, the security environment is tense due to the war against Ukraine and the crisis in neighbouring Afghanistan. This backdrop amplifies the question of geopolitical positioning and the stability of the sub-region. Switzerland has privileged access to the countries of Central Asia, as they belong to the voting constituency in the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank, IMF) that it heads. In its exchanges with Kazakhstan, the country's economic potential plays a key role. In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the focus is on development cooperation. Additionally, Switzerland is advocating a regional approach to cross-border water management.

South East Asia's dynamic development is opening up new opportunities for the diversification of Swiss interests in the Asia-Pacific region in accordance with the [South East Asia Strategy 2023–26](#). The highly developed country of Singapore is already an important partner today, not least in the areas of finance and education, research and innovation. The G20 member Indonesia deserves particular attention, as it could rise to become one of the world's five largest economies in the longer term. Switzerland is also seeking to conclude new free trade agreements with Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam, while its focus in Myanmar is on supporting the country in tackling its ongoing crisis. It will maintain its development cooperation with Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos and Vietnam. Furthermore, it would like to deepen its strategic dialogue partnership with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

In **Oceania**, Switzerland has like-minded partners: Australia, which is a G20 member, and New Zealand. It aims to reinforce its collaboration with both countries, especially on a multilateral basis and in the area of science.

MENA

The geographical proximity and geopolitical significance of the MENA region make it an **important partner** for Europe and Switzerland has an interest in its stability and economic upturn. The internal structural problems and increasing auto-crisation of some countries, which led to the Arab Spring protests back in 2011, make far-reaching reforms necessary and harbour latent conflict potential. The region is the scene of numerous conflicts and humanitarian crises. Nonetheless, it is also home to some of the world's richest countries and it plays a key role in the **global energy supply**, as it holds more than 50% of the world's oil reserves. Conflicts are increasingly being **tackled on a regional basis**. The most recent examples of this are the end of the crisis with Qatar, the rapprochement of Saudi Arabia and Iran, and the re-admission of Syria to the Arab League. Switzerland is a **host state for peace talks** and negotiations (e.g. Libya), and it supports various regional peacebuilding initiatives.

Since Hamas's terrorist attacks of **7 October 2023** and Israel's military response (section 2), certain dynamics of a new order in the region have stalled, at least for now: continuation of the normalisation of relations between Israel and Arab states no longer seems realistic without a negotiated resolution of the Palestine question. The latter will be even more difficult to achieve in the changed circumstances. But it is also possible that a renewed awareness of the necessity of a political approach to the Middle East conflict in order to break the spiral of violence could go hand in hand with new impetus for a two-state solution. There could be delays in realising geo-economic projects such as the building of a trade route from India via the MENA region to Europe.

Beyond the Palestine conflict, the **Middle East** is also racked by other crises. The Syrian crisis has led to large population movements and numerous internally displaced people in the region, increasing the pressure on surrounding countries. Switzerland's humanitarian aid is in particular demand. In many countries of the Middle East, people lack economic prospects. Switzerland's priorities here include collaborating on peacebuilding and on programmes that create jobs for young people. Within the framework of the work to update the [MENA Strategy](#), the Federal Council will review its Middle East policy in light of foreign policy requirements and political expectations within Switzerland. Through the ban on the terrorist organisation Hamas, the federal authorities will have the necessary instruments to take action against any activities of Hamas and support for it in Switzerland.

While some countries in **North Africa** are benefiting from booming fossil fuel exports, others are suffering from paralysing economic crises. Very young populations are seeing themselves faced with limited economic and political prospects, mounting poverty and an increasingly authoritarian environment. This is heightening the migratory pressure on Europe. Switzerland's collaborative work centres around talks on migration and sustainable development.

In the region encompassing the **Arabian Peninsula and Iran**, the Gulf States have been able to fortify their economic position against the backdrop of the war against Ukraine and have diversified their international partnerships. China and Russia have become crucial partners in the areas of the economy, energy and security. The Gulf States have become important economic partners for Switzerland. Their investment-friendly climate, financial dialogues and joint economic commissions meet with interest from Swiss companies and are therefore encouraged. The many years of war in Yemen have led to a major humanitarian crisis. Switzerland continues to represent US interests in Iran.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Comprising 49 countries and over 1.4 billion people, sub-Saharan Africa is an increasingly important region in global politics and has considerable economic potential. Still, the region faces major **challenges**, such as demographic growth, widespread poverty, corruption, violent changes of power, armed conflicts, the impact of climate change and strong migratory pressure. Particularly concerning are the developments in the **Horn of Africa** and in the **Sahel region**. In the latter, Switzerland is looking into how to shape its international cooperation work more regionally and more flexibly, to also support the democratic coastal states of West Africa. Overall, Switzerland enjoys a great deal of credibility in sub-Saharan Africa. Based on this, it aims to seize the opportunities available in line with its [Sub-Saharan Africa Strategy 2021–24](#).

The economic strength of the countries varies greatly. Sustainable growth is essential to tackle the triple crisis involving the climate, biodiversity and pollution, to combat poverty, to integrate the growing number of young people into the economy and to reduce inequalities. Africa aims to promote regional trade with its African Continental Free Trade Area. Moreover, Europe's desire to diversify its supply chains offers chances for Africa. **Opportunities** are arising especially in combination with the advanced **digitalisation** in some countries. Switzerland is underpinning these by promoting the rule of law, investment protection and clearer economic framework conditions.

Stability and peace in Africa also benefit Switzerland. **Promoting peace** and **combating terrorism** remain vital. The latter is on the rise, above all in the Sahel region, Somalia, the north of Mozambique, the Lake Chad region and the African Great Lakes region. Where possible and requested, Switzerland acts as a mediator. It also takes part in UN peacekeeping missions. Switzerland helps to alleviate human suffering and to improve living conditions sustainably.

The aspiration to find its own solutions to regional problems and to choose partners independently is also evident in Africa. At the same time, external major and regional powers are increasingly present there. Alongside the United States, the EU and other European countries, which remain central, China, Russia, Türkiye, India and the Gulf States are

also aiming to bolster their influence. Frequent diplomatic visits and the continuation of the **partnership approach** are crucial in this context. In doing so, Switzerland also uses multilateral organisations, such as the UN, the International Organisation of La Francophonie and the African Development

Bank, and it is increasing its focus on the **African Union**, a G20 member. Regional economic communities are becoming more important for Switzerland too.

Objectives

7. **Safeguarding regional interests:** Switzerland will position itself as a country that, with its independent foreign policy, strengthens Europe and European achievements within the constellation of global politics, aims for good relations with all the regions of the world, is committed to international law and contributes to global understanding. It will intensify its regional diplomatic efforts to identify opportunities for good offices. The geographical follow-up strategies will be examined in terms of objective attainment and adjusted accordingly for the future.
8. **G20 countries:** Switzerland will step up the safeguarding of its interests with respect to non-European G20 countries. It will hold talks with these countries at least once a year at the level of a federal councillor.

4.3 Multilateralism

Effective, viable responses to global challenges can only be found in a multilateral framework. The Federal Council intends to help boost the effectiveness and efficiency of this system. It is guided in this aim by principles that have proven their value in Switzerland's political system, such as the principle of subsidiarity (efficient allocation of tasks). To be able to represent its interests optimally in the multilateral context, Switzerland must be appropriately represented in terms of both content and personnel in the relevant organisations and bodies. Switzerland considers it very important to have Swiss people in leading positions. Its **strategic presence promotion** includes campaigns in favour of Swiss national candidacies, for example for a seat in the UN Human Rights Council (2025–27) and for annual participation as a guest in the G20, as well as campaigns supporting candidacies by Swiss individuals, for example for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2025–28).

UN

The UN and its specialised agencies have a particular role in the multilateral system. Its strength lies in the universality of membership, its convening power and the strong **legitimacy** of its decisions. It is also unique in that its tasks do not just include political dialogue and normative work, but also comprehensive on-site operational work. For example, there are currently around 70,000 UN blue helmets on deployment.

To remain relevant, multilateralism and thus also the UN and its specialised agencies need to be more effective. **Reforms** are therefore essential. From Switzerland's point of view, reforms should include clarifying and sharpening mandates, intensifying partnerships and coordination between actors, and identifying complementary overlaps within the system. That would make it possible to reduce duplications of effort and exploit synergies. A clearer distribution of tasks is crucial. The resources necessary for carrying out tasks need to be made available. It must be possible to gauge the actual



Figure 12: The 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (source: UN).

impact on site and the correct, efficient use of resources transparently and measurably. Ultimately, professional supervision and accountability play a key role.

Switzerland has a strong multilateral profile, which is being further sharpened by its seat in the UN Security Council. It is a trusted member of the UN and demonstrates its will to shape events there. It aims to mediate global solutions as a bridge-builder. Hence, it will continue to contribute to selected areas of reform, building on its internationally recognised commitment to reform processes to date, for example with respect to the UN Security Council's working methods and the UN development system. The processes relating to Our Common Agenda – the UN Secretary-General's vision for networked, efficient multilateralism – thus have a vital role. As part of this agenda, the Secretary-General also launched the New Agenda for Peace. This new agenda stresses that in a changing world it is important to take a multilateral approach to peace and security based on international law. It also contains practical recommendations for a comprehensive UN peace strategy. Additionally, it offers numerous points of reference that can be utilised during and after the remaining term of Switzerland's mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

Switzerland wishes to use its mandate in the **Security Council** to make a contribution to a peaceful, rules-based international order. By means of targeted partnerships, it is bolstering its influence and drawing more attention to its interests and positions. It intends to capitalise on this, including after the end of its mandate.

The Federal Council will adopt **strategic parameters** for Switzerland's future contribution to focused, effective multilateralism.

Despite the setbacks in its implementation (section 2), the **2030 Agenda** paves the way to the future with its focus on longer-term global challenges and its comprehensive approach. Due to the tense economic situation in many countries, innovative financing approaches involving the private sector will be needed even more than before in order to achieve the sustainability goals. Switzerland will also participate in the upcoming discussions about the post-2030 Agenda framework at an early stage.

Other multilateral organisations and forums

In the **WTO**, Switzerland defends its trade policy interests, takes part in ongoing reform efforts and works towards securing and further developing a binding multilateral trade system. It supports measures to create optimum transparency in WTO members' trade policies. In the **OECD**, Switzerland participates in standard-setting committees, where appropriate. This means that it can put forward its interests when best practices or standards are being drawn up and anticipate potential effects on its interests in good time. Some standards

apply not just to the 38 member states of the OECD but also to other states, including major emerging countries.

The **G20** is currently the key forum for global financial and economic issues. This is where concrete mandates are passed on to equally relevant multilateral bodies in attendance (IMF, WB, OECD, FSB, FATF, etc.). Regular participation as a guest in the G20's Finance Track and in the working groups of the Sherpa Track, for example on trade and investment, anti-corruption issues and health, are important for Switzerland to be able to present its interests at the highest global level.

As the 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 shaping their strategic, institutional and operational orientation. At the same time, it works within these core organisations to promote a coherent political approach, an efficient and effective global financial architecture, and systematic coordination. It also supports institutional and financial reforms to tackle global challenges.

International police cooperation is indispensable in times of increasing cross-border crime. Alongside bilateral cooperation, Switzerland relies on global collaboration via **INTERPOL** and European collaboration via **Europol**. The latter is strengthened by collaboration within the framework of Schengen. Switzerland plays an active part in combating cross-border financial and economic crime.

International Geneva

In the area around the United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland is home to a globally unique concentration and variety of actors committed to fortifying the international order. These actors help to safeguard the interests and values of Switzerland, which relies on a rules-based international order. International Geneva is a neutral location for negotiations in the framework of Switzerland's good offices, international dialogue and the search for **forward-looking solutions**. Major global questions, such as the opportunities and risks presented by technological progress, the governance of artificial intelligence, migration, global health issues and climate change need practical global responses. **Geneva's 'ecosystem'** provides good conditions for this. The vast, wide-ranging specialist knowledge available and the well-established culture of collaboration between traditional actors in multilateralism (states and international organisations), science, the private sector and NGOs contribute to effective, focused multilateralism.

Major standard-bearers for International Geneva, such as the **International Committee of the Red Cross**, the offices of the **High Commissioner for Human Rights and the High Commissioner for Refugees**, rely on innovation to find new solutions to major challenges. The three security policy centres in Geneva that were initiated by Switzerland – the **Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)**, the **Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)** and the **Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)** – play an active role in these efforts, in particular in the area of peace and security policy. New institutions and diplomatic initiatives, such as the [Global Alliance for the Missing](#), underline International Geneva’s innovative potential.

Geneva as the centre of global digital and technology policy

According to the 2023 Digital Atlas of the [Geneva Internet Platform](#), 50% of global digital policy is negotiated in Geneva. This needs to be further strengthened, partly with the expertise of long-standing partners, to encourage key digital players, such as technology companies, global philanthropists, public and private data producers, and operators of global critical infrastructure to set up a presence in Geneva. The GESDA Foundation already works with the private sector, philanthropists and science in a structured manner, for example in founding the [Open Quantum Institute](#).

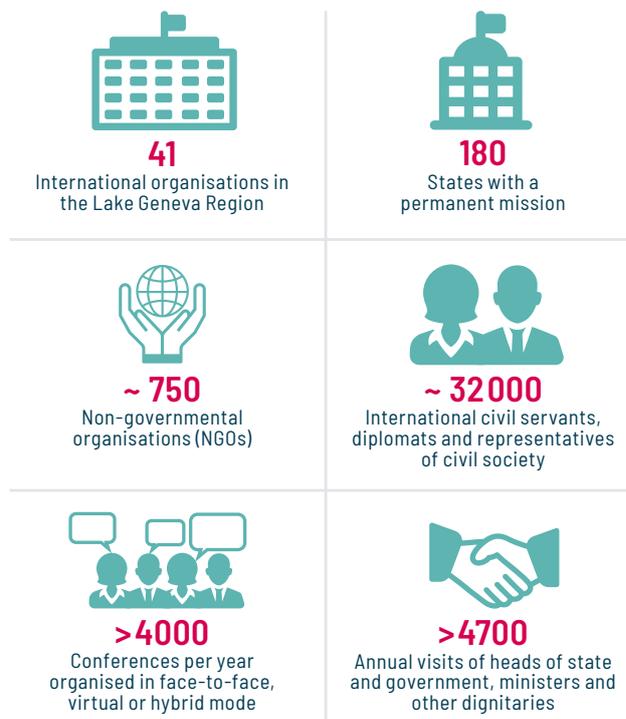


Figure 13: Figures on International Geneva (source: FDFA; current figures available [here](#)).

Due to increasing competition, Switzerland concentrates its efforts as a **host state** primarily on strengthening the areas of digitalisation, science diplomacy and the environment, as well as on developing and making available modern framework conditions and infrastructure. Switzerland thus aims to reinforce its attractiveness as a host state, alongside its established focuses on international humanitarian law and human rights.

In connection with the elaboration of strategic parameters for multilateralism, the Federal Council will also reinforce Switzerland’s position as a host state for the coming years. To this end, it will adopt a multilateralism and host state strategy 2026–29.

Objectives

- 9. **Multilateralism:** Switzerland will advocate focused multilateralism that is geared to the rules-based order, subsidiarity and coherence, so that multilateral bodies can retain the ability to act in the future and contribute to a secure world. It will assume responsibility, especially as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Additionally, it will define its future positioning as a host state with its multilateralism strategy.
- 10. **2030 Agenda:** Switzerland will contribute to the efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In doing so, it will give equal consideration to the three dimensions – the environment, the economy and society – in an integrated manner. It will promote an effective follow-up ‘post-2030’ agenda.
- 11. **International Geneva:** Switzerland will reinforce the competitiveness of International Geneva, especially in the areas of digitalisation, science diplomacy and the environment. It will also provide modern infrastructure in collaboration with the Canton of Geneva.

5 Thematic priorities

5.1 Peace and security

Peace and security are basic prerequisites for prosperity and sustainable development. Conflicts do not just have a local impact: they also affect Swiss interests, influencing security, the economy and migration directly and indirectly. In view of the growing number of conflicts, Switzerland's commitment to peace and security is all the more important. Yet the success rate of peace processes has diminished in the last decade. Many conflicts have become more complex, as have the conditions for mediation (section 2).

Switzerland deploys its **good offices** in places where its interests are affected, where it can play an active and effective role, and where there is a demand. It realistically appraises the potential uses and impact of its good offices, recognising that dialogue always requires a minimum amount of readiness to compromise and that more dialogue does not necessarily lead to peace. It leverages its room for manoeuvre, brings the conflicting parties into contact discreetly, wherever this is possible, and enables dialogue, negotiations and the search for a compromise. Taking an impartial, negotiation-based approach, Switzerland works directly or in a supporting role to achieve the political conditions for peacefully resolving conflicts. International Geneva serves as its global hub for dialogue and cooperation.

In its civilian **peace promotion**, Switzerland concentrates on its comparative strengths. Its presence in conflict regions remains crucial. To be able to deploy its resources as effectively as possible, Switzerland defines priority regions or countries for its peace policy. In view of the war against Ukraine, it is reinforcing its footprint in Europe. At the same time, it is continuing to manage its peace policy flexibly to be able to seize opportunities. In particular, activities such as supporting mediation, facilitation and dialogue are also possible beyond priority countries, provided that there is a demand and resources are available. The Federal Council attaches great importance to involving women effectively in peace processes and to ensuring protection from sexual and gender-based violence for people who are caught up in conflicts, fleeing and migrating. It will renew the [National Action Plan](#) to implement the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda**.

Military peace promotion creates the conditions to make civilian peace promotion possible in the first place. Switzerland participates in such missions based on a UN or OSCE mandate. In addition to providing contingents for KFOR and EUFOR Althea (section 4.1), Switzerland also makes military experts available for UN missions. The Federal Council wishes to focus on contributing particularly sought-after and

high-value assets, as set out in the Security Policy Report 2021. It believes that stepping up Swiss participation in peace missions is also a means to intensify its collaboration with NATO and the EU.

Switzerland is involved in **combating impunity** for the gravest crimes. Justice is essential to prevent atrocities and to consolidate lasting peace. Switzerland supports accountability mechanisms, in particular the International Criminal Court (ICC). As part of its commitment to dealing with the past, it promotes the right to know, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence. In addition to the individual dimension of criminal liability, international law also stipulates that states must make reparation for breaches of international legal provisions and for the resulting loss or damage. Switzerland is working to ensure that a mechanism will be created internationally to facilitate Russia's payment of reparations to Ukraine in accordance with international and national legal principles. This is crucial for Ukraine's reconstruction.

Arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation are currently facing headwinds. In some cases, existing agreements are being suspended or terminated. This is all the more reason for Switzerland to work continually to ensure that the relevant agreements and instruments are implemented, universalised and reinforced. At the same time, it is attaching more importance to states reducing risks and acting responsibly. The Federal Council continues to stand for a world without weapons of mass destruction. Given the fast pace of technological developments, it is calling for clear, broad-based international regulations in the area of autonomous weapons. Additionally, Switzerland is contributing to stability and sustainability in outer space.

Technological developments in **cyberspace** are also making it more important to observe and implement international law. Switzerland is taking part in multilateral discussions to clarify the application of international law and to identify any regulatory gaps. It is advocating for the implementation of the UN norms of responsible state behaviour in cyberspace, with the involvement of non-state actors. In line with its [Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–24](#), Switzerland is defending its values in cyberspace too. It is promoting international confidence-building and thus contributes to global cybersecurity and enhanced collaboration to fight cybercrime.

Climate and security

Climate change is increasingly threatening peace and security. Rising temperatures, droughts and floods can threaten livelihoods and food security. Moreover, they can heighten the competition for natural resources in areas that are often already fragile. This can lead to people having to leave their homes. Climate change thus acts as a risk multiplier: it exacerbates existing political, social, economic and ecological stress factors and can also spark tensions. Switzerland is working in various ways, for example at the UN, to ensure that these risks are identified and taken into account, and that appropriate innovative solutions are found, such as improvements to early warning systems. International Geneva plays an important role in this area.

Conflicts and wars are key drivers of **forced displacement and irregular migration**. If the countries of transit and the countries of destination do not have sufficient resources, migration can in itself become a destabilising factor. That is why Switzerland takes a partnership approach to foreign policy on migration: it addresses the challenges and opportunities involved together with the countries of origin, of transit and of destination, for example as part of migration partnerships. Migration is a thematic focus area for Switzerland's international cooperation work. The Federal Council aligns its migration policy with that of the EU and its member states, where this is appropriate and in Switzerland's interest. Switzerland shows solidarity with the European countries that are hardest hit by the migration flows and plays a part in improving the protection of the Schengen area's external borders.

Due to rising needs, Switzerland is expanding its **humanitarian aid**. It is reinforcing international coordination and boosting local capacities. Sustainable aid: By linking humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peace promotion in a targeted manner, Switzerland reduces humanitarian needs in protracted crises. Forward-looking action: Switzerland is bolstering its contribution to disaster risk prevention. Emergency aid and reconstruction: Switzerland is helping in a direct, rapid and targeted manner, basing its emergency aid and support for reconstruction on the humanitarian needs on the ground and on the added value that its expertise can offer. In addition to this, it is promoting international humanitarian law.

Switzerland is a reliable partner in the area of **sanctions**. Sanctions are an important instrument to enforce international law, including in connection with the war against Ukraine. Switzerland is committed to the effective implementation of sanctions, and it works with other states and in particular with the EU to achieve this. In the UN, it is seeking to ensure that the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law are respected whenever sanctions are imposed and implemented. The negative impact of sanctions on civilian populations should be minimised. Switzerland takes a similar stance in the **fight against terrorism**, which needs to comply with the rule of law. Humanitarian missions must remain possible despite the fight against terrorism and sanction regimes. Combating terrorist financing remains crucial.

Objectives

12. **Good offices:** Switzerland will align both its established and new instruments with the changing geopolitical environment so that it can continue to foster peace and security, as well as a functioning rules-based international order. It will facilitate dialogue, negotiations and the search for compromise.
13. **Peace promotion:** In addition to its long-term peace policy, Switzerland will strengthen its capability to identify short-term avenues for action and use it to mediate, facilitate dialogue and resolve conflicts. It will enhance its contribution of high-value assets in the area of military peace promotion.
14. **Arms control and disarmament:** The Federal Council will support the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. It will promote the reinforcement of the arms control architecture. It will review and update its arms control and disarmament strategy in light of the changed international conditions.
15. **Humanitarian action:** Switzerland will expand its humanitarian aid by connecting it more closely with its activities in development cooperation and peace promotion. Compliance with international humanitarian law and protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts will remain priorities.

5.2 Prosperity and competitiveness

In order to ensure sustainable economic growth, even in the face of increasing geopolitical risks, and to strengthen Switzerland's appeal as a business location, the framework conditions in Switzerland must be continuously reviewed and adjusted if necessary. This applies to the business location, the financial centre and the ERI sector.⁶ At the same time, it is becoming more important to safeguard the corresponding foreign policy interests. This means helping to shape the relevant international conditions, incorporating them into domestic policy, and concluding bilateral and international agreements in the areas of business, trade, tax, and ERI that are as advantageous as possible. Resilience and diversification are also becoming key topics.

Framework conditions for resilience and diversification

The Swiss economy has so far managed to hold its own in a world shaped by crises. Economic policy underpins the economy's **resilience** by providing conditions in which companies have as many options as possible and can freely select their preferred option.⁷ International **supply and value chains** function properly if markets are as open as possible and internationally agreed rules apply. This results in competition, legal certainty and predictability, which are essential for sustainable economic growth. Securing these conditions remains vital for strengthening resilience and ensuring the security of supply. With this in mind, Switzerland is seeking opportunities to enhance its international cooperation in the area of critical goods, such as the Trade and Health Initiative launched during the pandemic within the framework of the WTO. It is focusing on the countries of Europe as strategic partners due to their geographical location and to their cultural, legal and political closeness to Switzerland. Switzerland examines the **industrial policy measures** of its European and like-minded trading partners and decides whether to participate on a case-by-case basis. A protectionist design of industrial policy initiatives is not in its interest, however.

Sustainability in bilateral free trade agreements

Switzerland sets out binding sustainability provisions in its free trade agreements. The state parties undertake to comply with the stipulated requirements in the areas of environmental protection and labour rights when pursuing the economic goals set out in the agreements. Switzerland monitors the implementation of sustainability provisions and addresses any issues systematically with its partner countries. To this end, Switzerland maintains, for example, bilateral working dialogues with selected partner countries. It continually examines and improves the monitoring mechanisms and ensures that the relevant stakeholders are involved and kept informed. Additionally, it checks regularly whether the provisions are still relevant and up to date.

Frontrunner in education, research and innovation

To ensure that Switzerland remains successful in a competitive and volatile environment, it is even more crucial than before that it remains a centre of excellence for education, research and innovation. Switzerland provides the necessary framework conditions to boost the competitiveness of ERI actors. It will continue its efforts to diversify its international partnerships, and to seize opportunities to develop new cooperation projects with promising countries. At the same time, it is strengthening its existing cooperation with its most important partners in the area of ERI, in particular by fostering close bilateral or multilateral collaboration in strategic areas. To this end, Switzerland uses the Swissnex network and its network of representations as a whole. As a host state, it is also paving the way for the long-term development of CERN and encouraging ERI actors to develop technologies that are relevant for future CERN experiments.

Science diplomacy

Switzerland's pole position in international rankings in the area of education, research and innovation provides a good basis for high-profile science diplomacy. Swiss science diplomacy helps to strengthen the international profile and competitiveness of Swiss actors in the area of education, research and innovation, and to support cooperation projects throughout the world. In turn, science can contribute to diplomatic efforts in the context of good offices, peace promotion and global governance as well as underpinning evidence-based foreign policy actions.

Sustainable economic and human development

Overall, the strategic orientation of international cooperation in 2021–24 has proven its worth. Cooperation activities have had to be adapted time and again due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war against Ukraine, coups, state over-indebtedness and numerous natural catastrophes. Switzerland has demonstrated that it has the necessary flexibility to deal with this. Flexibility will also be a feature of the International Cooperation Strategy 2025–28, which will place more emphasis on areas like health, promotion of food security and democracy (section 5.4).

The crises have underlined the importance of **economic resilience**. Hence, systematic promotion of the private sector and good economic framework conditions in developing countries are gaining in significance. Switzerland is supporting the development of the capital markets and MSMEs' access to sustainable financing. This includes promoting the use of financing instruments to mobilise private investments.

⁶ See the Federal Council's 2022 [overview of action to strengthen Switzerland as a business location](#), its 2020 [financial market strategy](#) and Switzerland's 2018 [International Strategy on Education, Research and Innovation](#).

⁷ The Federal Council's [Foreign Economic Policy Strategy of 24 November 2021](#).

Moreover, Switzerland is helping to boost productivity in international value chains and thus to create decent jobs. Inspired by its own vocational education system, it is advocating vocational training that is rooted in high-quality basic education and geared to the needs of the job market. In collaboration with the private sector, Switzerland is promoting international standards and **good corporate governance practices** that guarantee environmental, economic and social sustainability, and that respect human rights. It is bolstering the public institutions that shape economic life by fostering the responsible use of state resources, anti-corruption measures, reliable economic and trade policies, and a favourable environment for high-quality investments.

Economic development is only possible once a certain level of **basic services** can be guaranteed. Good-quality basic services in the areas of health, education, social security, drinking water and sanitation should be accessible even to the poorest populations. If these services can no longer be provided due to crises or conflicts, Switzerland steps in with humanitarian aid. Development cooperation focusing on the medium to long term helps the authorities in priority countries to ensure equal access to the supply of basic needs. One of the challenges is preserving natural resources while securing their distribution in ways that promote development. As Europe's water reservoir, Switzerland has proven expertise in the area of water management. It sets corresponding priorities in its [Guidelines on Water 2022–25](#).

Health

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that global health crises can compromise international security, economic development, social stability and gender equality. The [Swiss Health Foreign Policy](#) takes a comprehensive, coordinated approach, advocating the right of every human being to the highest attainable standard of health. The priority areas for action are health protection and humanitarian crises, equal access to medicines and medical technologies, sustainable health-care provision and digitalisation, determinants of health, global health governance and addiction policy. Switzerland supports key partners in the field of global health, most of which are headquartered in International Geneva.

Data, digitalisation and sustainable development

Data and digitalisation play a central role in reaching the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Data need to be available, for example in the areas of population, health and the environment, so that it is possible to react to challenges. Digital technologies have the potential to make transformative changes, but there is also a risk that parts of society and some countries will be left behind. Switzerland assists developing countries in building up robust data and statistics systems, in providing fair access to digital technologies and in using them. At the global level, Switzerland is helping to create trustworthy, transnational data spaces, taking digital self-determination into account. Switzerland is committed to strengthening digital governance based on international law.

Objectives

16. **Economic conditions:** Switzerland will improve its appeal as a business location domestically and internationally and promotes a rules-based international economic and financial order.
17. **Economic resilience:** Switzerland will provide the framework conditions for diversifying foreign trade in terms of geography, suppliers and buyers. To this end, it will reinforce its collaboration with partners, especially in the area of essential goods and services.
18. **ERI:** Switzerland will develop new bilateral and multilateral cooperation partnerships to strengthen its global strategic positioning. In addition, as CERN's host state, it will pave the way for the organisation's long-term development.
19. **Sustainable economic and human development:** Switzerland will improve access to the global market for its international cooperation priority countries and foster decent jobs for their populations. It will achieve this in particular by improving the framework conditions for the local private sector and by supporting local MSMEs.
20. **Provision of basic services:** In its priority countries, Switzerland will improve the access to and quality and coverage of basic services for the poorest communities.

5.3 The environment

Preserving natural resources and respecting the limits of our planet is essential to achieving sustainable development as defined in the 2030 Agenda. In its [2030 Sustainable Development Strategy](#) (2030 SDS), the Federal Council identifies the themes of climate, biodiversity and energy as priorities. There is a need for action in both domestic and foreign policy. Coherence between the relevant policy areas must be increased. It is vital to take a transparent approach to conflicts of objectives resulting from the demands that society and the economy place on the environment, especially in the areas of food systems, housing, leisure activities and mobility. Switzerland acts in a responsible manner and takes sustainability into account in its cooperation work.

Climate

Tackling the climate crisis is becoming a central task for domestic and foreign policy. Switzerland has been disproportionately affected by global warming. It is supporting the goal to limit climate warming to 1.5°C. To achieve this, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to be stepped up. The emission reduction targets set out in the [Paris Agreement](#) should be gradually raised. Switzerland is in favour of a solid climate regime that holds the largest emitters in absolute terms to account and sets a good example itself. It is working to ensure that states' obligations in tackling climate change are clarified.

Developing countries need to be given support in implementing climate policy and adopting climate measures, given that climate change is having increasingly serious consequences for sustainable development. Switzerland is supporting developing countries to combat and adjust to climate change, and is thus boosting their stability and security, among other things. To this end, it is contributing to the long-term transformation to inclusive, sustainable, low-emission and resilient food systems, and economic and financial models that conserve natural resources, especially water and energy. It is committed to ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable countries and communities are taken into account in international strategies and measures in the areas of climate, disaster risk reduction and the environment.

Implementing the principle whereby emission cuts abroad can be included in target achievement should prevent double counting and ensure environmental integrity. Switzerland seeks to conclude bilateral agreements on emission reductions abroad. It also aims to strike bilateral agreements with selected countries that allow it access to suitable **CO₂ storage facilities** abroad so that it can permanently store remote emissions that are difficult to avoid.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity plays a crucial role in humankind's survival. Varied, viable ecosystems form the basis for our food systems, regulate our climate, and provide clean air and water. Their condition has greatly deteriorated in recent decades. Abundant biodiversity that is resilient in the face of change could help mitigate climate change and its consequences. To preserve biodiversity, measures are needed at both the local and global levels. International coordination is essential.

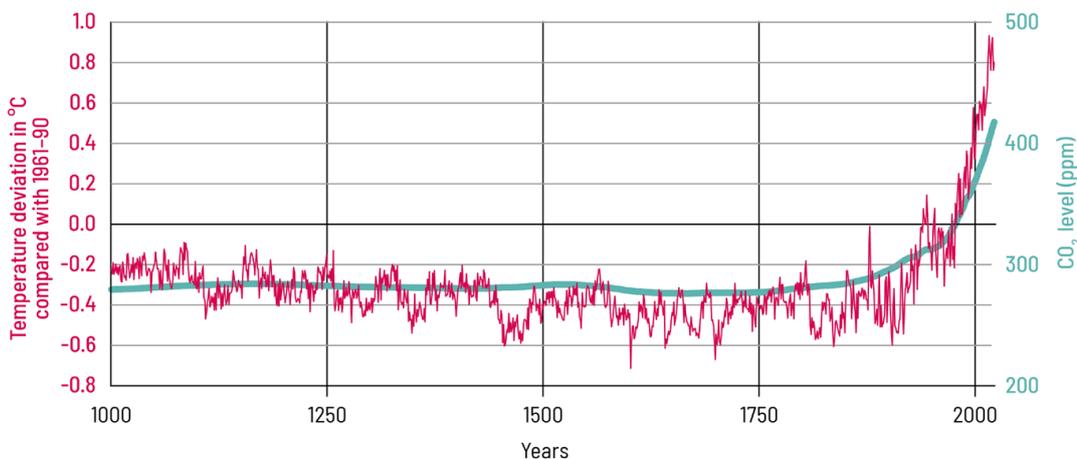


Figure 14: Concurrent rise in global CO₂ emissions (ppm) and the median temperature (in °C compared with 1961–90) [source: [Meinshausen et al. 2017](#); [Neukom et al. 2019](#); [Climatic Research Unit \(University of East Anglia\) and Met Office 2023](#)].

Switzerland is committed to ensuring that agreements relating to biodiversity are implemented effectively. One example is the Kunming-Montreal **Global Biodiversity Framework** agreed in 2022. Switzerland endeavours to strengthen synergies between individual environmental agreements as well as to implement these agreements and conventions and shape their financing mechanisms coherently. In multilateral processes, Switzerland places particular emphasis on combatting the most significant global causes of biodiversity loss. These include loss of habitat, excessive use of natural resources, climate change, environmental pollution and the spread of invasive, non-indigenous species.

Pollution

Increasing pollution from waste and chemicals is a key driver of biodiversity loss. The international chemical and waste regime encompasses various conventions ratified by Switzerland as well as a voluntary global chemical strategy. The latter has the joint backing of state actors (including Switzerland) and non-state actors. To date, the sustainability goals in this area have not been achieved. A strong international regime with a high level of protection is in Switzerland's interest. It is advocating an ambitious convention on combating **plastic pollution**, which aims to stop plastics from ending up in the environment by 2040 and which will set out the necessary bases for this purpose.

Switzerland is promoting framework conditions that ensure the sustainable use of natural resources, infrastructure and the financial system. Reinforcing global governance of mineral resources, taking into account their entire life cycle, is to be a key element in this regard. Metals and minerals play a crucial role in the energy transition, infrastructure and digitalisation.

Energy

Switzerland imports around 70% of the energy it needs (fossil fuels, nuclear fuel, wood and, at least in winter, electricity). Electricity trading with the EU must have a legal basis, as must future hydrogen imports and CO₂ exports. Swiss investments in energy, most of which are in Europe, also need to be secured under international law. The energy sector is responsible for the majority of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. Switzerland is working in the framework of the International Energy Agency **IEA** and the International Renewable Energy Agency **IRENA** to ensure that the relevant goals in the 2030 Agenda are achieved. In the International Atomic Energy Agency **IAEA**, it is helping to improve the security, safety and verification of civilian nuclear material and nuclear plants and to further develop international standards and conventions on nuclear security and safety. Switzerland is also working in various international bodies to secure the abolition of damaging subsidies for fossil fuels.

Worldwide, more than 700 million people have no access to **electricity**. 2.4 billion people cook with fuels that are damaging to their health and the environment. A secure, affordable supply of energy leads to better living conditions and improved production processes, both of which are essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Switzerland is promoting access to clean, affordable energy, an increase in energy efficiency and the decarbonisation of the energy sector in developing and emerging countries. Research, innovation and development are crucial in this area too.

Objectives

21. **Climate change:** Switzerland will advocate an effective international climate regime that is also binding on the major emitters. As part of its international cooperation work, it will support low-emission, climate-resistant development paths in its priority countries. It will secure access to CO₂ storage facilities abroad by means of bilateral agreements.
22. **Biodiversity and pollution:** Switzerland will promote the protection and sustainable use of global biodiversity. It will strive to secure greater synergies between the relevant conventions and to achieve the goals set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. In the areas of chemicals and waste, raw material extraction and trading, and infrastructure, it will aim for high standards.
23. **Energy:** Switzerland will update its energy foreign policy, in particular with a view to improving its energy security and civilian nuclear safety. It will drive forward the implementation of the energy-related goals in the 2030 Agenda and improve access to clean energy as part of its international cooperation work.

5.4 Democracy and governance

Democracies have been under pressure internally and externally for nearly 20 years now. The global **democratic 'recession'**, the rise of authoritarian trends and regimes, and the increasing repression and restriction of democratic freedoms in many states are a challenge for Swiss foreign policy. This issue must be tackled systematically and coherently.

Direct democracy is a key component of Swiss political identity. Switzerland has a constitutional and legal mandate to promote democracy. Strengthening democratic values and freedoms serves Swiss interests globally. Despite or precisely because of the restrictions on democratic freedoms, there is a strong desire for greater participation and stronger democratic institutions in many societies. It is important to make greater use of these opportunities, as well as of Swiss potential and expertise.

Switzerland is maintaining its existing democracy promotion network with other states. It is also enhancing policy dialogue and helping to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in selected countries. Moreover, it is engaged multilaterally and in exchanges with non-European democracies. Given the precarious state of democracy in the world, Switzerland wishes to sharpen its **profile in its foreign policy on democracy** with the aim of helping to reinforce democratic resilience worldwide. A corresponding conceptual paper will be issued at the start of the new legislative period.

The **rule of law** remains fundamental for good governance. One of its hallmarks is the separation of powers, especially the independence of the judicial system. Integrity in government administration and guaranteed ownership rights are also particularly important. Corruption undermines citizens' trust in the state and causes major economic damage. Switzerland promotes the reinforcement of the rule of law and the separation of powers as well as the protection of civil space. It assists national and local parliaments, governments and administrations in carrying out their core functions of legislation, execution, representation and oversight. Additionally, it supports civil society actors and the media in their supervisory function.

Human rights

Switzerland also has a constitutional and legal mandate to promote human rights. It stands up for the universality and the indivisibility of human rights. It encourages states to implement human rights in the physical world and the digital space and advocates responsible business conduct. Switzerland defines its thematic priorities – such as abolishing the death penalty, preventing torture, defending freedom of expression, promoting women's rights and protecting minorities – on the basis of its expertise or in response to new challenges that arise, for example as a result of digitalisation or of migration. It implements its human rights diplomacy in line with its [Guidelines on Human Rights](#), which will be renewed for the years 2025–28. The [national action plan on business and human rights](#) will also be updated.



Figure 15: Regional democratic progress and setbacks between 2012 and 2022. A country is 'autocratising' or 'democratising' if the difference is statistically significant and substantial according to the democracy index (source: [V-Dem](#)).

Switzerland's commitment to **equal opportunity** and equality is based on human rights and the Federal Constitution. Equal opportunity is a priority in the 2030 SDS. Moreover, the Federal Council adopted the [2030 Gender Equality Strategy](#) in 2021. Especially at the beginning of their lives, all people should have the same development opportunities and fair starting conditions in terms of education and career prospects, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion, language, economic and social status, way of life, political convictions or any physical or mental disability. Switzerland promotes equal opportunity and gender equality in its foreign policy too, especially regarding access to public services, resources and decision-making processes.

International law and soft law

Observing and promoting international law have always been priorities for Swiss foreign policy. However, the international norms applicable to Switzerland today do not just consist of bilateral and multilateral agreements, but increasingly also of soft law, national legislation with extraterritorial effect and private-sector standards. The trend towards fragmentation is likely to grow further, due to geopolitical tensions and the increasing significance of non-state actors, such as major technology companies. Switzerland needs to adjust its international-law, diplomacy and domestic-policy toolboxes in order to represent its interests and values effectively in this new environment.

The increasing significance of **soft law** leads to questions about democratic legitimacy. In Switzerland, there are legal bases to ensure that Parliament is involved in important soft-law projects. Supplementary provisions on this topic are currently being drafted. Particular attention will continue to be paid to the effective implementation of these bases. Above all, the United States, China and the EU are increasingly adopting **legal bases with extraterritorial effect** in order to unilaterally create legislation with de facto validity worldwide. Examples include measures in the area of sanctions and laws in the area of new technologies that are applicable in the entire digital space. As a result, internationally active Swiss companies find themselves exposed to several legal jurisdictions at the same time. This leads to legal uncertainty and can cause legal conflicts. Together with the affected Swiss parties, the Confederation will establish how to deal with overlapping legal jurisdictions and draw up practical guidelines. As this issue does not just impact Switzerland, but also many other states, the Confederation will examine whether international principles can be agreed in this area.

New technologies and digital governance

Switzerland advocates open, inclusive digital governance. Democratic self-determination, the rule of law and respect for human rights need to be guaranteed in the digital space too. Switzerland is promoting stronger connections between government lawmaking and private standard-setting in order to obtain an appropriate set of rules for new technologies. Standard-setting by private standards bodies (e.g. ISO or IEC) is of central importance, in particular in the regulation of new technologies. One example is the development of international **rules for artificial intelligence (AI)**, to which Switzerland is actively contributing. The Council of Europe is currently negotiating an AI convention, which represents a key basis for general AI principles. However, private standards bodies will bear primary responsibility for the technical implementation of the convention. Consequently, Switzerland will step up its exchanges with these organisations. In view of the rapid developments in AI, Switzerland also wishes to foster new governance formats that bring together authorities, private companies, international organisations and research institutions. With International Geneva as a global hub for digital governance, it possesses a key instrument for this endeavour.

Moreover, Switzerland is attempting to establish an inclusive, human-centred approach to data governance by launching a global initiative to create **trustworthy data spaces** based on digital self-determination. The aim is to facilitate a trustworthy digital economy for all the parties involved. Additionally, it is promoting **digital sovereignty**, that is, the ability of states and international organisations to act in the digital space. Switzerland is committed to ensuring that the data of governments and international organisations enjoy immunity, even if they are stored in clouds in other countries. To regulate data access rights in general, it is examining the feasibility of an international clearing house that can define binding access rights for the affected states and cloud providers in case of disputes.

Rapid scientific and technological developments are the basis for **anticipatory science diplomacy**, which expands Switzerland's well-established science diplomacy (section 5.2). It aims to identify the implications of new scientific developments for the global common goods as early as possible and to make them of use to the general public. Switzerland has the capability to make an internationally effective instrument available for this purpose, thanks to its strong position in education, research and innovation and as a host state of numerous organisations and global governance processes in Geneva. The [GESDA foundation](#), which was set up by the Federal Council and the Geneva State Council, develops new methods and initiatives in collaboration with science, diplomacy, business and civil society.

Objectives

- 24. Democracy:** Switzerland will sharpen its profile in its foreign policy on democracy. It will implement programmes to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in partner countries and it will promote democracy in policy dialogue and multilaterally.
-
- 25. Human rights:** Switzerland will work bilaterally and multilaterally to protect and promote human rights. It will help to consolidate the legal and institutional framework at the international level. It will advocate gender equality and in particular the rights of women and girls.
-
- 26. Extraterritorial legislation:** Switzerland will promote legal certainty for Swiss companies that are dealing with different legal jurisdictions. The Confederation will draw up corresponding guidelines for Swiss companies with the involvement of all stakeholders. Based on this, it will examine the feasibility of an international instrument that sets out principles for states to deal with extraterritorial legislation.
-
- 27. Digital governance:** Switzerland will promote open, inclusive digital governance that respects human rights. It will advocate a corresponding international regulatory framework for AI and launch a global initiative that creates trustworthy transnational data spaces based on digital self-determination and establishes international data governance.
-
- 28. Anticipatory science diplomacy:** Switzerland will position itself as a leader in this area, and it will work with actors in the area of education, research and innovation to ensure that scientific findings and recommendations will be taken into account in the decision-making of multilateral bodies at an early stage and to a greater extent. This will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of multilateralism.
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6 Instruments

6.1 Overview

Conducting foreign policy is the responsibility of the Federal Council. The FDFA is the designated responsible department. Its goals and functions are set out in a [Federal Council organisation ordinance](#). Various instruments are available to implement foreign policy, including the external network and citizen-oriented consular services, diplomacy, international cooperation, good offices and communication. These instruments are described in greater detail below. The international activities of specialist departments constitute further specific instruments, which are not presented here. Examples include economic and financial dialogues, migration partnerships, scientific and cultural exchanges, and collaboration between intelligence services.

These instruments are aligned with each other and deployed in a coordinated manner. The Federal Council speaks with one voice abroad and is positioned accordingly in the external network. The FDFA encourages its staff to develop their competencies and skills. It also promotes career permeability, experience outside the Confederation and equal opportunities.

External network and citizen-oriented services

In line with its independent foreign policy profile, Switzerland has a relatively large network of diplomatic and consular representations. These cover a broad area of tasks across the entire spectrum of diplomacy, international cooperation, and beyond. For example, they support Swiss companies abroad and they act as contact partners for the total of around 11% of Swiss citizens who live abroad with their families. Swiss nationals living abroad play an important role for the Swiss economy, research and other areas, and contribute to Switzerland's positive image. Additionally, the representations assist Swiss citizens who need help and support in emergency situations abroad (the Swiss take around 16 million trips abroad per year). They operate a worldwide system that efficiently processes approximately 750,000 visa applications. The representations implement security and crisis management to keep their operations running and protect their staff and assets.

Status in 2023

170 representations worldwide with approximately 4,000 employees (see annex)

One Switzerland = external network as a platform for various players within and close to the Confederation: business promotion (Swiss Business Hubs); education, research and innovation (Swissnex); defence, police and migration attachés; promotion of tourism (Switzerland Tourism)

Collaboration with Schengen partner states for cost-effective, global coverage in the area of visas: Switzerland represents other Schengen states in around 60 cases and is likewise represented by Schengen states in around 60 cases

A Crisis Management Centre provides support from Bern and via nine regional security advisers in the external network

Implementation of the 2030 Agenda with concrete projects run by the representations

Diplomacy

Diplomacy is at the heart of foreign policy. It aims to maintain and develop intergovernmental relations in a peaceful manner, to reach political agreements and negotiate legal settlements and monitor their implementation. Diplomacy represents Swiss interests bilaterally towards other states, in a multilateral framework and towards non-state actors. Foreign policy issues in all areas (including security, peace, disarmament, the economy, finance, energy, health, development, law, migration, the environment, transport, education, research, innovation, and culture) are dealt with by diplomacy. Consequently, the FDFA is not the sole institution responsible for diplomacy. For example, trade diplomacy, which has always been crucial, is managed by the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) based on [Switzerland's foreign economic policy strategy](#).

International cooperation

The Confederation's international cooperation comprises humanitarian aid, development cooperation and civilian peace promotion. *Humanitarian aid* is rather short-term in nature. It saves lives, helps to protect civilians and relieves the suffering of populations who are worst hit by disasters, crises and conflicts. *Development cooperation* is orientated towards the longer-term. It aims to strengthen institutions and improve the living conditions in the priority countries. To achieve this, the Confederation operates bilateral programmes, works within the framework of multilateral institutions (e.g. UN organisations, development banks) and runs global programmes. Its *civilian peace promotion* aims to prevent and resolve violent conflicts by deploying its expertise in confidence-building. The Confederation also supports international organisations and institutions by seconding civilian staff to them. *Military peace promotion* is not part of international cooperation, but it is closely tied to civilian peace promotion. The Confederation participates in the peacekeeping operations of international organisations with a UN or OSCE mandate by providing staff and equipment. The FDFA shares its institutional responsibility for international cooperation with the EAER, which is active in particular in the area of economic development cooperation.

Status in 2023

Diplomatic service with around 380 transferable diplomats, including 240 abroad

Specialists active in diplomacy/foreign policy within the FDFA and the external network, as well as in units with an international focus in all departments

Linguistic and cultural diversity as a specific strength of Swiss diplomacy

Status in 2023

Around 320 employees on the international cooperation career path, roughly half of whom are abroad. Numerous specialist employees and local employees with international cooperation tasks

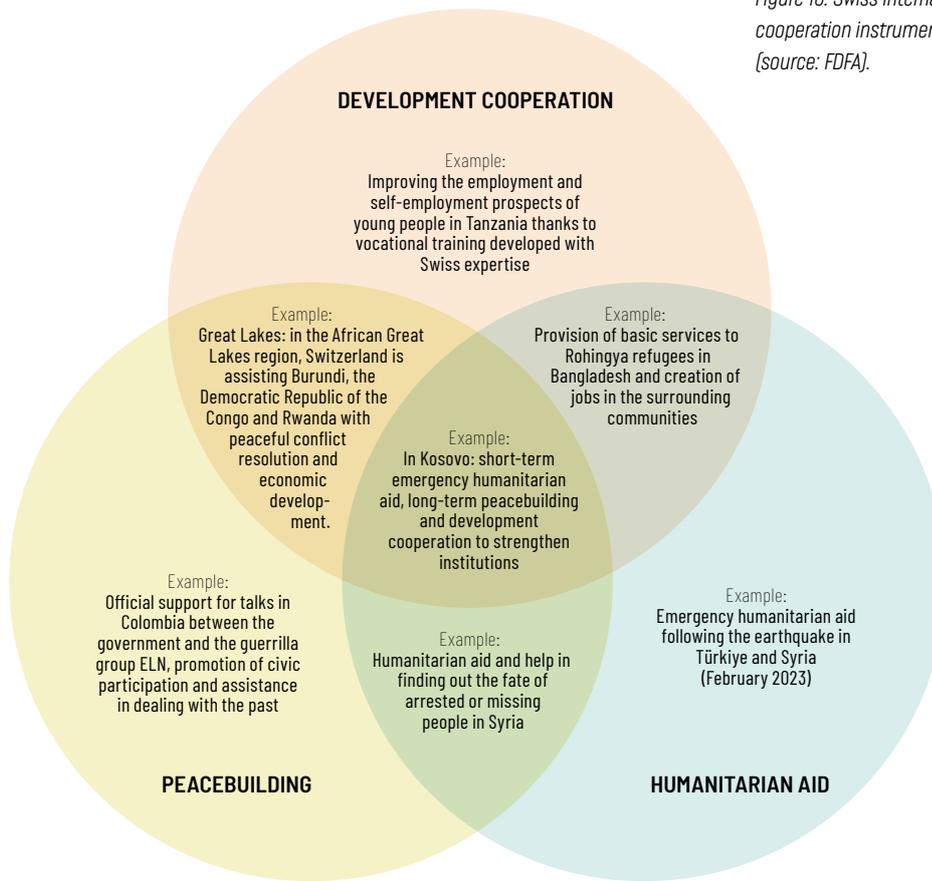
Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA); approximately 250 deployments in around 50 countries every year

Employees specialised in peacebuilding in various representations

100 civilian secondments and more than 250 military personnel on nine UN-mandated peacebuilding missions

Provision of military expertise for training purposes

Figure 16: Swiss international cooperation instruments (source: FDFA).



Good offices

Good offices can be seen as an instrument of diplomacy, but they also overlap with international cooperation and are presented separately here. They aim to keep discussion channels open and resolve conflicts peacefully. The term ‘good offices’ refers to three areas: *Protecting power mandates*: Switzerland takes over some of the consular and/or diplomatic tasks if two states break off their relations either fully or partially. *Host state*: Switzerland is a host state for peace conferences and negotiations. *Mediation and dialogue facilitation*: Switzerland enables dialogue between parties to a conflict as mediator by shaping peace processes, supporting dialogues or brokering between the parties. The good offices of Switzerland have a long-standing tradition and will continue to form an integral aspect of its foreign policy profile (sections 3.2 and 5.1). Switzerland makes its good offices available when its interests are affected, it can be effective and they are requested. It examines, on a case-by-case basis, the extent to which good offices or other instruments are best suited to its purpose of contributing to peace and stability. In each case, it also weighs peace policy interests against other interests. The Federal Constitution and the Federal Council’s strategies serve as the basis for weighing these interests.

Status in 2023

- Long-standing expertise and credibility

- Discretion, flexibility and fundamental willingness to talk to all actors

- Involved in around 20 peace processes

- Around half a dozen protecting power mandates

- Numerous dialogues in Switzerland (section 4.3)

- The three Geneva centres (GCSP, GICHD and DCAF) are recognised centres of expertise for peace and security policy

- The external network and special envoys (MENA, Sahel, Horn of Africa), among others, play crucial roles, in addition to specialised staff for peacebuilding

Communication

Communication is an essential component of politics, and is indispensable for achieving foreign policy goals. It increases foreign policy's effectiveness and scope for action, as well as underpinning diplomacy. Inside Switzerland, communication helps to anchor foreign policy domestically and to form the opinions of the Swiss population, enabling them to take well-informed decisions on all political levels. Within Switzerland's political system, communication and exchanges on foreign policy issues between all stakeholders are of particular importance, as evidenced by the Switzerland–EU dossier. As needed, coordinated communication between the Confederation and the cantons, is also important for strengthening foreign policy's long-term viability. Abroad, Switzerland's communication promotes recognition and understanding of its positions, interests and values, thereby helping to safeguard Switzerland's interests.

6.2 Neutrality

Neutrality is part of Switzerland's foreign policy identity (section 3.2). It is also one of Switzerland's foreign policy instruments. Neutrality was deliberately never enshrined as a goal in the constitution. Depending on the international constellation, the Federal Council has always adjusted the effective form of its neutrality, using the leeway that the constitution provides for. In its [report in response to the postulate 'Clarity and guidance in neutrality policy'](#) of 26 October 2022, the Federal Council traced the corresponding concepts. The basis has always been the law of neutrality, which is international law going back to the Hague Convention of 1907. The new situation in Europe following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has reignited debate on **how to handle neutrality**. In this case, the background situation looks different from earlier conflict constellations in Europe. This time, Switzerland's neighbours are not at war with each other. Nor is Europe split in two as it was during the Cold War, when the Iron Curtain ran relatively close to the Swiss border. Russia's war of aggression is a threat to Europe, including Switzerland. To date, Europe has reacted to it in a remarkably unified manner. In this context, some key Western partners have shown diminished understanding for how Switzerland is holding on to its neutrality (section 1).

That said, the geopolitical context also features competition between the major powers and a trend towards renewed bloc-building, which regional powers in particular are trying to circumvent by positioning themselves as middle-ground powers (section 2). Switzerland's profile as an advocate for dialogue and mutual understanding, as a European host state with a global impact and as a bridge-builder for effective multilateralism remains relevant in this context. Neutrality plays a part in this profile and continues to open up opportunities (section 3.2). It often contributes to Switzerland's good reputation, for example in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

Status in 2023

Target- and audience-oriented communication to explain the content and reasons for foreign policy decisions, both domestically and internationally

Alignment of communication activities between the departments and with the Federal Chancellery, and as needed the cantons, especially in the case of crises and strategic issues

Definition of objectives and priorities for communication abroad in the Strategy for Communication Abroad

In this altered environment, new challenges are arising with regard to neutrality. The war against Ukraine has highlighted the question of how Switzerland, as a neutral state, should deal with serious breaches of the UN Charter by a permanent member of the Security Council. In this case, the UN Security Council has failed to take binding measures against the offender. There are voices in international law that consider the law of neutrality to be inapplicable in such clear cases of military aggression. They claim that the law of neutrality has been obsolete in such circumstances since the introduction of the UN Charter in 1945. This would mean that neutral states could support the victim of aggression militarily just like any other state.

However, the vast majority of international law experts do not share this opinion. The prevailing view is that if the collective security system fails to work because of a deadlock in the UN Security Council, the **law of neutrality continues to apply despite serious breaches of the UN Charter**. The rules of the UN Charter and the law of neutrality thus exist side by side. In such cases, as a permanently neutral state, Switzerland abides by its obligations under the law of neutrality in the event of war.

The law of neutrality only imposes **obligations in the military arena**. Neutral states are not allowed to join any military alliances or to support belligerent states militarily. Likewise, they are not permitted to deliver weapons from their own army stocks to belligerent states, and they are obliged to observe the equal treatment requirement with regard to the private export of military goods. These rules are to be interpreted and applied on a case-by-case basis. Outside this rather narrow area that is defined by the law of neutrality, Switzerland is free as a neutral state to position itself with respect to belligerent states. Switzerland thus has considerable scope for action in security and foreign policy. The Federal Council set out the basis for this scope for action in

its [1993 White Paper on Neutrality](#). Aside from the obligations under the law of neutrality, neutrality does not prevent Switzerland from showing solidarity with Ukraine and its population through concrete action and support, nor does it stand in the way of a cooperative foreign and security policy to foster European security.

It is permissible under the law of neutrality for Switzerland to react to breaches of international law, to publicly condemn such breaches and to initiate non-military measures against belligerent states. Moreover, Switzerland is required by international law to support UN sanctions. Since 1998, it has also adopted EU sanctions on a case-by-case basis after weighing its interests. Where these **sanctions** only apply to economic activities, they do not fall under the law of neutrality. Military goods that directly influence the fighting ability of belligerent parties are an exception to this. In such cases, Switzerland is required to comply with the equal treatment provision in the law of neutrality when imposing and applying sanctions.

The adoption of EU sanctions against Russia has triggered discussions as to whether Switzerland should rule out the adoption of sanctions against belligerents for political reasons in view of their far-reaching consequences. The Federal Council had taken this decision to safeguard Switzerland's interests and to meet the imperative of showing solidarity with its most important partners. If Switzerland had refrained from joining the sanctions regime against Russia, it would have been isolated in the European and transatlantic arena and would most probably have had to reckon with considerable repercussions for its economy. It would have been incomprehensible for many like-minded states if Switzerland had not adopted its key partners' measures to maintain the international order – from which it greatly benefits – even though those measures are not subject to any restrictions under the law of neutrality.

As well as the sanctions issue, the war against Ukraine has also highlighted the issue of **war materiel exports**, especially the question of whether European states should be able to re-export war materiel manufactured in Switzerland to Ukraine. European partner states consider that the Swiss approach and Swiss war materiel legislation are hindering the provision of legitimate aid to Ukraine. Switzerland's reliability in the area of war materiel exports has been called into question, which is negatively impacting its domestic security-related technology and industrial base. In this context, proposals have been put forward in Switzerland on how Swiss legal provisions on re-export could be amended to facilitate re-exports by European partner states. The challenge remains of how to apply such amendments to existing interstate wars while complying with the law of neutrality.

The war against Ukraine has led to discussions about how the collective security system can be maintained if the UN Security Council is incapable of taking a decision. Since the 1950s, a **'uniting for peace'** procedure has been available, which is seen as a way out in some cases. Under this procedure, if the UN General Assembly deals with an issue of international peace or international security, it can pass a resolution with a two-thirds majority if the Security Council itself is unable to pass such a resolution due to a veto. This procedure has failed to establish itself over the decades, however. The procedure has only rarely been used, most recently at the end of February 2022 following Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. Additionally, such resolutions lack the legal effect of UN Security Council resolutions. Switzerland is prepared to work internationally to find solutions to further develop international law and to play a part in ensuring that the UN remains able to act even if the UN Security Council is dead-locked. For viable solutions to be drawn up, such work must take place on the multilateral level.

Switzerland's neutrality can only be effective if it is understood and acknowledged internationally and if it is considered useful. Yet some European states that originally constituted the main benchmark for neutrality hardly recognise the value of Switzerland's neutrality nowadays. Any change to the current practice and interpretation of the law of neutrality must be carefully considered and should not be derived solely from the debates about the war against Ukraine. Amendments to the War Materiel Act could give the Federal Council more scope for action, in particular with respect to future conflicts between states, without calling into question the law of neutrality. With the present FPS, the Federal Council stresses that Switzerland can also **share in European responsibility as a neutral state**. It aims to emphasise this even more in its foreign policy in the coming years.

7 Implementation partners

Broad networking is necessary to safeguard interests effectively. Switzerland works with numerous actors to implement its strategy. It cultivates partnerships and fosters networks not just with governments and international organisations, but increasingly also with non-state actors. In particular companies and scientific institutions are gaining in significance as partners. Domestically, the Federal Council takes a **Whole-of-Switzerland** approach, involving – in addition to Parliament and the cantons – all other relevant national stakeholders in the shaping and implementation of its foreign policy. Switzerland continually monitors the use of its resources and the attainment of targets by means of internal and external control mechanisms.

States: As a reflection of universality, Switzerland maintains relations with all states, if possible. It conducts political dialogues with many of them. Depending on the state, it also engages in thematic dialogues in areas such as human rights, financial issues, the environment, science and education, the digital and cyber arenas, and consular collaboration. Switzerland's network of representations abroad (section 6.1) and the representations of other countries in Switzerland play important roles. Switzerland takes a flexible approach to shaping partnerships (section 4.2), with its most important partners including European states and the EU.

International and regional organisations: As central hubs for dialogue and the reconciliation of interests, these organisations are a key platform for Switzerland to make its voice heard, to network and to contribute its expertise. Additionally, many organisations (UN agencies, the World Bank, etc.) take over operational tasks and act as partners for the implementation of the FPS. Switzerland attaches great importance to ensuring that such organisations operate with clear goals and transparent control mechanisms and that they strive to be efficient and effective. As a host state, it promotes good framework conditions for effective multilateral action.

Companies: A stable environment is important for private companies to be able to achieve their goals. As a result, there are often common interests. Companies are a key to prosperity and can play a part in improving the well-being of people on the ground. Responsible business conduct underpins sustainable development and helps to protect human rights. Without companies' resources, expertise and innovative strengths, it is not possible to implement the 2030 Agenda. The private sector is a key partner in particular for development cooperation. Closer collaboration with the sector is also of mutual interest in digital foreign policy and science diplomacy, for example with respect to governance issues.

Science: Scientific policy advice is becoming more important for foreign policy too, not just with a view to tackling crises, but also to better understand the complexity of many challenges and to formulate cross-sector solutions. As part of its science diplomacy, the Confederation is fostering collaboration between diplomacy and science, and contributing to the international networking of ERI players (section 5.2). As a sponsor of the GESDA Foundation, it attaches importance to anticipatory science diplomacy and is fostering the interplay of diplomacy, science, the private sector and NGOs in order to generate new impulses for multilateral cooperation (section 5.4).

Civil society: Switzerland works with non-governmental organisations in numerous contexts. These organisations are active, for example, in development cooperation, humanitarian aid, the promotion of human rights and sustainability. Other civil society actors, such as religious organisations, groups of citizens, non-profit associations and foundations, and interest groups may also be contact partners or implementation partners. The skills and output of non-state actors form the basis for corresponding partnerships.

Annex

Overview Objectives 2024–27

Geographic Objectives

- 1. Switzerland–Europe:** Switzerland will stabilise and further develop its bilateral approach to the EU in order to secure existing agreements, conclude new agreements, and ensure its participation in EU programmes. It will promote the development of networks with EU/EFTA states and the United Kingdom, ensure cross-dossier coherence and take action informed by a strategic overview.
- 2. Neighbouring states:** In cooperation with the cantons, the Confederation will strengthen Switzerland's partnerships with its neighbours and cultivate trust-based collaboration in its border regions.
- 3. Schengen/Dublin:** Switzerland will use its Schengen/Dublin association to help combat crime and irregular migration, as well as to protect the area's external borders and to promote an efficient Dublin system at the European level. By adopting and implementing further developments of Schengen, it will strengthen the security of Switzerland and Europe.
- 4. European security:** Switzerland will promote European security by means of enhanced cooperation with the EU and NATO as well as with partners on a bilateral basis. It will reinforce its participation in military peace promotion missions with high-value contributions and be ready to host a summit meeting of the European Political Community. It will also support the OSCE and offer dialogue formats for exchanges on security policy.
- 5. Ukraine:** Switzerland will attach strategic importance to supporting and reconstructing the country. It will show solidarity by contributing to Ukraine's reconstruction as part of its international cooperation work and with the help of other instruments. It will work to secure a fair, lasting peace.
- 6. Western Balkans:** Switzerland will promote the stability and European integration of the region. To this end, it will deploy its instruments in a regionally coordinated manner and bolster its collaboration with the countries of the Western Balkans, including with civil society (this encompasses the diaspora), with the private sector and with other donor countries.
- 7. Safeguarding regional interests:** Switzerland will position itself as a country that, with its independent foreign policy, strengthens Europe and European achievements within the constellation of global politics, aims for good relations with all the regions of the world, is committed to international law and contributes to global understanding. It will intensify its regional diplomatic efforts to identify opportunities for good offices. The geographical follow-up strategies will be examined in terms of objective attainment and adjusted accordingly for the future.
- 8. G20 countries:** Switzerland will step up the safeguarding of its interests with respect to non-European G20 countries. It will hold talks with these countries at least once a year at the level of a federal councillor.
- 9. Multilateralism:** Switzerland will advocate focused multilateralism that is geared to the rules-based order, subsidiarity and coherence, so that multilateral bodies can retain the ability to act in the future and contribute to a secure world. It will assume responsibility, especially as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Additionally, it will define its future positioning as a host state with its multilateralism strategy.
- 10. 2030 Agenda:** Switzerland will contribute to the efficient implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In doing so, it will give equal consideration to the three dimensions – the environment, the economy and society – in an integrated manner. It will promote an effective follow-up 'post-2030' agenda.
- 11. International Geneva:** Switzerland will reinforce the competitiveness of International Geneva, especially in the areas of digitalisation, science diplomacy and the environment. It will also provide modern infrastructure in collaboration with the Canton of Geneva.

Thematic Objectives

12. **Good offices:** Switzerland will align both its established and new instruments with the changing geopolitical environment so that it can continue to foster peace and security, as well as a functioning rules-based international order. It will facilitate dialogue, negotiations and the search for compromise.
13. **Peace promotion:** In addition to its long-term peace policy, Switzerland will strengthen its capability to identify short-term avenues for action and use it to mediate, facilitate dialogue and resolve conflicts. It will enhance its contribution of high-value assets in the area of military peace promotion.
14. **Arms control and disarmament:** The Federal Council will support the vision of a world without nuclear weapons. It will promote the reinforcement of the arms control architecture. It will review and update its arms control and disarmament strategy in light of the changed international conditions.
15. **Humanitarian matters:** Switzerland will expand its humanitarian aid by connecting it more closely with its activities in development cooperation and peace promotion. Compliance with international humanitarian law and protection of civilian populations in armed conflicts will remain priorities.
16. **Economic conditions:** Switzerland will improve its appeal as a business location domestically and internationally and promotes a rules-based international economic and financial order.
17. **Economic resilience:** Switzerland will provide the framework conditions for diversifying foreign trade in terms of geography, suppliers and buyers. To this end, it will reinforce its collaboration with partners, especially in the area of essential goods and services.
18. **ERI:** Switzerland will develop new bilateral and multilateral cooperation partnerships to strengthen its global strategic positioning. In addition, as CERN's host state, it will pave the way for the organisation's long-term development.
19. **Sustainable economic and human development:** Switzerland will improve access to the global market for its international cooperation priority countries and foster decent jobs for their populations. It will achieve this in particular by improving the framework conditions for the local private sector and by supporting local MSMEs.
20. **Provision of basic services:** In its priority countries, Switzerland will improve the access to and quality and coverage of basic services for the poorest communities.
21. **Climate change:** Switzerland will advocate an effective international climate regime that is also binding on the major emitters. As part of its international cooperation work, it will support low-emission, climate-resistant development paths in its priority countries. It will secure access to CO₂ storage facilities abroad by means of bilateral agreements.
22. **Biodiversity and pollution:** Switzerland will promote the protection and sustainable use of global biodiversity. It will strive to secure greater synergies between the relevant conventions and to achieve the goals set out in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. In the areas of chemicals and waste, raw material extraction and trading, and infrastructure, it will aim for high standards.
23. **Energy:** Switzerland will update its energy foreign policy, in particular with a view to improving its energy security and civilian nuclear safety. It will drive forward the implementation of the energy-related goals in the 2030 Agenda and improve access to clean energy as part of its international cooperation work.
24. **Democracy:** Switzerland will sharpen its profile in its foreign policy on democracy. It will implement programmes to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in partner countries and it will promote democracy in policy dialogue and multilaterally.
25. **Human rights:** Switzerland will work bilaterally and multilaterally to protect and promote human rights. It will help to consolidate the legal and institutional framework at the international level. It will advocate gender equality and in particular the rights of women and girls.
26. **Extraterritorial legislation:** Switzerland will promote legal certainty for Swiss companies that are dealing with different legal jurisdictions. The Confederation will draw up corresponding guidelines for Swiss companies with the involvement of all stakeholders. Based on this, it will examine the feasibility of an international instrument that sets out principles for states to deal with extraterritorial legislation.
27. **Digital governance:** Switzerland will promote open, inclusive digital governance that respects human rights. It will advocate a corresponding international regulatory framework for AI and launch a global initiative that creates trustworthy transnational data spaces based on digital self-determination and establishes international data governance.
28. **Anticipatory science diplomacy:** Switzerland will position itself as a leader in this area, and it will work with actors in the area of education, research and innovation to ensure that scientific findings and recommendations will be taken into account in the decision-making of multilateral bodies at an early stage and to a greater extent. This will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of multilateralism.

External network in Europe



Status: 31.01.2024

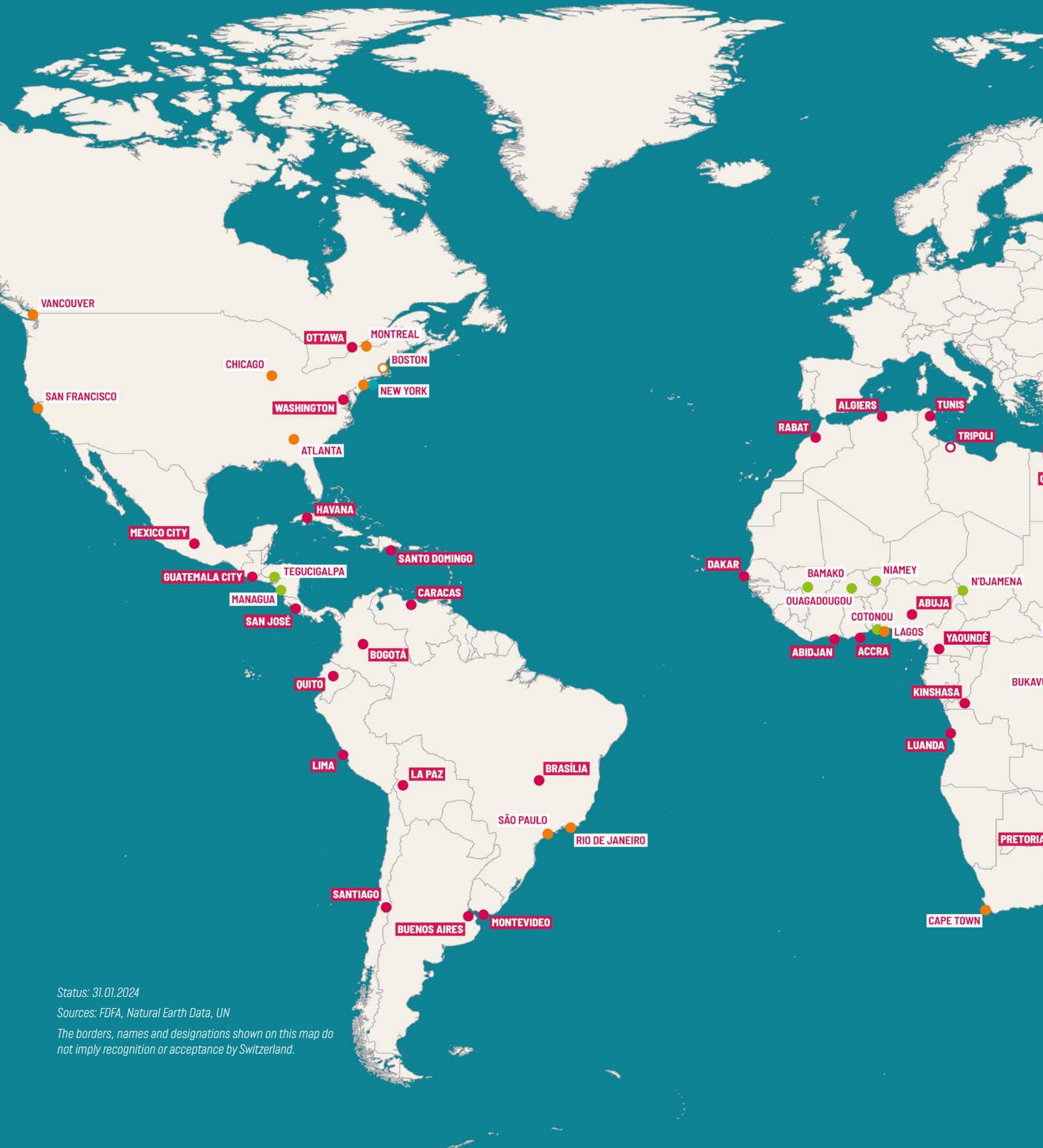
Sources: FDFA, Natural Earth Data, UN

The borders, names and designations shown on this map do not imply recognition or acceptance by Switzerland.



- EMBASSY ○ TEMPORARILY CLOSED EMBASSY ● REPRESENTATION OFFICE ● COOPERATION OFFICE
- GENERAL CONSULATE ● CONSULATE ● PERMANENT MISSION/REPRESENTATION ● OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

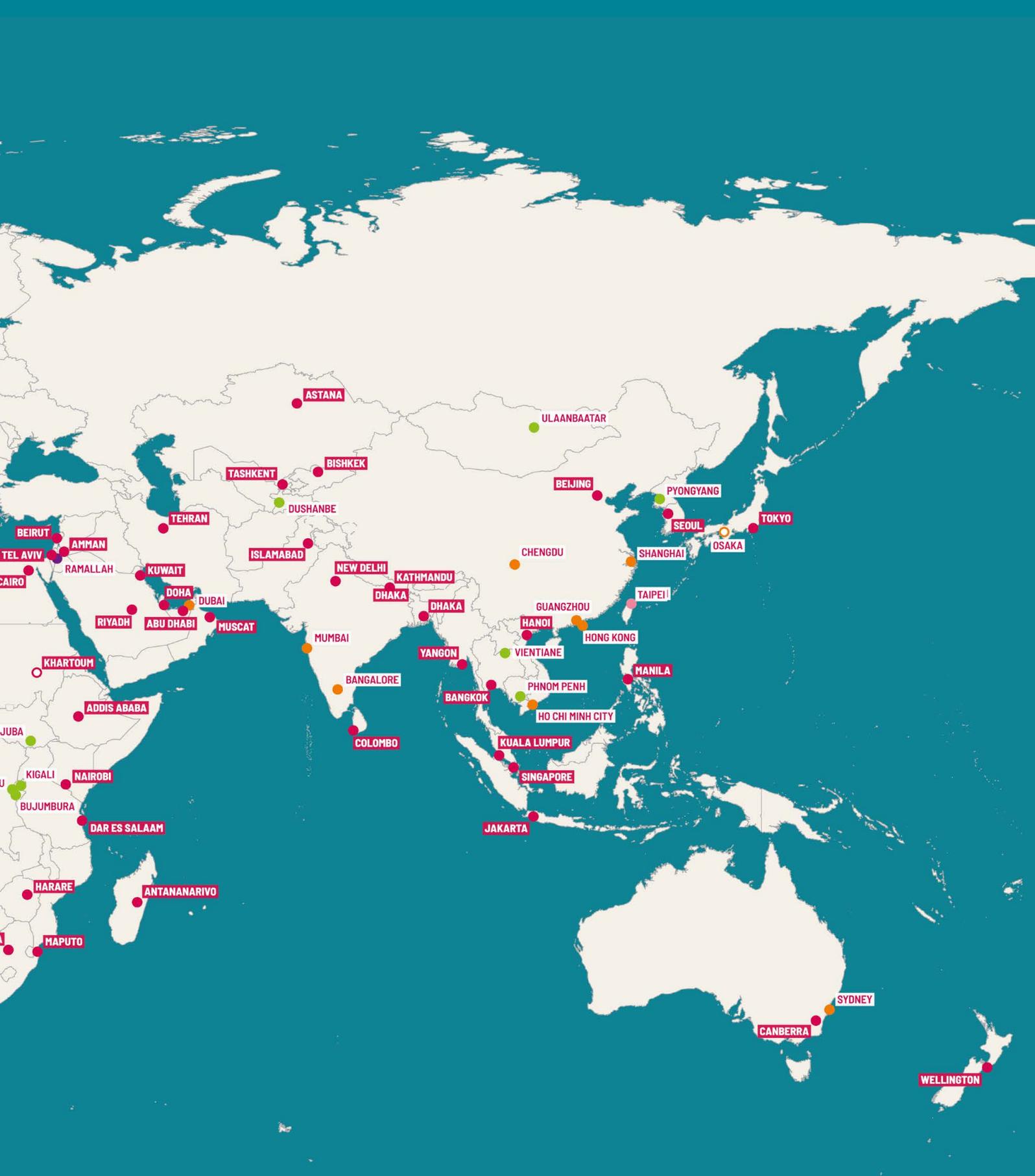
External network outside of Europe



Status: 31.01.2024

Sources: FDFA, Natural Earth Data, UN

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- **PERMANENT MISSION/REPRESENTATION**
- **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

List of abbreviations and acronyms

2030 SDS	2030 Sustainable Development Strategy
AI	Artificial intelligence
BRICS	An informal grouping of Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa (with additional states from 2024)
CERN	European Organization for Nuclear Research
CO ₂	Carbon dioxide
COP30	30th Conference under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance
EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ERI	Education, research and innovation
ETH	Federal institute of technology
EU	European Union
EUFOR Althea	European Union Force Bosnia and Herzegovina
Europol	European Police Office
EUSALP	Macro-regional EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
FACs	Foreign affairs committees
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
FPS	Foreign policy strategy
FSB	Financial Stability Board
G20	Group of Twenty (African Union, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States)
G7	Group of seven (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States)
GCSP	Geneva Centre for Security Policy
GDP	Gross domestic product
GESDA	Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IEA	International Energy Agency
IEC	International Electrotechnical Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IRENA	International Renewable Energy Agency
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MERCOSUR	Common Market of the South (Mercado Común del Sur)
MSMEs	Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USD	US dollar
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

Glossary

The FDFA website contains a [glossary](#) with foreign policy terms, which is kept continually up to date. The aim of the glossary is to contribute to a common understanding of foreign policy terms.



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