

# Maritime Strategy 2023–27



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

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\* This Appendix is not included in the print version, but may be accessed through the QR code on page 19 of this publication. It is only available in French and German.

# Foreword



The sea is the oldest habitat on earth from which all life originated.

Two thirds of our planet is covered by water. Water is therefore a key component of sustainable development. Healthy oceans are vitally important to us as humans. The oceans play a critical role in regulating the climate and are key to overcoming other urgent global challenges such as food security, energy supply, sustainable global logistics chains and environmental change. Landlocked Switzerland also depends and has an impact on marine ecosystems, given that several major European rivers have their source in Switzerland.

Without oceans to provide transport routes, a globalised economy could not exist. As a globally oriented economy, Switzerland relies on seamless international logistics chains and maritime trade. The exploration and sustainable exploitation of the world's oceans are also crucial to Switzerland. As Swiss companies and institutions play a major role in all these areas, the Federal Council seeks to ensure that the framework conditions in which they operate are optimal. Switzerland is among the leading ship-owning nations in the global rankings. Having considered various options for seafaring under the Swiss flag in future, the Federal Council has decided to prioritise the maintenance of a secure, reliable, streamlined and sustainable regulatory framework.

Based on all these considerations, maritime issues are clearly very important to landlocked Switzerland. I am therefore pleased that the Federal Council has adopted a maritime strategy for the first time.

The Maritime Strategy, which is based on Switzerland's [Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23](#), covers international law, the economy, scientific research, the environment, social aspects, and the Swiss flag and sets out thematic priorities, objectives and measures for the 2023–27 period.

This strategy was drawn up in consultation with numerous stakeholders and is intended to strengthen the coherence of Switzerland's maritime policy. In implementing the policy, a whole-of-Switzerland approach will be followed. The Maritime Strategy also seeks to provide an overarching frame of reference for various stakeholders in the Swiss private sector, scientific community and civil society.

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

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

# 1. Background

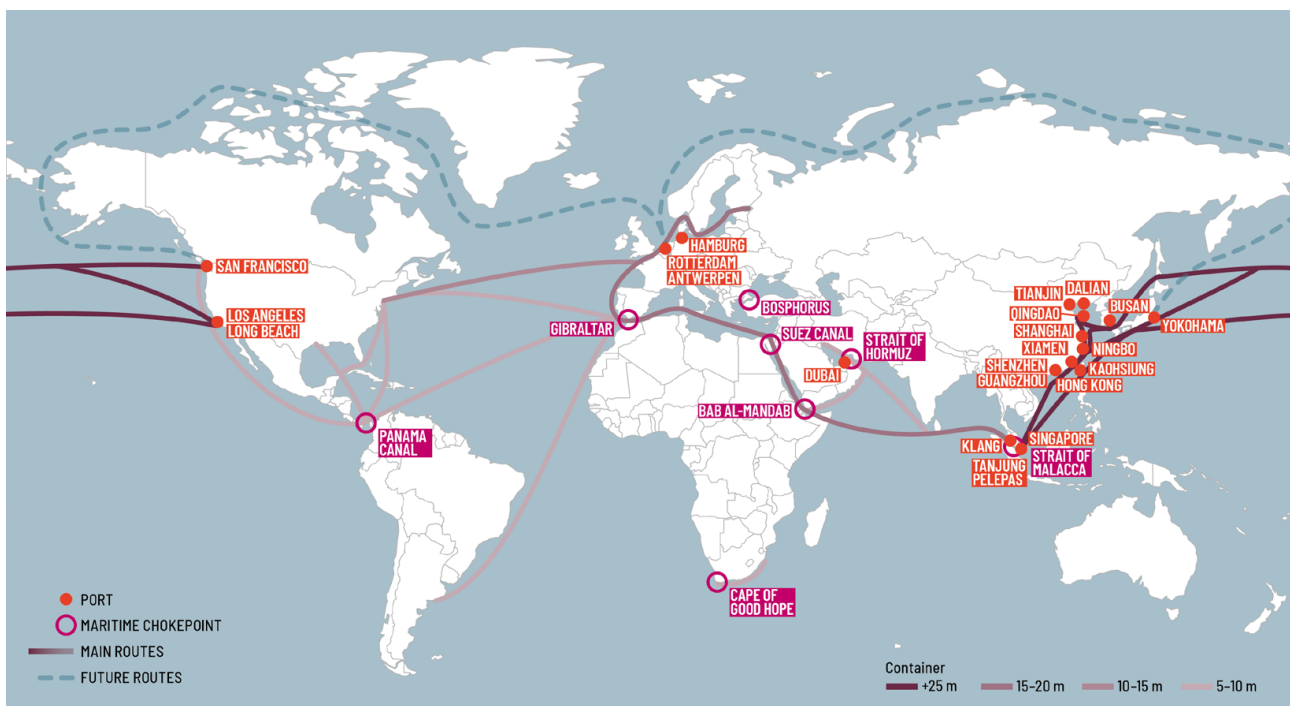
Seas and oceans have become an increasingly important political issue at international level. The latest technologies can be deployed everywhere for both military and civilian purposes, including over and on the ocean surface and in the ocean depths, enabling global transport routes to be monitored and untapped natural resources to be exploited.

The [2030 Agenda](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015 and the Agenda's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have given fresh impetus to efforts to achieve sustainable development across the world. [SDG 14](#) addresses the impact of human interaction with the oceans. It is underpinned by targets addressing conservation and the sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources, including coastal areas, capacity building and ocean governance.<sup>1</sup>

A number of marine regions are hotspots for political, military, state and/or non-state interference. Growing rivalry between the major powers and distancing of the West from mid-tier regional powers, which threaten to pursue territorial interests through non-peaceful means, could give rise to conflict over access to, the use of and control over marine regions.

As a result, established maritime states are increasingly competing with emerging ones. In recent years, tensions have arisen, for example, in the Persian Gulf, Eastern Mediterranean, Black Sea and South China Sea. China and the US are also increasingly vying for supremacy in the Pacific by employing diplomatic and economic means, but also, to an ever growing extent, military means. Small countries like Switzerland must be able to rely on oceans being governed by the rule of law, not by the law of the strongest. Switzerland is therefore committed to ensuring that seas are governed by a **rules-based order** built on the [United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#). It is essential to ensure that disputes are settled peacefully through the [International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea](#) or other dispute settlement mechanisms.

Switzerland's waterways flow into three maritime regions: the Mediterranean, Northeast Atlantic and Black Sea.<sup>2</sup> Ocean shipping facilitates trade and interaction between all nations and has contributed to economic development and prosperity throughout history. Up to 90% of goods traded around the world are transported by sea at least to some extent. The supply of energy, food and raw materials relies



Main maritime transport routes. FDFA image

1 <https://council.science/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/SDGs-interactions-14-life-below-water.pdf>.

2 The Rhine (North Sea); Rhône (Mediterranean), Ticino (Adriatic/Mediterranean); Inn (Black Sea).

on seaborne transportation. The **maritime economy** is at the centre of the global value chains on which Swiss consumers and industry rely. Switzerland has no direct access to the sea and therefore relies on logistics operating securely, efficiently and sustainably along these value chains. Swiss companies are also among the leading providers of maritime services.<sup>3</sup> Switzerland therefore has an interest in improving the business environment for the maritime sector.

Organic and chemical pollutants, waste and noise pollution are heavily contaminating regional and international marine ecosystems and fish stocks are in decline. Deep-sea mining that is not governed by international rules poses a considerable risk to the environment. Switzerland is also committed to further developing internationally agreed **environmental and social** rules and standards. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of social factors, i.e. decent working and living conditions for seafarers.

Research and innovation are essential to harnessing scientific knowledge and developing practical approaches to addressing environmental, energy, security and social challenges. Although Switzerland has an excellent university system and is exceptionally well placed to contribute to **maritime scientific research**, its research capabilities are not widely recognised. Opportunities for participation could be better exploited in line with Switzerland's approach to policy development, including in international forums, which should be based on scientific findings.

Switzerland initially became aware that it lacked merchant ships during the First World War. It experienced another supply crisis during the Second World War, which forced it to deploy ships around the world, eventually establishing its own maritime fleet flying the **Swiss flag** in 1941. The venture proved successful, so it was decided at the end of the war that the fleet should be retained. Merchant ships owned by Swiss private sector companies and operated by Swiss ship owners now sail on all the world's oceans under the Swiss flag. The [Federal Act on Navigation under the Swiss Flag](#) has essentially remained unchanged since it was enacted in 1953 and has not kept pace with recent social, economic and technical developments. In mid-2017, the federal government also ceased financial support for Swiss-flag-flying ships under its supply policy. The Act does not adequately address current needs and circumstances, with the result that only very few ships still fly the Swiss flag. The legal foundations therefore need to be updated in line with national and international rules.

Switzerland also intends to make a contribution on maritime-related issues and influence future developments. The Maritime Strategy is intended to strengthen cooperation between the relevant federal offices. Adopting an integrated approach in relation to all stakeholders will help achieve consistency in federal policy for the maritime sector. This integrated approach, combined with a common understanding of interests and objectives, will help Switzerland to fully exploit its maritime potential in policy, economic, social, legal and scientific terms, while also taking environmental aspects into account.

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<sup>3</sup> UNCTAD (2021). Review of Maritime Transport 2021.

# 2. Thematic priorities

The Maritime Strategy sets out five thematic priorities, covering the main areas in which Switzerland is active. An objective has been set and concrete measures identified for each priority.<sup>4</sup>

The objectives and measures described in the strategy are not intended to be exhaustive. Other objectives and measures may be added, where necessary, following consultation between the relevant federal offices.<sup>5</sup>

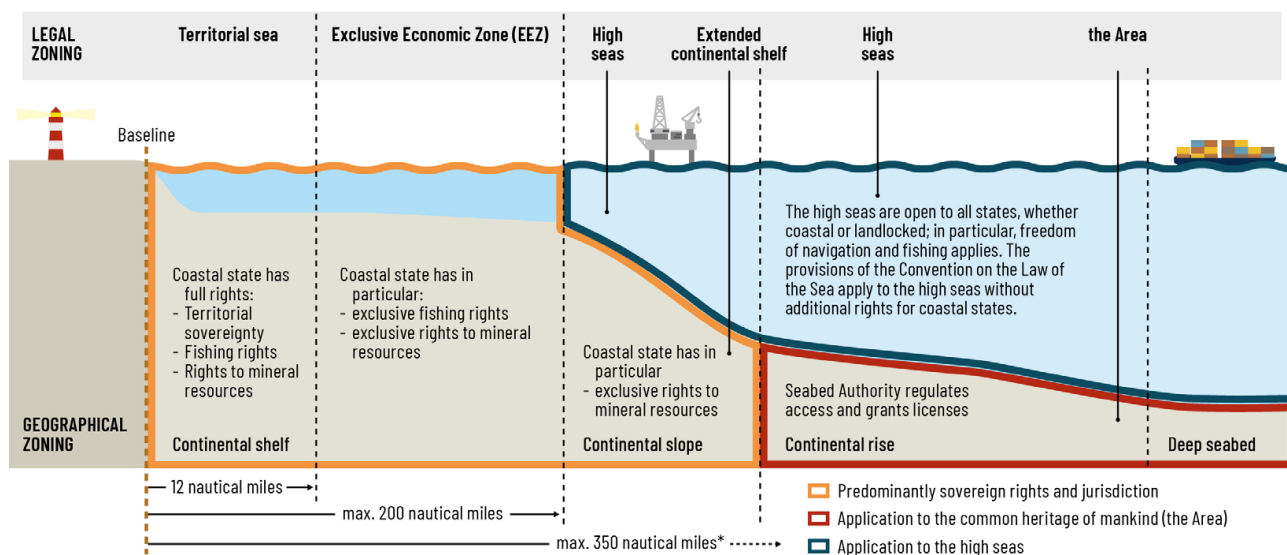
<sup>4</sup> The Maritime Strategy does not address maritime security.

<sup>5</sup> See section 3 'Implementation' below.

## 2.1 Rules-based maritime order (international law)

Switzerland is among the best connected countries in terms of access to the global economy. It has an interest in ensuring that existing international law is universally upheld and supports **a rules-based maritime order** that is firmly enforced. Switzerland is also committed to maintaining and developing current international law<sup>6</sup> to ensure that the

oceans are protected and exploited on a sustainable basis. It also calls for compliance with non-legally binding norms, standards and codes of conduct, and ensures that seagoing vessels flying the Swiss flag comply with applicable international standards and rules.



UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, rights of access based on distance from the coast. FDFA image

<sup>6</sup> See page 19: Overview of agreements in the maritime sector

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## Objectives and measures

### A. Switzerland advocates a global rules-based maritime order in relevant international bodies and is committed to strengthening international law.

#### A1. Strengthen international law (application, enforcement, further development)

- A1.1 Actively participate in the further development of international law in the maritime context.
- A1.2 Exercise Switzerland's rights through the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and other dispute settlement mechanisms.
- A1.3 Influence relevant bodies, forums and negotiations with a view to safeguarding the rights of landlocked states.

#### A2. Adopt the body of rules under international law

- A2.1 Advance the body of law governing maritime matters, including, in particular, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions.
- A2.2 Ratify agreements and amended agreements that are aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda.

#### A3. Strengthen Geneva as a location for organisations operating within the maritime sector.

- A3.1 Exploit synergies by promoting networking between Geneva-based international maritime actors in relation to global trade, intellectual property, the environment, peace and security, humanitarian aid, human rights and healthcare.
- A3.2 Adopt an attractive host state policy with a view to creating optimum locational conditions for organisations operating in the maritime sector.

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## Effectiveness and added value:

- Establishes stable conditions for the maritime industry and protects and promotes the sustainable exploitation of oceans, which in turn helps to promote and maintain peace and security.
- Also strengthens Geneva as a location for the maritime sector.
- Creates opportunities for Switzerland to influence international bodies through active participation.

## 2.2 Maritime economy

The maritime economy is essential to the global value chains on which Swiss consumers and industry rely. Some 90% of intercontinental trade is conducted by sea. In terms of performance, maritime shipping is by far the cheapest and most environmentally friendly method of transport. Seagoing vessels carry significantly higher volumes of cargo and produce significantly fewer CO2 emissions than land or air transport. It is essential to retain this comparative advantage. The [tonnage tax on seagoing vessels](#)<sup>7</sup> is a globally accepted mechanism for promoting maritime shipping and is commonly levied in the EU, for example. It is thus a key measure to attract the business of highly mobile shipping companies. Parliament has therefore commissioned the Federal Council to prepare a bill for the introduction of the tonnage tax. The Federal Council's dispatch on the Federal Tonnage Tax Act was submitted to Parliament on 4 May 2022. It is currently being deliberated by Parliament.<sup>8</sup>

There are over hundred double taxation agreements and other taxation agreements relating to shipping companies and airlines that provide international transport services. These agreements create legal certainty and prevent companies and staff from being taxed twice. As a general rule, the agreements provide for shipping companies to be taxed in the country in which the undertaking is established.

Free trade agreements ensuring a level playing field in terms of access to markets and infrastructure create favourable locational conditions for shipping and logistics companies.

In negotiating free trade agreements, Switzerland aims to ensure that these sectors have access to markets on a non-discriminatory basis. To achieve greater legal certainty and remove administrative barriers, it will be necessary to agree terms that go even further than the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation, especially with key maritime states.

Switzerland has a whole ecosystem of companies providing shipping and related services, including chartering, freight forwarding and multimodal transportation. Commodities trading and financing are also closely linked to the shipping industry. Some of the world's leading shipping, chartering, inspection and trading companies are based in Switzerland. The 60 or so shipping companies based in Switzerland operate around 900 ships, one of the 13 largest fleets in the world. The industry provides jobs for several thousand persons.

Swiss companies are well placed in both the merchant shipping and international Rhine shipping sectors.

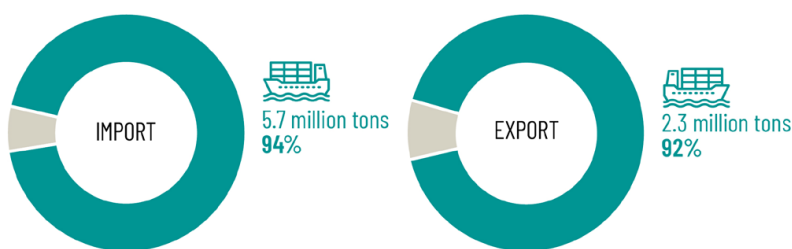
Favourable conditions are essential to Switzerland retaining its appeal as a place to do business, and to incentivise companies to continue using the Swiss flag. A tonnage tax may contribute to this.

The highly qualified workforce is also a key advantage and adds to Switzerland's appeal as a business location.

### SHARE OF FREIGHT TRANSPORT VIA THE RHINE



### SWITZERLAND'S INTERCONTINENTAL FOREIGN TRADE WITH OCEAN-GOING VESSELS



Importance of ocean shipping for Swiss foreign trade. FDFA chart

<sup>7</sup> This is an alternative method of taxing profits, where tax is not assessed on the basis of profits actually generated, but calculated as a fixed amount based on the vessel's cargo capacity for each day of operation. Companies may opt to be taxed on the basis of tonnage, which allows profitable companies to pay less tax.

<sup>8</sup> The National Council approved the Federal Act on Tonnage Tax for Seagoing Vessels (Tonnage Tax Act, BBl 2022 1253) on 13 December 2022. The Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation of the Council of States (WAK-SR) commenced consultation on the bill on 14 February 2023 and conferred additional detailed mandates on the Federal Administration, including with regard to constitutionality.



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## Objectives and measures

B. Switzerland is committed to improving business conditions in the maritime sector.

### B1. Improve market access for international maritime services

B1.1 Improve market access for maritime services by participating in multilateral regulatory forums or negotiating free trade agreements.

### B2. Maintain an attractive tax regime

B2.1 Maintain and expand the existing network of double taxation agreements and possibly introduce a tonnage tax.

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## Effectiveness and added value:

- Creates favourable conditions for the maritime industry, enhancing Switzerland's appeal as a place to do business.
- Facilitates access to foreign markets.
- Ensures a level playing field with other global maritime centres.

## 2.3 Marine environment and social issues

Many international organisations and bodies have established rules and regulations to protect and ensure the sustainable use of marine resources, ensure environmentally sound shipping, preserve the natural and cultural assets of oceans and provide decent working conditions.

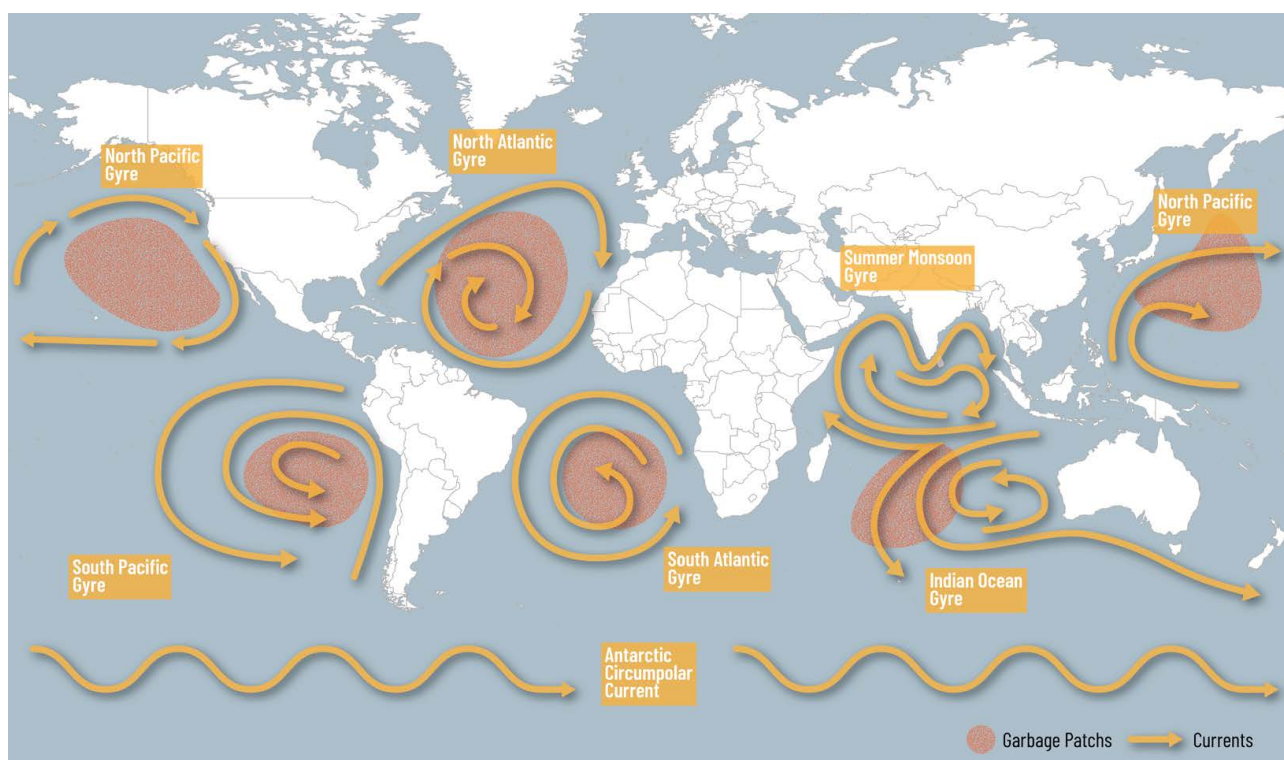
SDG 8<sup>9</sup> (“Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”), SDG 13<sup>10</sup> (“Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”) and SDG 14<sup>11</sup> (“Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”) under the 2030 Agenda are relevant here.

Marine resources are crucial to food security. Global and regional agreements have been adopted to stop the over-exploitation of resources, preserve biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of the world’s ecosystems. According to the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#)<sup>9</sup>, just two-thirds of fish stocks are used sustainably.<sup>9</sup> In addition to legal overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is still one of the greatest threats to marine ecosystems.<sup>10</sup>

Greenhouse gas emissions caused by international shipping fall outside the scope of the current international climate change regime. These also need to be reduced to reach net-zero in future. The [IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships](#)<sup>12</sup> and the further development of this strategy is therefore of crucial importance.

By ratifying the [UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage](#)<sup>11</sup> in 2001, Switzerland committed to fighting the progressive destruction, looting and exploitation of the world’s underwater cultural heritage.

The working conditions for seafarers, an important occupational group for global security of supply, are often precarious; accidents and physical and mental illness are widespread. The pandemic has highlighted these trends. Switzerland is committed, particularly within the framework of the ILO, to the implementation and further development of the Maritime Labour Convention (2006)<sup>12</sup>. This sets out the right of all seafarers to decent employment, including occupational safety and health.



Waste accumulating in rotating ocean currents. FDFA image

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fao.org/publications/sofia/en/>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.fao.org/iuu-fishing/en/>.

<sup>11</sup> SR 0.444.2

<sup>12</sup> SR 0.822.81

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## Objectives and measures

C. Switzerland is committed to protecting the world's oceans against pollution and achieving sustainable development (at environmental, economic and social level).

### C1. Participate in international instruments in the areas of marine biodiversity, plastic pollution and decent employment

- C1.1 Negotiate an international instrument to end plastic pollution throughout the life cycle of plastics.<sup>13</sup>
- C1.2 Strengthen the targets to reduce GHG emissions of maritime shipping to net-zero by 2050 as part of the revision of the IMO Greenhouse Gas Strategy
- C1.3 Ensure decent employment in the maritime sector in the framework of the Maritime Labour Convention (ILO-MLC 2006).

### C2. Provide a safe and sustainable marine food chain

- C2.1 Step up monitoring to ensure that marine resources are exploited lawfully and sustainably, in particular under the auspices of the [FAO's Committee on Fisheries \(COFI\)](#), the [International Whaling Commission IWC](#) and other managing authorities.
- C2.2 Support trade measures in the context of species conservation.<sup>14</sup>
- C2.3 Support the right of [indigenous peoples and local communities to exploit whales and other marine resources, subject to biological criteria](#).<sup>15</sup>

### C3. Strengthen sustainability standards in the use of marine resources

- C3.1 Safeguard at least 30% of the world's marine areas for biodiversity by 2030.<sup>16</sup>
- C3.2 Implement relevant targets under the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).
- C3.3 Develop stringent environmental standards for deep-sea mining and consider a moratorium on commercial deep-sea mining.

### C4. Protect Switzerland's transboundary rivers that flow into the sea

- C4.1 Emphasise the importance to Switzerland of managing transboundary rivers that flow into the sea.
- C4.2 Reconcile interests between upstream and downstream countries when entering into and developing international treaties.

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## Effectiveness and added value:

- Improves biodiversity and reduces ocean pollution and overexploitation.
- Contributes to combatting climate change.
- Contributes to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda (SDG 8 'Decent work and economic growth', SDG 13 'Urgent action to combat climate change' and SDG 14 'Life below water').

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<sup>13</sup> Mandate of the Federal Council to participate in the negotiations of 31.08.2022.

<sup>14</sup> Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (SR 0.453).

<sup>15</sup> International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (SR 0.922.74).

<sup>16</sup> Target 3 under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

## 2.4 Marine scientific research

Research on the oceans plays an important role in the comprehensive study of the earth's environmental and climate system. Marine ecosystems, especially in the deep sea, are some of the least explored habitats.

Such research requires access to infrastructure such as research vessels and stations – especially in the Arctic and Antarctic. Marine technologies are also used to source raw materials and renewable energy.

Swiss marine researchers are recognised especially for their work on modelling, biodiversity, ecology, ecotoxicology, pollution and palaeoclimatology. For example, Swiss polar science is internationally represented within the [Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research \(SCAR\)](#), the [International Arctic Science Committee \(IASC\)](#), the [Arctic Council](#), and the [Forum of Arctic Research Operators \(FARO\)](#) and at the European level on the [European Polar Board](#). The

[Swiss Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research](#) and the [Swiss Polar Institute](#) also play an important role in this domain. For the exploration of the Mediterranean, Switzerland is a member of the [Commission internationale pour l'exploration scientifique de la mer Méditerranée \(CIESM\)](#).

The networking of maritime science and research with other areas (climate science, energy research, materials research and new technological developments and their validation), in which Swiss research is world-leading, helps to exploit synergies and is a prerequisite for the application of technologies.

Switzerland has observer status in the [Arctic Council](#) and is a non-consultative party to the [Antarctic Treaty](#). As part of the polar community, Switzerland uses both forums to advocate for the peaceful and sustainable development of polar regions.



Plankton net used to sample an area of water as part of research into the presence of microplastics in Antarctic waters  
(Photo: University of Basel, Patricia Holm)

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## Objectives and measures

### D. Switzerland strengthens maritime research and science.

#### D1. Strengthen Swiss science in international ocean bodies

- D1.1 Promote marine research through the competitive project funding schemes of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
- D1.2 Maintain funding through committees and contributions from the academic community and by supporting research bodies of national importance (SPI). Research bodies are selected in line with the conditions laid down in federal research and innovation legislation.<sup>17</sup>

#### D2. Position Switzerland as part of the polar community

- D2.1 Use Switzerland's Arctic Council observer status to promote international scientific research, the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, dialogue among nations and dialogue with indigenous peoples' organisations.
- D2.2 Promote a 'science diplomacy culture' by facilitating fruitful interaction between science and politics.
- D2.3 Consider upgrading to consultative status under the Antarctic Treaty.

#### D3. Strengthen research shipping

- D3.1 Ensure that the Swiss research community can exploit synergies to the full by facilitating access to research vessels and platforms.
- D3.2 Participate in international expeditions and projects and lend political support to research vessels flying the Swiss flag.

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### Effectiveness and added value:

- Promotes Switzerland as a research location.
- Links Swiss ice, snow and high-altitude research to maritime and polar research.
- Gives Switzerland leverage in scientific bodies with regard to maritime issues.

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<sup>17</sup> Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA, SR 420.1).

## 2.5 Swiss flag

Legislation governing merchant shipping under the Swiss flag is in certain respects outdated and does not adequately address current needs and circumstances. As a result, merchant shipping under the Swiss flag is at a global competitive disadvantage, with very few ships now flying the Swiss flag.

The aim is to create an attractive, competitive and service-oriented flag with a reliable regulatory framework. The Swiss flag should be targeted at ship owners seeking a flag of quality that will deliver added value for fleets and crews. A quality flag of this type would contribute to the achievement of Switzerland's goals for sustainable development.

In addition, the flag should promote Swiss values (reliability, sustainability and efficiency), contribute to Switzerland's international image, and leverage synergies with respect to new areas of research and development (cluster building). The flag should therefore meet a national and international demand without the federal government incurring any additional costs (cost-covering fees).



*A ship flying the Swiss flag leaving port. Photo: FDFA*

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## Objectives and measures

### E. Switzerland modernises its flag and increases its international competitiveness.

#### E1. Ensure competitive conditions of registration for merchant ships and Rhine vessels and updated regulations for international recreational boating

- E1.1 Review conditions of registration for merchant ships, Rhine vessels and international recreational boating, paying particular attention to nationality and capital requirements.
- E1.2 Develop comprehensive safety and sustainability standards for merchant ships and Rhine vessels sailing under the Swiss flag, maintaining a clear distinction between shipping licences and registration.
- E1.3 Ensure compliance with international rules.

#### E2. Improve oversight and sanctioning

- E2.1 Tighten up regulatory requirements (monitoring and reporting obligations) and administrative capacity to initiate corrective action and impose penalties.
- E2.2 Establish a coherent and effective inspection scheme to safeguard the quality of the flag.

#### E3. Provide a service-oriented public authority for the maritime sector

- E3.1 Attractive cost-benefit ratio for the Swiss flag.
- E3.2 Provide fast, high-quality digital services (e-government).
- E3.3 Communicate the benefits of the Swiss flag through appropriate means.

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### Effectiveness and added value:

- Brings fresh impetus to Switzerland's maritime sector.
- Enhances global competitiveness and contributes to the sustainability of the Swiss flag.
- Enhances Switzerland's appeal and boosts its image.

# 3. Implementation

## At bilateral and multilateral levels

Switzerland discusses issues relating to the world's oceans and seas with all states and stakeholders at every level. Clear goals are defined, which need to be aligned to the 2030 Agenda SDGs and applicable international agreements, with a view to using the limited resources available to the Federal Administration as effectively as possible. Particular attention will be paid to measures involving legislative processes at national and/or international level. Prioritising such measures may affect the date by which the strategy will be implemented in full.

## Responsibilities of federal offices and interdepartmental coordination

The strategy will have no impact on the responsibilities of federal offices.

The whole-of-government approach adopted by the Federal Administration will ensure consistency of service delivery by the federal offices responsible for maritime issues. This coordination and prioritisation will take place periodically under the guidance of the FDFA. The FDFA will also review progress in implementing the strategy on an annual basis in consultation with the relevant federal offices concerned.

## Coordination with stakeholders

Involving social stakeholders, the academic community, civil society and the private sector is crucial to ensuring the sustainable use of oceans and seas and developing and maintaining safety and sustainability standards for shipping. Switzerland therefore encourages cooperation between multilateral organisations, the Federal Administration and non-state actors. A round table for stakeholders will be held once a year under the auspices of the FDFA. Stakeholders from the academic community, civil society and the private sector should also be better represented in Swiss delegations sent to meetings and conferences held by international organisations, committees and forums.

## Communication

The general public has an interest in this issue. The relevant federal offices should ensure that their communications also address maritime matters.

## Reporting

A report on Switzerland's progress in implementing its work and the measures under the Maritime Strategy will be prepared as part of an annual monitoring process (traffic light system). Monitoring will be undertaken in consultation with stakeholders from the academic community, civil society and the private sector. The findings from the monitoring process will be published. The Federal Council will review the strategy in 2027.





*Ocean pollution has reached critical levels. Photo: David Salvatori/VWPics/Science Photo Library*

## 4. Glossary ↪

**Antarctic Treaty:** The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 governs the relationship between the signatory states with regard to Antarctica. The Treaty covers the area south of the 60th parallel. The treaty's primary purpose is to ensure in the interests of all humankind that Antarctica continues to be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and does not become the scene or object of international discord.

**Arctic Council:** Established in 1996, the Arctic Council consists of the eight states with territories bordering the Arctic and circumpolar regions: Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, and the United States, and seven indigenous peoples' organisations. 13 states – including Switzerland – have observer status and can attend the debates.

**Exclusive economic zone:** The exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is the area within a coastal state has sovereign rights and jurisdiction to explore and exploit natural resources. It extends up to 200 nautical miles (370 km) from the state's outer limit measured from the territorial sea baseline.

**Fisheries subsidies:** Fisheries subsidies are public money used to fund the fishing industry. Most of these subsidies go to industrial fisheries.

**Flag (Swiss flag):** A flag is a square or rectangular piece of fabric hoisted on the mast or stern of a ship to denote the nationality of the ship, the authority under which the ship sails or affiliation to a trading company or club, or to communicate via maritime flag signalling. Ships flying the Swiss flag must have the Swiss flag attached to the stern. Unlike the Swiss national flag, this flag is rectangular.

**Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing:** Illegal fishing occurs when vessels or harvesters operate in contravention of a state's fisheries law. Unreported fishing refers to fishing activities that are not reported or are misreported to the relevant national authorities or to the RFMO (see RFMO), in contravention of the applicable laws and regulations. Unregulated fishing generally means fishing by vessels without nationality, vessels flying the flag of a country not party to the RFMO governing that fishing area or species on the high seas, or harvesting in unregulated areas.

**International Maritime Organization:** The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for the safety and security of international shipping and the prevention of marine and air pollution from ships. Its headquarters are in London. The IMO has 175 members, including Switzerland.

**Landlocked country:** A landlocked country (or a country without a coast) is a country that lacks direct territorial access to an open (not an inland) ocean or sea. It is surrounded on all sides by land borders and can only access the sea through the territory of another country. 44 countries worldwide, including Switzerland, have no coastline.

**Marine genetic resources:** Marine genetic resources (MGR) means biological material from marine macro- and micro-organisms. MGRs exist in areas both within and beyond national jurisdictions.

**Maritime security:** Maritime security is an umbrella term for maritime issues related to national security, the marine environment, economic development, human security, and environmental concerns.

**Ocean governance:** Ocean governance is the management of policies, actions and affairs that affect the world's oceans. It takes into account the influence of various state and non-state actors in ocean policy matters. Ocean governance is complex because much of the ocean is considered common property.

**Piracy:** Piracy is a form of robbery practised by seafarers on the high seas, i.e. pirates. In addition to ships, pirates also sometimes raid small coastal towns.

**Regional fisheries management organisations:** Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) are international bodies established by countries with fishing interests in a specific geographical area. Some bodies are responsible for managing all of the fish stocks in a given area. Others focus on highly migratory species such as tuna that move within much larger geographical areas.

**Sea level rise:** Sea level rise, caused by melting ice and thermal expansion of the water, is one of the many consequences of climate change. Islands and coastal areas are especially vulnerable to rising sea levels. Every year, the seas and oceans rise another 3.2 mm.

**Seabed mining:** Seabed mining or deep sea mining (DSM) refers to processes to extract mineral deposits from the deep seabed.

**Small island developing states:** Small island developing states (SIDS) are countries that face similar challenges to sustainable development, including limited resources, remoteness, vulnerability to natural disasters, heavy dependence on international trade and a precarious environment. The high cost of communications, energy, transport, infrastructure and public administration impedes their growth and development, and their small size prevents them from exploiting economies of scale. Because of their exclusive economic zones (EEZ), SIDS are important maritime nations.

**Sustainable Development Goals:** The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the 17 goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (see 2030 Agenda). SDG 14, which advocates for the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, falls within the scope of the Maritime Strategy.

**Swiss Maritime Navigation Office:** The Swiss Maritime Navigation Office (SMNO), which is attached to the FDFA, is responsible for the Swiss merchant fleet. It exercises administrative, operational and technical supervision as the competent flag state and licensing authority for seagoing Swiss merchant ships, their operators and crews. The SMNO also supervises recreational and leisure sailing under the Swiss flag at sea.

**Underwater heritage:** Underwater cultural heritage is defined as all traces of human existence of a cultural, historical or archaeological nature which, for at least 100 years, have been partially or totally immersed, periodically or permanently, under the oceans and in lakes and rivers.

**United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) is an international agreement that lays down a comprehensive regime governing all uses of the oceans and their resources. In June 2022, 167 countries, including Switzerland and the European Union were party to the Convention. The extensive and detailed convention is often referred to as the 'constitution of the oceans'.

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## 5. Overview of agreements in the maritime sector

Use the QR code to download an overview of agreements in the maritime sector (<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/fdfa/fdfa/organisation-fdfa/state-secretariat/wohlstand-nachhaltigkeit.html> ↗).





*Auguste Piccard and Jacques Piccard on board the Trieste in 1953 (Photo: Keystone)*

Swiss oceanographer Jacques Piccard and US Navy Lieutenant Don Walsh on board the bathyscaphe Trieste in 1960, which dove to the bottom of the Mariana Trench located near Guam in the western North Pacific Ocean. It descended to a depth of 10,916 metres, withstanding roughly 1,100 bars of water pressure. It was only in 2019 that a US researcher piloted a submersible craft to a depth of 10,928m, beating the record by just a few metres.

The deep sea environment is less explored than the moon.



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