



## **Embargo: Until start of press conference**

# **FDFA contribution to the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic**

## **General**

COVID-19 does not stop at national borders. The rapid spread of the pandemic and its enormous economic consequences make cross-border cooperation between states vitally important. This cooperation has already proven to be a key factor in Switzerland's management of the crisis. For example, it has made it possible to secure the delivery of goods that had been blocked at Switzerland's borders with neighbouring countries and to ensure the flow of cross-border commuters. In addition, a large number of travellers have been able to return to Switzerland on repatriation flights.

FDFA priorities: 1 – Support for Swiss nationals abroad. 2 – Diplomatic tasks. 3 – International cooperation contributions.

## **1 – Support for Swiss nationals abroad**

### **Repatriation flights for Swiss nationals travelling abroad**

3 April: 16 special flights - Kyiv, Casablanca, Bogota, Dakar, Lima (first flight), Santiago de Chile, Algiers, Buenos Aires, Bangkok, Cebu/Manila, Tunis, Yaoundé/Douala, Lima (second flight), Yangon, Quito, Phuket

Repatriation flights in progress or confirmed: Phnom Penh, Sidney, Goa/Dubai, Belgrade, Bangkok/Vientiane

- By 3 April: 2,100 Swiss nationals and 1,600 foreign nationals (including foreign nationals living in Switzerland) were repatriated to Switzerland. Over 800 Swiss nationals were repatriated by partner states.
- The Swiss representations concerned have demonstrated enormous dedication and initiative in making the repatriations possible.
- The Crisis Management Centre (KMZ) has increased its operational capacity from 25 to 60 specialists.
- Travel Admin app I: active on approximately 132,800 mobile devices as of 1 April 2020 (23 Feb.: approx. 73,000)
- Travel Admin app II: approximately 11,200 trips are currently registered on the app. A week ago the number was about 16,200.

### **Helpline**

Around 20,000 email and telephone enquiries have been received since mid-March. Peak periods: approx. 850 phone and 1,000 email enquiries per day. Currently: 250–500 calls and over 300 email enquiries.

→ Helpline staff has been increased from 15 to 80 (mainly working part-time).

### **Consular assistance abroad**

Not all Swiss nationals travelling abroad can be given seats on repatriation flights. Swiss representations and the Consular Directorate are preparing for a significant increase in consular assistance activities.

### **Network of representations**

Switzerland's 170 representations abroad are a key instrument in crisis management. They provide assistance for Swiss nationals who are currently unable to return to Switzerland independently (repatriation flights and consular assistance), offer assistance and support for Swiss nationals living abroad and work on behalf of Swiss businesses worldwide.

## **2 – Diplomatic tasks**

**High-level bilateral discussions to address specific problems.** For example: Import of personal protective equipment

Consultation with neighbouring countries. For example: Border management, freedom of movement for cross-border commuters, repatriation flights

Coordination at European level. For example: Participation in EU crisis management efforts

## **3 – International cooperation**

### **Emergency assistance**

The SDC has allocated CHF 18 million for contributions to UN organisations (including the WHO), the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and local healthcare systems. It has also delivered emergency aid to China and Nepal (in consultation with the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), the Federal Office of Information Technology, Systems and Telecommunication (FOITT) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).

### **Emergency aid coordinated within Switzerland**

Requests from other states for support with medical supplies: equipment, protective and hygienic supplies, production of disinfectant agents (assessed by the FOPH, FOITT and SECO).

### **Medium and long-term measures**

Reallocation of funds totalling CHF 40 million within the framework credits: more funds for health programmes and strengthening developing countries' resilience to the economic crisis.