



Switzerland's priorities on the UN Security Council 2023/24



1. Background

The agenda of the UN Security Council (UNSC) is largely predetermined. It consists of 80% country- or region-specific discussions and 20% crosscutting issues. The thematic priorities of Switzerland primarily concern the latter. The Federal Council has deliberately not chosen any geographical priorities; other countries handle this in the same way. It is not possible to predict how the situation in the individual contexts will develop in 2023 and 2024. Setting priorities does not mean that Switzerland leaves other issues aside. According to its Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-2023, Switzerland aims at a credible engagement in the UNSC - covering the whole range of the agenda of the Council and primarily in its day-to-day business on country contexts. The Swiss priorities also take human rights into account. The close linkage of human rights with peace and security is an important element of Switzerland's Human Rights Guidelines 2021-24. In the UNSC, Switzerland will generally advocate for stronger cooperation and information flow with UN human rights institutions and mechanisms in Geneva. The emphasis will lie on the Human Rights Council as it plays a key role, and is the primary responsible UN body with an explicit mandate for the protection of human rights.

2. Four priorities for the UNSC

Priority 1: Building sustainable peace

The number of armed conflicts is at an all-time high. Conflict prevention is a central concern of the UN. The UNSC should also play its role in preventing the outbreak, continuation or recurrence of conflict. This involves: (i) addressing the root causes of conflict (especially lack of rule of law and political participation, human rights violations, links to environmental degradation, climate change); (ii) assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities; and (iii) preventing renewed violence through reconciliation measures. Finally, conflict prevention is more cost-effective than settling conflicts by military means. Respect for human rights and, in particular, the protection of minorities as well as the equal participation of women in peace processes ("women, peace and security") are essential for this. Switzerland has an excellent track record in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and is committed to accountability. It is valued as a credible and neutral mediator. It also has important expertise in peacekeeping, arms control and disarmament.

Priority 2: Protecting civilians

Switzerland has traditionally been committed to improving compliance with and strengthening international humanitarian law. This is linked to Switzerland's many years of experience in humanitarian aid and its commitment to protecting civilians in conflicts. Food security is a key

element of this. The less the civilian population is protected, the more difficult it becomes to find political solutions. Human rights and the rights of minorities are also essential, as well as the protection of refugees in conflict regions. The protection of civilians is an urgent humanitarian imperative. Switzerland has a specific knowhow and expertise in this domain and is committed, for example, to ensure humanitarian access; to introduce humanitarian exemptions to the UN Security Council sanctions; or to collect evidence in cases of violations. It has also long been committed to the rule of law and supports the work of the International Criminal Court. Switzerland's long-standing humanitarian tradition is recognized worldwide. The ICRC headquarters and the Geneva Conventions contribute to the visibility of humanitarian Geneva.

Priority 3: Enhancing effectiveness

A UNSC that is as capable, effective and broadly supported as possible is in the interest of the international community and of Switzerland. For this reason, Switzerland has been advocating for more transparency, accountability and inclusion of non-members in the work of the UNSC for more than 15 years. This initiative is called "Working Methods of the UNSC" and concerns the way the Council conducts its work (processes, culture of debate, distribution of work, cooperation with other bodies and actors, etc.). It thus influences the decision-making procedures of the UNSC and represents a counterweight to the permanent members and their veto. In line with the implementation of the Parliamentary motion Marty (2009), Switzerland will also advocate for the stronger institutional anchoring of the Ombudsperson in the UN sanctions system. Better procedural guarantees strengthen the efficiency of the sanctions imposed by the UNSC, and thus also its credibility. It is essential to preserve as much as possible the multilateral cooperation and capacity for action of the UN and the UNSC. The commitment to improved working methods contributes to this. Switzerland is internationally recognized for its reform efforts. It should now continue this work on the UNSC as well.

Priority 4: Addressing climate security

Climate change is considered to be arguably the greatest challenge facing humanity. The nexus between climate change and security is an important issue that will continue to grow in importance as the impacts of climate change increase. The UNSC regularly addresses this nexus in open debates and country contexts, although some of the permanent members resist recognizing the UNSC's competence over the issue. Climate and security is undoubtedly an issue that is attracting interest both nationally and internationally. It is possible to work on this topic especially in relation to concrete conflict situations. Switzerland has valuable expertise in this area, which it can contribute to the work of the UNSC.

August 2022