



For Peace, Human Rights and Security

Switzerland's commitment to the world



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA

“We are better off when others around the world are doing well”



Dear Reader,

Should Switzerland campaign for peace, human rights and the protection and safety of vulnerable people worldwide?

“Of course” would be the response of anyone who feels they are committed to Switzerland’s humanitarian tradition and who regards Switzerland as a guardian of human rights, perhaps at the same time citing the Swiss Constitution.

“No” would be the response of anyone who feels it is unnecessary for Switzerland to become involved in foreign conflicts and would prefer to leave the protection of human rights to the individual countries concerned. They may argue that Switzerland is too small and would be better advised to concern itself with its own business.

And Swiss foreign policy – what is its approach? Both. Its duty is to safeguard Switzerland’s interests in relation to other countries and to contribute to peace, security and prosperity within the scope of an overall policy. However, it also has a mandate to preserve and promote peace and security, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), which is responsible for implementing foreign policy, must therefore meet a variety of demands which can, but need not, lead to conflicting objectives. A world in which people can live in peace and security is in our interest, and contributing to it is our duty. In this way we are also enhancing our own security because the greatest dangers of our time, such as terrorism and environmental disasters, have a global dimension. In addition, hungry refugees even from distant

countries are landing on Europe’s shores and knocking on our doors as they seek new prospects.

A world in which people can live in peace and security opens up new opportunities for our economy, which also benefits us materially. In economic terms, Switzerland has always depended on lively trade relations with other countries and so has already learned that we are better off when the rest of the world is doing well.

This brochure contains examples illustrating Switzerland’s commitment to human security in the world. However, it also highlights the point that Switzerland not only gives but also benefits from its commitment, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. You will also learn about people at the FDFA who have shaped this commitment, and who will continue to do so.

I am sure you will find this publication interesting and stimulating to read.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes.

Micheline Calmy-Rey
President of the Swiss Confederation and Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, FDFA

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Political Affairs Division IV

The centre of excellence for human security at FDFA

The concept of human security focuses on the security of individuals and their protection from political violence, war and despotism. It acknowledges the fact that peace, human rights and humanitarian policy are closely interwoven.

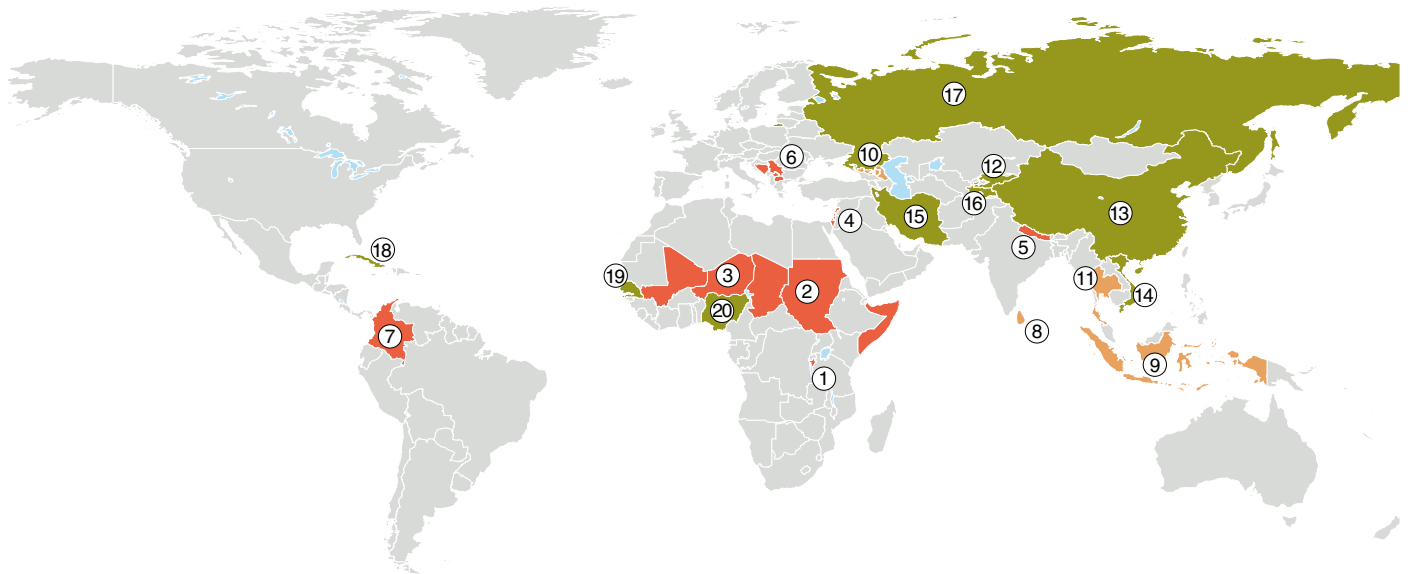
The promotion of peace and human rights is embodied in the Swiss Constitution as a goal of Swiss foreign policy and is thus regarded as a high priority. For Switzerland, this demonstrates that it intends to make high-profile contributions with an international impact in these areas.

Parliament passed a Federal Act outlining specific measures for civil peace promotion and the strengthening of human rights in 2004, and granted a first

line of credit. This must be renewed every four years and approved by Parliament.

The Political Affairs Division IV (PA IV) of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is responsible for implementing these measures, which serve to promote human security around the world. It is the centre of excellence for peace, human rights and humanitarian policy, and for Switzerland's foreign policy on migration.

Geographical Focus 2009–2012



Civilian peacebuilding:
Programmes

1. Great Lakes Region
2. Sudan and Horn of Africa
3. West and Central Africa
4. Middle East
5. Nepal
6. South Eastern Europe
7. Colombia

Civilian peacebuilding:
Specific interventions

8. Sri Lanka
9. Indonesia
10. North Caucasus
11. Thailand
12. Kyrgyzstan

Human rights:
Dialogue (D) and consultations (C)

13. China (D)
14. Vietnam (D)
15. Iran (D)
16. Tajikistan (D)
17. Russia (C)
18. Cuba (C)
19. Senegal (D)
20. Nigeria (D)



“We also do it because it’s right”

In its Foreign Policy Report 2000, the Federal Council stated that it would in future be making “a substantial and clearly visible contribution to the prevention of violent conflicts” and pursuing “an independent and high-profile humanitarian policy”. Former Swiss Ambassador to the UN and current State Secretary, Peter Maurer, had the task at that time of creating Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security (PA IV).

In 2000, former Foreign Minister Josef Deiss appointed the then 44-year-old Peter Maurer as Ambassador and posted him from New York to Berne in order to create and head the new Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security. Maurer had been working since 1996 as Deputy Permanent Observer to the Observer Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations, where he gained experience in working in an international body. Back in Berne, it was a matter of integrating humanitarian policy, human rights and peacebuilding into a single division. The current State Secretary remembers the main challenge being the preliminary work involved in establishing a legal basis and the first line of credit. The FDFA struggled with the principle of establishing a legal basis for foreign policy and with formulating the legislative text. Peter Maurer always remained confident that the proposal would meet with broad acceptance: “I had no doubt that there was a broad consensus in Switzerland that the country should commit itself to protecting human rights, humanitarian issues and peace by taking civil measures”. Maurer is convinced that this consensus still exists today.

“Foreign policy motivation and domestic policy support came together with the creation of PA IV,” says Peter Maurer. Foreign policy changed significantly

back in the 1990s: “Numerous ‘frozen conflicts’, which allowed little room for intervention, were lying dormant under the cloak of the Cold War. Most of the conflicts – in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus or even in Africa – had an east-west dimension or were actually proxy wars.” After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many frozen conflicts flared up and new ones came into existence. The major powers, the EU and international organisations such as the UN and the OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) increasingly began to get involved in the crisis areas. The demand for specialist knowledge of conflict resolution and for financial and human resources suddenly rocketed. In this environment, Switzerland created and expanded the civil instruments of peace policy. This step became all the more significant politically, as Switzerland was not prepared to take part in military peacebuilding activities.

It was now a question of concentrating the FDFA’s growing commitment to peace policy, human rights and humanitarian issues – in 2000, some 35 FDFA staff were working on these themes – into one department, coordinating activities and setting them out in the form of an overall plan and securing suitable funding. The idea that Switzerland should expand its involvement in the area of peacebuilding was largely undisputed in Parliament. There was more debate about the geographical areas and issues on which the FDFA should concentrate. This discussion is still going on today, says Maurer: “Some people are calling for a commitment in the immediate vicinity of Switzerland, e.g. in the Mediterranean, the Balkans or the Caucasus, while others advocate peace missions in other continents such as Latin America and Asia, or in Sub-Saharan Africa.” The State Secretary considers this discussion to be superfluous: “The extent to which the policy should be interest-led or problem-oriented is, in my opinion, the wrong debate. Many conflicts are interconnected. It is therefore impossible to maintain from the outset that events in Colombia or in Sudan will have less impact on our country than events in the Balkans. In today’s reality of international integration, the demand is more for a sensible mixture of a well thought-out plan and flexible adaptation to meet needs.” The principles in this regard are set out in the messages on the line of credit. They cover topics such as constitutionalism, religion and politics, election monitoring and advancing human rights.

It makes sense to match the capabilities and skills in Switzerland’s peace policy offering to the needs of conflict areas. How this is to happen must be discussed anew every time. Maurer appeals for a pragmatic approach: “If we mainly offer expertise in federalism and decentralization, there is a danger that the solution will go looking for a problem and not the other way round. On the other hand, we cannot focus solely on demand as our resources and expertise cannot stretch to cover every specialist area.” Supply and demand, and solidarity and self-interest

should be reconciled in a dynamic process and rational discourse.

Asked what Switzerland's greatest successes have been in terms of peacebuilding and protecting human rights, Maurer paused before answering: "The efforts to stabilize the Balkans, the country programmes in Kosovo and Macedonia, the Geneva Initiative in the Middle East and the diplomatic efforts between Armenia and Turkey are high-profile commitments. However, our biggest achievement is the fact that, with PA IV we have created an instrument that will contribute towards achieving stability in the longer term, is accepted in domestic politics and has also been judged one of the best internationally." Despite this, State Secretary Maurer definitely sees further growth potential. After all, contrary to other western countries such as Spain, Sweden, Austria or the Netherlands, Switzerland provides only limited support in military peacebuilding activities. It would therefore be fitting for the country "if we did a little more in places where we can actually make a difference."

Peter Maurer studied history and international law in Berne and Perugia. His fellow students at the time describe him as a committed, prudent person with great empathy. These qualities have partly contributed to the reputation he has acquired, particularly since his time as Swiss Ambassador to the UN in New York, as an efficient, skilful and determined networker and bridge-builder. His achievements have been explicitly praised by the UN Secretary-General and, in 2009, recognized in the election of Ambassador Maurer as Chair of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) of the General Assembly. Within a short time, his commitment to multilateral processes has given the still recent UN member Switzerland a high profile. In circles such as the "Small Five" small countries group (Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Costa Rica, Jordan and Singapore), Switzerland was the driving force behind many reform efforts and initiatives, including proposals for increased transparency in the Security Council's working methods and for more attention to the rule of law when dealing with anti-terror sanctions.

Maurer puts things into perspective: "I am not suffering from an idealistic bridge-builder syndrome! We forge alliances in order to achieve majorities because it is useful to us, and because we are flexible enough to form subject-specific coalitions based on the issues and problems concerned." In his post as UN Ambassador he demonstrated how it was possible for a small country to play an effective part in solving international problems. The general lament about the increasing ineffectiveness of the UN makes him uneasy. The State Secretary sets store by the observation that the resolution of conflicts depends first and foremost on the will of the warring parties: "The same applies to Israel and Palestine as it does to any conflict: the key element is not the failure of the

international community but the inability of the warring parties to find viable, lasting solutions and ways of living together. Where there is a lack of will, it is often almost impossible to find a solution."

When Switzerland builds bridges and forges alliances in the peacebuilding process, it does so not least in its own interest, says the State Secretary. In this way, the country also gains international goodwill and influence in other foreign policy issues. Switzerland's small size means it is obliged to cooperate, "as significant developments at home are increasingly dictated by developments outside the country." The UN and collaboration as part of peacebuilding provide an ideal platform from which to network, participate in resolution processes and thereby gain influence. This facilitates alliances and cooperation that can also be mobilized for other matters. "Keeping the ball rolling is the name of the game in sport and in diplomacy", is how Maurer put it in a speech. Power and influence depend on the ability to be useful and to provide resources. "A foreign policy based on zero budget growth overlooks the growing challenges that we face through international integration."

However, even though Switzerland is well-advised to engage in international peace policy because of increasing interdependence and in view of possibilities for integration, "not every intervention in a peace process should be bound up with interests to the bitter end – we also do it because it's right."

.....
Peter Maurer

Peter Maurer was born in Thun in 1956. He studied history, political science and international law in Berne and Perugia and wrote a dissertation on the supply of food in Switzerland in the Second World War. In 1987, he joined the diplomatic service, where his functions included working in the office of the State Secretary. In 1996, he was sent to New York as the senior staff member under the head of what at the time was Switzerland's permanent observer mission to the United Nations. In 2000, the Federal Council appointed him to the rank of ambassador and he became head of the new Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security. In 2004, he returned to New York as Switzerland's ambassador to the United Nations. Since 2010, Peter Maurer has been State Secretary at the FDFA.
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“The focus is on the individual, whose suffering must be alleviated”

Ambassador Claude Wild was appointed Head of Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security (PA IV) in August 2010. Following a ten-year period in which the Division was established and expanded, his aim is now to consolidate it and also to introduce new topics – such as climate change and its impact on the stability of a country – for international discussion.

Ambassador Wild, you have been the new Head of PA IV for several months now. What are your impressions so far?

My new position actually means a return to peace policy for me. I worked in the Peace Policy Section from 1994 to 1997, which was initially part of the International Organisations Division and, later on, part of Political Affairs Division III. We had five employees and a budget of CHF 25 million, and our main function was to support multilateral peace initiatives and programmes organised by the UN and the OSCE. Today, our remit covers peace policy, human rights policy and humanitarian and migration policy. We manage an annual budget of around CHF 62 million with a staff of 63. The issues we cover are extremely topical, and the activities of PA IV are thus widely reported on. At the same time, we are involved in politically sensitive programmes that have to be kept under wraps so as not to endanger the process. I was also pleasantly surprised by the number of NGOs both in Switzerland and abroad with which we collaborate and which do excellent work. These NGOs

represent civil society, whose involvement in complex crisis management processes and human rights issues is necessary today if sustainable solutions are to be identified and implemented.

The resources allocated to PA IV when it was set up were much less generous. Is the current budget sufficient to pursue the Division's objectives?

I feel that the budget allocated to peacebuilding activities is still not high enough for an economically powerful country like Switzerland – especially if you compare it with that of countries like Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. Norway, for example, spends around 1 per cent of GDP on development aid and peacebuilding. In Switzerland, we are aiming for a figure of 0.5 per cent by 2015. Far more money is spent on weapons and war worldwide than on promoting peace. It's an unsatisfactory situation. I get the impression that most people in our country are convinced that more peacebuilding activities would not only be good for Switzerland's reputation but would also be in our country's fundamental interest. We also experience the global repercussions of crises and conflicts in the form of refugees, for example. However, like all other public sector areas, we are under pressure to cut costs.

What arguments are you putting forward to persuade the decision-makers to increase PA IV's budget?

It has to be borne in mind that the donor country receives a large dividend on the capital invested in peacebuilding measures. The United States, a military power, has acknowledged this too. The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, recently published an article entitled “Leading through Civilian Power”, in which she emphasises the advantages of stepping up the United States' involvement in peacebuilding, and of civilian resources. This is a very noteworthy shift in foreign policy strategy towards a greater emphasis on peacebuilding and civil power. The FDFA has been pursuing this line for a long time through the activities of PA IV. Switzerland has a high level of international

credibility in peacebuilding and human security; we want to draw on this strength and expand it.

Which criteria determine whether Switzerland will get involved and what your main focus will be?

It's not by chance that we are involved so heavily in the Western Balkans at all levels of peace policy. We have felt the impact of the wars there at first hand – in the form of increased migration from the region, and in other ways. At times we have provided refuge for about one-tenth of the Kosovar population. There is no doubt that international law is making progress in peacebuilding and human security. One example here is the new conventions on anti-personnel mines. However, these conventions cannot achieve much in fragile countries such as Somalia because the state is not strong enough to ensure that the conventions are implemented. There is no one to address these issues within these countries. In such cases we are developing new models for creating a dialogue with other influential stakeholders, such as armed non-state actors who may have an entire region under their control. They often see themselves as fighting for a "just cause", they want to be reckoned with, and it is in their own interest to look after their image. Our interest, of course, is the humanitarian situation and the protection of the civilian population. With this different approach, it is not political or power issues that are the focus but the individual, whose suffering must be alleviated and who must be protected. However, this doesn't mean that violations of human rights should go unpunished – on the contrary, impunity is a serious obstacle to efforts to achieve lasting peace.

A study recently published by the ETH recommends that PA IV should focus its resources both geographically and on specific topics. Do you agree with that?

Now that PA IV has been in existence for ten years, the aim must be to consolidate the work it does and to go for greater depth. It is a good idea generally to focus our resources, which is why we are currently concentrating our peace programme on seven geographical regions. At the same time, though, we're not a development agency – we are a political affairs division that has to respond flexibly to crisis situations and to requests from bodies such as the UN for immediate assistance in political crises. For this reason, we can't tie up all our financial resources in projects that run for several years. We need to remain capable of providing mediators when they are needed, irrespective of whether or not the country concerned is one of our priority countries. It's important for the parties to be able to place their trust in us and for us to add value to the crisis management process.

Why do Swiss players enjoy universal credibility?

This is firstly a result of our history. Switzerland is neutral, it was not a colonial power, and it is not

part of a military alliance. Secondly, our image and our role as the Depositary of the Geneva Conventions and the headquarters of many humanitarian organisations all play a major confidence-building role. Thirdly, the quality of our experts, their achievements in the field of mediation and good offices play a vital role in establishing Switzerland's credibility.

Which new topics will PA IV be including in its programme?

One of the things we will be doing is to place greater emphasis in international discussions on the problem of climate change and its impact on the stability of a region. The associated challenges – such as the scarcity of resources and migration – are enormous. Increasing migration can have a destabilising effect as the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region show. Countries in which rebels control large areas are often misused as drug-transit routes. The rebels finance their operations through smuggling and drug trafficking. This can make entire countries "fragile", slows their development and increases emigration. In general, we will continue to address the fundamental question of how peacebuilding processes need to be organised to enable stakeholders in a crisis region to manage the situation without resorting to war. It seems obvious today, but it was in fact not so long ago that it was realised that a crisis is not over with a ceasefire agreement – reconstruction and lasting peace also have to include the process of coming to terms with the past.

The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution calling for greater attention to be paid to including women in peace processes. Is this something that PA IV is currently working on?

Switzerland takes a proactive approach to promoting gender equality in peace policy. UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security is one of PA IV's core topics at both the multilateral and the bilateral level. A revised version of the National Action Plan to Implement Resolution 1325 was acknowledged by the Federal Council in November 2010, and since then it has formed an important strategic foundation for PA IV's peacebuilding programmes. We are convinced that paying equal attention to the rights and needs of women and girls and equal participation of women and men in peace processes is the only way to achieve lasting peace and comprehensive human security. In concrete terms this means, for example, that we need to use our internal control instruments to determine the extent to which the resources we allocate to our programmes contribute to achieving the objectives set out in UN Security Council Resolution 1325. We also ensure that there is a good gender balance when PA IV's Expert Pool second staff on peacebuilding missions. Women's participation in both civilian and military peace missions is vital when it comes to protecting female civilian victims and preventing, dealing with and prosecuting gender-specific crimes such as systematic rape.

You've been involved in two UN Blue Beret peace missions in which the Swiss Armed Forces were involved. How do you feel about our army being involved in peace-support operations?

Peace operations are complex and multidimensional. They often have civilian, police, humanitarian, developmental and military components. I was an officer in the first foreign mission of the Swiss Blue Berets in 1989-1990. The Swiss military contingent of the Swiss Medical Unit was stationed in Namibia and then in 1991-1992 in Western Sahara. Like all other Swiss peacekeeping troops, I learned that the Swiss Army can play a major role in international efforts to stabilise a region, and this is something that is ultimately in Switzerland's own interest in view of the impact on trade relations and migration. The Swiss Army also benefits from volunteer soldiers and officers being able to use the skills they have learned in the barracks and on the shooting ranges in the real-life situation of a complex conflict zone. International peace missions are a context in which they can gain valuable experience. I am completely in favour of the Swiss Armed Forces participating in peacekeeping missions abroad – on the basis of my own experience and also because this is the only way in which we can credibly cover the full spectrum of peace policy.

Which topics and personal interests will you be working on in the next few years?

First of all, I'm looking forward to the wide variety of activities and to the upcoming success stories of this Division. Last autumn, for example, international security companies signed an International Code of Conduct, which we played a major role in drawing up. This Code of Conduct (see page 24) marks a radical change in approach because private sector players will now be required to observe human rights in their activities. This recent success story shows that a lot can be achieved in the field of human security with a relatively small financial input, good ideas and a firm belief that projects can be brought to fruition. Our

approach is pragmatic, persistent and goal-oriented, and this enables us to persuade other countries that something is a good idea. I would like the people of Switzerland to know more about the peacebuilding activities pursued by the FDFA. Another challenge is efficient and more intensive collaboration between all the institutions and public offices at the national and cantonal levels that are involved in peacebuilding and human security. Together, we can have a greater impact on promoting peace in crisis regions and on increasing Switzerland's global networking capabilities. These are the things that I will be focusing my efforts on.

Claude Wild

Claude Wild was born in Lausanne in 1964. He studied political science and international relations at the Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales (IUHEI) in Geneva and went on to complete post-graduate studies in security policy. From 1989 to 1990 and again from 1991 to 1992 he participated in the United Nations' peace operations in Namibia and the Western Sahara as a member of the Swiss contingent. From 1990 to 1991 he worked as an assistant on the security-policy programme of the IUHEI. In 1992, he joined the diplomatic service. After assignments with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Swiss embassy in Nigeria and the Austrian Ministry of Defence, he became deputy head of the peace-policy section of Political Affairs Division III in Berne. In 1997, he became first secretary and later counsellor at the Swiss embassy in Moscow. In 2000, he was placed in charge of the policy and institutions section of the Integration Office in Berne with responsibility for policy on Europe. In 2004 he became deputy head of the Swiss embassy in Canada. From 2007, he acted as deputy head of the Swiss mission to the European Union in Brussels. In August 2010, he was appointed ambassador and head of the FDFA's Political Affairs Division IV, Human Security.

Peace policy





“Don’t judge, throw your prejudices overboard and listen”

Mediator Julian Hottinger has accompanied major peacebuilding missions worldwide. His experience and proven field expertise have taken him to places such as Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Liberia and Indonesia on mandates for the FDFA. Hottinger, who is a constitutional lawyer and son of the Middle East expert Arnold Hottinger, is a member of the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding of the FDFA.

Ambassador Hottinger, when and why is mediation successful in peace policy?

Let me start by saying that nowadays, people think that mediation is a magic wand that can solve any conflict. Mediation can indeed be a suitable tool, but only in certain situations. Firstly, the time has to be right. The parties must be “ripe” for negotiation. This usually means that the conflict has existed for a long time and has entered a phase of major escalation. The parties realise that force won’t get them any further, or that they don’t have the necessary resources. Once they get to the negotiating table, the first thing they usually want to do is bide their time and see what will happen. It’s nearly impossible to tell at the outset whether mediation is going to be successful or not. My golden rule is not to start mediation until the risk of causing harm is minimal.

Can mediation actually cause harm then?

Oh yes, in particular if the parties use the negotiation period to obtain arms and to regroup, so that by the time the negotiations have finished they are more dangerous than they were before. Then it’s usually the civilian population that suffers. It’s not

easy to identify this danger at the start of the mediation process. The parties play their cards close to their chests – quite apart from the fact that they often don’t know themselves whether they actually want to negotiate or keep on fighting. You mustn’t forget that the mediation process makes big demands on them. They are entering a completely new world, one in which they are suddenly expected to talk instead of fight and to put themselves in the position of the other party. They generally start by arguing, shouting and threatening each other because that’s the world they’re familiar with.

What’s your approach at the start of the mediation process?

The key to any mediation that you want to succeed is empathy. If neither party is capable of developing empathy for the other party at the negotiating table then mediation has failed because there is no will to negotiate. The opponents sit there and argue – and nothing happens. This is what we call “sitting ducks”. This happens especially if they don’t have the authority or legitimacy of their party to be able to negotiate with any degree of freedom. Parties only stay at the table if they believe that they will gain more by negotiating than by going back into the fray.

What strategies do you employ to persuade the parties to stick with the mediation process?

The most important thing is to listen. It’s not a good idea to give the parties the impression that you know all there is to know about the conflict. So we ask them to explain the nature of the conflict to us. We also avoid putting them under any time pressure at all. Insisting that they formulate an agreement is also counterproductive. The primary function of a mediator is to create common ground. The parties come to the negotiating table, spend days debating, listen to each other, explain their positions and think – until gradually the problem at the heart of the conflict emerges. We move in circles, and as the discussions progress we move closer to the centre until some common ground emerges that enables us to think about a solution. This is where our task ends because it’s up to the parties to come up with the content of an agreement. You have to give them time. It takes just one minute for a conflict to flare up – and years to bring it under control. Sudan is a good example. The west sometimes finds it difficult to be patient. But even if a narrow timeframe is stipulated by financial backers or western governments, it’s still useful to begin mediation. Once there are initial signs of success, the mediation is usually continued.

What do you look for during the mediation process?

A mediator must make sure that the central reason for the conflict is not avoided. The negotiating parties like to skate round the really delicate points such as ways to deal with human rights violations. If we refer to them, they usually respond with, “We’ll see.” But an agreement that doesn’t focus on the central issue

isn't going to last. Another technique used in international mediation is to show the parties that similar conflicts have been at least partially resolved in other countries. We look at the peace processes in Burundi, Eritrea, Somalia and elsewhere with them. This helps to deflect their fixation on their own conflict and helps them believe in the power of negotiation and that the problem can be solved.

What is the main type of conflict encountered today?

It's a complex problem. A conflict may have arisen 40 years ago out of ideological differences. As the years go by, the question of ideology recedes into the background and ethnic, territorial and political dimensions are added. There's no such thing as a one-dimensional conflict. Take Northern Ireland, for example. It started with Catholics and Protestants, but then economic and political discrimination became an issue and different visions of society developed. Southern Sudan is another example. The problem is by no means limited to the question of Islam versus Christianity – only 2 per cent of the population in the south is Christian. Natural resources and political participation are equally important issues. Mediation has to tackle all the levels of the problem, although we naturally have to distinguish between its more and less important dimensions.

When do you consider that mediation has been successful – when an agreement is concluded?

Success is a wide-ranging concept. Do we say that the process in South Africa has been successful? At first sight, yes: the apartheid regime was removed and the African National Congress (ANC) was integrated into the political process. But we weren't able to put an end to the racial problems that still exist in the townships today. If, in the course of the peace process, we manage to get the parties to sit at a table, to develop a common vision and, above all, to stop the violence, then mediation was successful. Only history will tell whether it was a lasting success.

How would you describe the "ideal" mediator?

Oh, someone very different to me (laughs)! That's a difficult question to answer. I went to a pretty tough mediation school in Canada. Later I realised that training is only one aspect of good mediation. You also need patience, the ability to empathise and to listen. Above all, though, a mediator needs to be creative enough to suggest solutions that you wouldn't necessarily have thought of but which can help to solve the problem or at least to approach it. It's also important to be experienced and knowledgeable in working with multicultural societies. And last but not least, always respect the people you're working with and don't do anything to them that you wouldn't want somebody to do to you. But the most important thing is not to make moral judgments. I've been heavily criticised for sitting down at a table with major criminals. But my job is not to judge and condemn but to achieve peace. Mediation means talking to the

devil, but the devil will be held to account later for what he has done – meaning that, of course, people who have done wrong must be brought to justice, and acts of violence punished.

How can this be done in a war-torn society in which the judicial system doesn't function properly or whose legitimacy is limited?

There are two important issues here. What form of reconciliation can society accept, and what does it expect from the judicial system? In other words, you have to find out what this society needs in order to achieve reconciliation and what it expects the judiciary to do. It is then up to the judiciary to demonstrate its legitimacy by not allowing crimes to go unpunished and by implementing society's decision as to which crimes should be punished. If, in this process, society gains the impression that justice is not being done to its concept of atonement and forgiveness, then there is a great risk that a peace agreement will never be implemented correctly.

Where did you earn your spurs as a young mediator, and how has your work changed over time?

I initially worked for the Government of Canada and was then hired by Switzerland when Political Affairs Division IV was set up. The first few years after I had completed my training were challenging. I stuck closely to the theory until I realised how much of a gap there is between theory and practice. I learned something new with each case. Ultimately it's experience that pays dividends – and the instinct that lets you interpret people's behaviour and their verbal and non-verbal signals correctly.

Was there a mediation process that was particularly important for you on a personal level?

The conflict in Northern Ireland affected me deeply because it happened in Europe. My mother was born in the United States but she had Irish roots and we children knew about life in Northern Ireland from our relatives. I was involved in the preliminary talks, and we very soon realised that the Irish parties were toying with us. They knew right from the beginning exactly what they wanted to achieve, but they didn't put their cards on the table.

Can you recall any particularly satisfying moments?

I fundamentally distrust any signs of a breakthrough! You really never know right to the last moment whether or not the parties are going to sign the agreement. You see the hands holding the pens trembling, and you think, oh my God, anything could happen now! It's not unusual for one of the parties to refuse to sign – generally the one of whom you'd have least expected it. At moments like this you are also fully aware that signing is one thing, implementing the agreement is something else entirely. By this time I'm normally very tired, I usually become ill and worry about all the things that could still happen.

You should negotiate with your head and not with your heart. Once the agreement has been signed, the mediator has to leave the location because the parties can't stand the sight of him by then. He has seen them at their best, but also at their worst. Mediators should never go back! There are other players who are responsible for implementing the agreement.

What was your most important "learning experience"?

Don't judge, throw your prejudices over board and listen. That's particularly true of negotiations in Africa. Africans love debating, preferably on an informal basis, at the market or under a tree. The meetings I have had with my Somali friends have always been fascinating. They talk and talk until there's nothing else to be said and everything goes quiet. Everybody more or less knows everybody else's opinion. The stupidest thing the mediator can ask at the end of the day is: "Do you agree or not?" Then the discussions start all over again. Instead of that, we say: "Right, we've finished this discussion, let's move on to the next topic." It's practically impossible to achieve concrete results.

What mistakes would you avoid today?

Oh, a whole list of them! The most annoying mistake happened during a mediation process when it was obvious right from the first day that the delegates didn't like me – and I didn't like them either. Maybe my English was too European and theirs was too Asian. I thought it would get better. I waited six weeks before I went to the senior mediator and said, "Look, I'm the wrong person in the wrong place at the wrong time." I was replaced by a colleague who then did an excellent job. I'd waited far too long even though my instinct had told me to get out. But the six weeks weren't wasted, as the delegation was so happy to have somebody else that they cooperated fully afterwards.

To what extent does the fact that you are working on behalf of Switzerland play a role in your job?

Switzerland is a small, neutral country that doesn't have a colonial past, isn't a superpower and – above all – doesn't have a hidden agenda. That's definitely an advantage in the peace process. As the mediation process progresses, the mediator's nationality becomes less and less important and the individual becomes increasingly important. I go from being "Swiss" to being "Julian". Switzerland is held in very high regard. Yet we still have a tendency to underestimate ourselves constantly. On the other hand, though, it's precisely this modesty that makes us such highly regarded partners.

Julian Hottinger

Julian Thomas Hottinger is deployed as mediation and facilitation expert on assignment for the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Julian Hottinger studied Social and Political Science at the University of Lausanne, and pursued his studies at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IUHEI) in Geneva. He subsequently attended the Canadian International Institute of Applied Negotiation (CIIAN), specializing in International Conflict Mediation. Up until 2003, he held the post of research assistant at the University of Fribourg's Institute of Federalism. In the past years, he has been engaged in peace processes, for instance, in Afghanistan, Northern Ireland, Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and Aceh in Indonesia. In addition, he participated in the ceasefire negotiations for the Nuba Mountains in central Sudan that culminated in the signing of an Agreement at the Bürgenstock near Lucerne. Furthermore, he was involved in the negotiations between the northern and southern parts of Sudan that paved the way to a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Promoting peace in Burundi

Switzerland made a major contribution to reaching a ceasefire agreement between the warring parties in Burundi's civil war. It was subsequently awarded an important UN function, currently holding the chair of the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission for the second time.

Almost half of all peace processes fail in the first five years after a ceasefire. Long-term peacebuilding requires a commitment that continues after the violence has ended. During this critical period after an agreement has been signed, the UN Commission has the task of mobilizing the attention of the international community and proposing suitable strategies for peacebuilding and reconstruction after a conflict.

In Burundi, the polarization between the country's ethnic groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, which had been encouraged by political elites, and structural injustices, triggered violent conflicts. Coups, military dictatorships, uprisings and bloody acts of vengeance resulted in a civil war, which is estimated to have cost over 300,000 lives. Peace talks between the warring parties began in 1998 and resulted in a peace agreement (Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement) in 2000. The peace process had been largely completed by 2009 with the demobilization of the last Hutu rebel movement. In April 2009, the FNL (Forces Nationales de Libération) was permitted as a political party. However, substantial deficits in governance and respect for human rights, combined with criminality, impunity and corruption, remain serious problems for the country.

Switzerland was involved in the Arusha process via the services of mediator and constitutional lawyer Julian Hottinger, who worked at the Institute of Federalism in Fribourg at that time. Soon after, Hottinger switched to the FDFA, contributing specialist knowledge and contacts to subsequent negotiations. Switzerland then teamed up with non-governmental organisation "Initiatives of Change" to build up a dialogue with the FNL, incorporate it into the peace process and accompany it during the South African-led negotiations. The fact that the rebels were persuaded to lay down their weapons and change their name was considered a major success. It was only the involvement of the FNL that made comprehensive peace possible. During the implementation of the agreement and with an eye on the elections in 2010, Switzerland assisted in the transformation of the rebel movement into a political party.

Last year's elections were won by the government by a large majority. However, the political opposition parties had boycotted the election process and accused the government of serious human rights abuses and of manipulating the results. The lack of trust in the democratic process after years of conflict and the unwillingness of the political elite to compromise show

that democracy means more than holding elections. Switzerland therefore continues to support dialogue between political parties and is calling for war crimes to be pursued in order to further the reconciliation process between the different population groups.

With Switzerland as chair, the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission is setting its priorities in the following areas:

- Supporting the integration of Burundi into the East African Community, the presidency of which was assumed by Burundi in 2011.
- Mobilizing resources for the economic and social reintegration of former fighters and their families.
- Ensuring that peacebuilding retains a key role in strategy documents for the future development of the country (e.g. those of the World Bank).
- Calling for democratic dialogue with all the political forces in the country, including those that are not represented in Parliament.
- Supporting the rule of law, human rights, the fight against corruption, and reconciliation efforts.

Today, Switzerland has a local office of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Burundi and a peace adviser who is putting Switzerland's peace programme into practice. Activities are currently focused on encouraging political dialogue, controlling small arms and light weapons, helping people to come to terms with the past and supporting the reconciliation process as well as upholding constitutional principles.



Burundi

The East African country of Burundi is one of the continent's smallest, and with 8.6 million inhabitants is densely populated. Moreover it is one of the poorest countries in the world. Although the security situation has stabilised since the Forces Nationales de Libération (FNL) became the last rebel movement to lay down its arms at the end of 2008, it is still not possible to speak of a lasting peace. The 2010 election year was an important test for this young democracy, following years of civil war. However, the majority of opposition parties boycotted the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Combating the illicit trade in small arms

At a UN conference, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that small arms and light weapons are today's weapons of mass destruction. The FDFA is undertaking diplomatic initiatives to call for tough international standards to combat the illicit trade in small arms.

Today, small arms are one of the most serious threats to human security. The majority of the estimated half a billion small arms are held by public bodies. However, if they get into the hands of terrorists and criminals, the consequences are catastrophic. Small arms are easily acquired, usually cheap and simple to operate. Moreover, the illegal arms trade is profitable.

For years, the UN has been addressing the subject of the illegal trade in small arms. Since the end of the East-West conflict, the problem has been on the agenda for multilateral diplomacy. As a key player in the fight against small arms and light weapons, Switzerland ensures that countries do not just pay lip service to the subject. At the UN Small Arms Conference in 2001, 156 countries approved the UN programme of action, presented jointly by Switzerland and France, to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. Since then, small arms have had to be marked – a first step on the way to revealing trade flows and clandestine arms deals.

A group of countries under the leadership of the FDFA went on to develop an instrument that can be used to trace and mark illicit small arms. This was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005. In addition, the assembly agreed on a definition formulated by the FDFA of "small arms" and "light weapons", which laid an important foundation for all future negotiations. However, it was not possible to make the measures binding under international law; the process got as far as declarations of intent. The implementation of the programme of action also ran into difficulties. At the UN conference held in 2006 to review progress since the adoption of the programme of action on the illicit trade in small arms (2001), delegates were unable to agree on a final document – not least because of the national interests of the major powers.

In 2006, the FDFA joined forces with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to organise a ministerial conference on armed violence and development, which culminated in the adoption of the Geneva Declaration. In this way, Switzerland had achieved an important objective. It had raised awareness of the fact that small arms reduction and development have an effect on each other. The more violence spirals out of control, the more a country's economic and social development is inhibited. The signatory states

undertook to implement specific measures to combat the disastrous interaction of violence and development by 2015. The aim is to achieve a measurable reduction in armed violence.

Some 110 governments have pledged their support. Switzerland was a member of a core group that drafted the framework of action for the implementation of the Declaration. It contains a list of measures such as arms amnesty campaigns, the symbolic burning of weapons, reforms in the justice and security sectors and improvements in border and customs controls. First, it must be possible to measure the extent of armed violence in a country. The core group is therefore currently in the process of defining suitable indicators – e.g. the number of murders – and quantifying the economic cost incurred as a result of violence involving small arms. Programmes of action are currently being tested in various countries, including Burundi and Guatemala.

The UN General Assembly also approved a protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms. Anyone who illegally manufactures firearms, sells them or owns them without a licence can now be prosecuted.

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Small arms
According to an assessment by the Geneva Competence Centre Small Arms Survey some 740,000 people are killed each year by pistols, machine guns or automatic weapons. "The world is awash with small arms and light weapons. There are 500 million such weapons around the world, one for every 12 persons."
Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General
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From human rights initiative to peace in Nepal

On 21 November 2006, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed in Kathmandu, bringing to an end the decade-long civil war in Nepal that cost over 16,000 lives. Switzerland's long-term commitment to peace, human rights and development cooperation made a key contribution to this result. Switzerland enjoys the trust of all the parties involved and was requested to provide assistance with the implementation of the agreement.

Switzerland was one of the first countries to pursue an active development policy in Nepal, starting in the early 1950s. The civil war between rebels and the government, which was to last about 10 years, began in 1996 and cost thousands of human lives. Two hundred thousand people were driven from their homes. In May 2005, the FDFA despatched its Special Adviser for Peacebuilding, Günther Bächler, to Kathmandu with a mandate to make contact with all the warring parties and identify possibilities for achieving a negotiated solution. A decisive point for the ultimate outcome was that the peace adviser involved the democratic parties as a third party in the dialogue.

The Swiss diplomat's mediation efforts got off to a shaky start and led him, among other places, to a backyard in the slums of New Delhi in India, where the headquarters of the Maoist rebel group were based. After a phase of informal shuttle diplomacy (separate discussions with the warring parties), the parties officially sat round the negotiating table for the first time in late 2005.

The armed conflict ended in 2006 with a peace agreement and the transformation of Nepal into a republic with the inclusion of the Maoists. A human rights initiative by Switzerland in the spring of 2005 had a major effect: the largest field mission of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was subsequently set up. The peace agreement was followed in April 2008 by elections to a constituent assembly. A month later, the victory of the democratic forces led to the abolition of the monarchy.

A peace agreement is the first essential step in a peace process, but the usually fragile implementation phase over the next few years decides whether it will develop into a lasting peace. Switzerland retained a presence on the ground in Nepal and played a mediating role during the long transitional phase between 2006 and 2008 after the agreement was signed. The implementation process was hard going, which was only to be expected from this starting point, and was characterised by setbacks and crises of confidence between the parties. At one point the Maoists temporarily left the government and the implementation of the peace agreement ground to a halt.

Together with other countries, Switzerland made a financial contribution to the peace fund that was established by the Nepalese government and is today used to support the process. Eleven Swiss nationals participated in the EU election observation mission. Switzerland helped set up radio programmes in the country to provide the people with information on the forthcoming elections. Switzerland supported the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) both financially and through the secondment of experts.

When a country that was previously governed by an autocratic regime wishes to give itself a new, democratically legitimised constitution and introduce government reforms, it needs expert assistance. Switzerland is making an important contribution to the process of establishing a constitution. In October 2008, the FDFA organised a study trip for members of the constituent assembly to learn from Switzerland's cantonal and municipal authorities. The history of the establishment of the Canton of Jura in particular served as an object lesson.

PA IV, together with the SDC and other government agencies, also provided assistance in the establishment of a new security system as well as in a process of dealing with the past. The latter corresponds to one of the main objectives of Swiss foreign policy: to promote respect for human rights.

Switzerland's strategy for 2009-2012 combines active peacebuilding at the political level with management of conflict-sensitive development cooperation projects. Mediation work is still required. On several recent occasions, Switzerland has been actively involved at an informal level in moving the stalling peace process forward. This commitment is recognised and appreciated both by the Nepalese and internationally.



Nepal

The population of Nepal is about 30 million. According to IMF estimates, the per capita gross domestic product in 2009 was USD 452. That makes this landlocked Asian country one of the world's poorest. Nepal borders on two of the world's most populous states – China and India. The population includes a variety of ethnic groups. Since 2008 Nepal, formerly a Hindu kingdom, has been a republic. At the beginning of 2011 the UN Mission in Nepal (Unmin) withdrew from the country. Its main task, integration of the estimated 19,000 Maoist former combatants in the national army, is considered a failure.

The influence of religions and world views in conflicts

Religion and world views can play a central role in conflicts. For this reason, this dimension of conflict must be taken into account during any peace mission. The FDFA takes a pragmatic approach in the context of its activities to promote projects that enable representatives of different world views to meet and work together.

Since the mid-1980s, there has been a tendency for religious movements to become stronger all over the world. In many countries, religion is an integral part of social and political life. Nowadays there is a religious dimension to many of the conflicts within and between countries, as demonstrated by the examples of Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and the Middle East. Where religious differences are not the immediate trigger for violent confrontations, they can be one of the reasons why conflicts escalate. In such instances, classic negotiation processes are largely futile. When different world views and visions clash, it is impossible to separate values and interests.

Peacebuilding efforts must take this aspect into account. The FDFA has been working intensively on this topic since 2004 and has enabled dialogues to take place between rival parties in a number of countries. Isolation encourages extremism, and for this reason religious fundamentalists are also included in the process. Projects take a pragmatic approach – peace is achieved more easily if the parties meet and work together in an everyday context rather than discussing value systems, which tends to be unproductive. Projects that promote reciprocal integration mitigate prejudice and strengthen confidence, and with it peaceful coexistence.

This pragmatic approach is illustrated by the FDFA's work in Tajikistan, a country that was torn apart by war from 1993 to 1997. The primary conflict was between, on the one hand, the secular government that had emerged from the Soviet system and the democratic elite, and the religious (Muslim) elites, on the other. A successful peace process brought about the current stability in Tajikistan, yet deep mistrust still exists between the former warring factions, and many questions concerning the relationship between the secular government and the religious elements in society remain unresolved. It was possible to address some of these questions in a dialogue mediated by Switzerland between representatives of the government and the secular and religious elites. This resulted in a confidence-building document that established principles for coexistence and mechanisms for transforming conflicts arising from religious, legal and political issues. This was the basis on which working groups developed projects to implement these principles. One of them provided for the develop-

ment of a uniform curriculum for the private religious schools (madrasas), which operated independently of the state education system. The integration of elements of secular and civilian education into the curriculum taught by the religious schools built a bridge between the two education systems. A project was subsequently set up to evaluate this curriculum in a madrasa and to adapt, promote and propagate it in other religious schools. In this way it was possible to take some of the tension out of the situation and to regulate the relationship between the state and the religious community.

The FDFA is involved in many countries and organisations, including the following:

- In Sri Lanka, dialogue is taking place with Buddhist monks committed to a peaceful political future for the country, with the aim of promoting the future peaceful coexistence of all population groups.
- Switzerland is following efforts by Salafis (a movement within Islam) to develop a theological and political position in harmony with the political system in Lebanon. Switzerland is also supporting the creation of a basis for a process of negotiation between Salafis and the official religious representatives with the aim of integrating Salafis into the religious institutions.
- In Egypt, practice-oriented dialogue is being facilitated and encouraged between a Muslim NGO and a Swiss Christian NGO.
- The FDFA is working with the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which was established in 2005, to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim players in countries including Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan. The Alliance of Civilizations aims to combat extremism and to promote reciprocal tolerance.
- In 2005, Switzerland launched the Montreux Initiative which is designed to increase the transparency of Islamic charity organisations, whose credibility suffered greatly as a result of the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, and to create a climate of trust.

Religions and conflicts

In many parts of the world there has been a political renaissance of religious societies. The importance of religion in public discussion and particularly in relation to peace processes and escalating conflicts has increased significantly. Religious beliefs can influence the course of a conflict. Researchers are currently looking into the question of the extent to which such beliefs can aggravate a conflict or diminish it. Another question is whether or not religious disputes are really the cause of conflicts or if there might be other motives hiding behind differences of religious opinion. Various analyses have already shown that religions can be manipulated as a cover for strategic power interests.

Southern Sudan: From Burgenstock to comprehensive peace

Switzerland's long-term commitment in war-ravaged Sudan has earned it the trust of the conflicting parties. The FDFA has been asked on several occasions to contribute to the peace process in this country that has been torn apart by decades of civil war.

Sudan is one of the poorest countries on the African continent and the scene of one of the biggest humanitarian catastrophes in recent decades. One of the main factors is the civil wars between the Muslim north and the Christian-Animist south. The second civil war from 1983 to 2005 alone cost some two million lives and displaced four million people from their homes. The conflict arose due to the lack of political participation accorded to Southern Sudan and the consequent marginalisation of the south, control over the country's natural resources, and ethnic and religious differences.

Switzerland's involvement in Sudan was the result of the close relationship between Swiss diplomat Josef Bucher and an ambassador from Sudan. The Sudanese government asked Bucher, Switzerland's Special Representative on Conflict Issues, to facilitate talks between the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Southern Sudan and the Sudanese government. Bucher was subsequently in close contact with both parties between 1994 and 2002. The discussions culminated in 2002 with the Nuba Mountains Ceasefire Agreement which was signed at Burgenstock near Lucerne by the Government of Sudan and the SPLA rebel army.

Switzerland was asked to lead the negotiations and, together with the USA, mediated between the parties. One of the FDFA's contributions to the negotiations was the idea of federalism, a form of government that was initially unimaginable for the Sudanese. In the dispute over the oil fields in the south, the Swiss mediators suggested that the parties should discuss how to distribute the revenue rather than talk about who the oil belonged to. The ceasefire agreement was negotiated within a week – on the tail of a tough and patient mediation process that had gone on for over seven years. Josef Bucher recalls the first meeting with John Garang, the rebel leader and later Vice President. "He cut his finger with the Swiss Army Knife that I had presented to him. I winced, but he just laughed, saying, 'Bucher has succeeded in doing what the government in the north failed to do: injure me.'"

The Ceasefire Agreement signed in Burgenstock was the core of more extensive negotiations that ultimately led to a comprehensive peace agreement in 2005. Peace has largely held between the north and

the south, and more than two million people have returned to their villages. But relations are still tense even today. Contentious issues included the 2010 elections and preparations for the referendum on independence for the south. The recent history of Sudan is a good example of how the peace process doesn't end when an agreement is signed, but requires ongoing commitment.

Switzerland remains involved in Sudan and has dispatched an expert to monitor the implementation process for the peace agreement. The government in Southern Sudan explicitly requested Switzerland to provide a mediation expert for the negotiations between the rebel Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan government.

The House of Nationalities project was a Swiss initiative. Based on the acknowledgement that the many and varied cultures are a great asset to the country and that the rights of the ethnic and cultural communities have to be protected in order to ensure peace, the House of Nationalities was proposed as a platform for intercultural dialogue. The programme was realigned in late 2009, and a written agreement was reached with the semi-autonomous government of Southern Sudan. Today, the programme is known as the Council of Traditional Authority Leaders (COTALs) and is managed by the Government of Southern Sudan. The COTALs encourage dialogue with the aim of reducing the latent tensions between and within the different clans in the south, which led to the death of tens of thousands during the war. This long-term programme is intended to restore the role of the clan committees in local conflict prevention and resolution which was weakened during the war. The COTALs are also intended to provide an interface between the structures of a modern state and traditional society. The role of these clan committees has been enshrined in the country's legislation. Switzerland is also encouraging the development of independent media and, as part of this, the involvement of the Southern Sudanese diaspora in the process of rebuilding the country.



Sudan

The Republic of Sudan is Africa's largest country, with a surface area of 2.5 million square kilometres and a population of about 40 million. More than 100 ethnic groups live in Sudan, and the linguistic diversity is equally great. More than 50% of the population are black Africans while about 36% are of Arabian origin. However, the majority speak Arabic. Around 65-70% of the South Sudanese are Sunni Muslims, 10% Christian and the remainder follow indigenous religions. Islam is the state religion. In the peace declaration key issues were a government of unity and elections as well as a referendum on the fate of the South. By an overwhelming majority the South Sudanese voted in January 2011 for independence. This separation is due for completion on 9 July 2011.

Voices from politics, the economy, science and civil society



Political Affairs Division IV, which is the competent agency of the Swiss government for civilian peacebuilding and strengthening respect for human rights, is therefore responsible for implementing a substantial part of Swiss peace and human rights policy. Switzerland has earned considerable respect and influence at the international level as a result of the FDFA's work in the field of peace, human rights and humanitarian policy in conjunction with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). As a member of the Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding and in particular while taking part in election observation missions, I have seen for myself how Political Affairs Division IV has been able to provide crucial support to mediation processes, dialogues, projects and programmes. One of the biggest future challenges of Political Affairs Division IV will be to become increasingly involved in these fields in order to ensure that Switzerland achieves these goals on a sustainable basis.

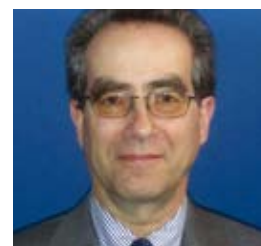
Brigitta M. Gadiant

National Councillor; member of the Advisory Committee of the Federal Council for International Development and Cooperation and Chair of the Committee for International Humanitarian Law of the Interparliamentary Union

Assuming leadership and being open for collaboration are keys to ensuring respect for Human Rights, and this has become increasingly visible and effective in Political Division IV of FDFA in recent years. The Swiss Confederation's growing engagement with state and non-state actors through the work of PA IV is not only welcome but is also vital to progress on the Human Rights agenda and the introduction of appropriate processes. Much work remains to be done, but the progress is tangible.

Ron Popper

Head of Corporate Responsibility at ABB Asea Brown Boveri Ltd



The Geneva Academy of international humanitarian law and human rights contributes to Switzerland's international influence in fields that are among the country's most noble traditions. The wish to ensure greater respect for human dignity lies at the heart of the project. The Academy has proved itself within a few years and it is continuing to develop successfully. It would not have been possible to establish the Academy or to continue its activities without the support of Political Affairs Division IV of the FDFA.

Nicolas Michel

Professor of international law, Chairman of the Board of the Geneva Academy of international humanitarian law and human rights

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Human rights policy



Human rights dialogue with Vietnam

Switzerland conducts human rights dialogues with over half a dozen countries, including Vietnam. As a major instrument of foreign policy on human rights, the aim of these dialogues is to make a contribution towards the respect for human rights in the dialogue partners' countries.



Vietnam

The population of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is estimated at about 90 million. Since the year 2000 Vietnam, which has no independent judiciary, has enjoyed rapid economic growth. It is one of Switzerland's most important trading partners in Southeast Asia. Trade between the two countries increased five-fold between 1998 and 2008. Aside from Switzerland, Australia, Norway and the United States are engaged in a human rights dialogue with Vietnam. Meetings in the framework of this dialogue enable Switzerland to discuss such human rights issues as freedom of expression and the independence of the media. Lists with the names of prisoners and others whose situation is of concern are regularly submitted to the Vietnamese government by the FDFA. Furthermore in consultation with other states the Swiss Embassy in Hanoi keeps track of trials involving human rights defenders.

The FDFA commenced its formal human rights dialogue with Vietnam in 1997. Vietnam shows a serious willingness to enter into dialogue and appreciates Switzerland as a partner with no hidden agenda. Generally, a meeting is held each year, with the location alternating between Switzerland and Vietnam. The right pre-conditions are in place for the dialogue with Vietnam. In addition, the political and media pressure that can make any discussion of human rights issues difficult and provoke defensive reactions is not as great as, for example, in the dialogue with China. The discussions, which are held in a climate of openness, remain confidential. At the end of the meeting, the parties agree on what should be published.

The subjects covered in the human rights dialogue with Vietnam centre around international human rights issues, criminal law, criminal proceedings and the penal system, minority rights, religious freedom and women's rights. There are deficits in the socialist country, especially in terms of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Vietnam would also like to work together with Switzerland to improve prison conditions. For its part, the Vietnamese delegation has in previous rounds mentioned Switzerland's minaret initiative and the lack of rights for migrants without papers in Switzerland. In the course of the discussions on the ratification of the UN Convention against Torture and other reforms in Vietnamese law, such as the abolition of the death penalty, the FDFA has pressed for a moratorium on executions and the publication of statistics on the use of the death penalty. It is also advising its dialogue partner to cooperate more closely with the UN Human Rights Council.

As part of the human rights dialogues, discussions are held on an equal footing. Instead of merely criticising, Switzerland wishes to raise its dialogue partners' awareness of human rights challenges and solutions and exchange experiences. The discussions are accompanied by specific projects funded by Switzerland. For example, each round of dialogue also involves meetings with experts and visits to various public authorities. An exchange of experts concerning the penal system and issues surrounding the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against Torture has been part of the human rights dialogue since 2006. The last visit of a delegation of

Vietnamese prison experts took place in Switzerland in October/November 2009. A Swiss delegation travelled to Vietnam at the end of 2010 in order to continue this exchange. In the course of this cooperative venture, the training of prison staff has been given priority for the first time. The Swiss experts are working closely with the college for prison staff that has recently opened in Hanoi.

The FDFA notes that the human rights situation in Vietnam has improved in recent years. Death sentences are no longer carried out, there is demonstrably less torture in prisons and religious freedom is officially recognised. In 2007, a law on gender equality and domestic violence was passed that had been drawn up partly in collaboration with Switzerland. The Swiss representatives in the discussions consider that these regular exchanges in the form of the human rights dialogue, which enables relevant subjects to be broached, have a positive effect on the dialogue partner's human rights situation and body politic. In addition, the discussions have a favourable effect on other areas of bilateral relations for both countries, e.g. on trade relations.

Switzerland also holds human rights dialogues with Iran, Tajikistan, Cuba and China. Regular human rights consultations are also held with Russia and a human rights dialogue with Nigeria will be launched in 2011.

UN Human Rights Council reviews the human rights situation

Established in 2006, the UN Human Rights Council dates back to an initiative by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in conjunction with Switzerland. The successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights, which had been discredited owing to excessive politicisation and polarisation, has an efficient mechanism for regularly reviewing the human rights situation in all member states.

In the spring of 2006, the UN General Assembly decided by 170 votes to 4 to establish the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. This was the crowning moment of an FDFA initiative. In 2003, Swiss law professor Walter Kälin was commissioned by the FDFA to look for ways of reforming the UN Commission on Human Rights. The draft was presented to the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in 2004. Thanks to a committed diplomatic campaign by Switzerland in collaboration with the UN, the new Council was approved by a clear majority.

The UN Human Rights Council has 47 members who are appointed for a term of three years. The seats are divided among regional groups. In addition, candidates for a seat have to go through an application procedure, are accountable and called upon to meet the “highest standards” in terms of respect for human rights. The shortcomings of its predecessor organisation have been addressed by, for instance, attaching the Council directly to the General Assembly as a subsidiary organ, meaning it is therefore at a higher institutional level than the former Commission. Special sessions can be convened in the event of urgent cases of human rights violations.

It is the task of the member states to assess the human rights situation in all countries. In the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), all countries take turns to assess themselves and accept the recommendations of the other countries. In addition to country recommendations, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also prepare a report. Governments undertake to implement the recommendations they have accepted. It is generally agreed that the periodic review of the human rights situation in all member states is a successful innovation brought about by the UN Human Rights Council. Nonetheless, the frequent unwillingness of governments to implement the recommendations is criticised. The fact that the review covers all countries removes the taboos surrounding the human rights situation in a country and raises hopes that political reforms will be made in the medium term. That said, as before, many of the Council's decisions are still politically motivated and a type of “bloc thinking” is apparent. The election to the Council of certain member states that stand accused

of human rights violations was also the subject of international criticism.

The FDFA is endeavouring to move the dialogue past the formation of blocs and prevent a climate of polarisation from arising. It is therefore consciously building bridges, making proposals in supranational groups and working closely with non-governmental organisations and think tanks such as the Geneva Academy of international humanitarian law and human rights. NGOs are an important part of the UN Human Rights Council. Furthermore, the FDFA is calling for political arguments to cease and for discussions in the Council to focus on the human rights situation at hand, as it is this – and not political attitudes – that are to be judged. All discussions should be centred on the victims.

In 2010, Switzerland, which is appreciated as a point of contact within the Council, was elected to the Council for a second three-year term.

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Human Rights Council

Switzerland, which had a strong commitment to the creation of the Human Rights Council as well as the consolidation of its instruments, began serving a second term as a member of the Council in May 2010, following its membership in 2006-09. On 25 February 2011 the Council held a special session on Libya, marking the first time in its brief history that the Council devoted a special session to a current member. Without a vote the Council adopted a resolution which recommended to the UN General Assembly that it suspend Libya's Human Rights Council membership. The General Assembly duly acted on the recommendation. This has sent a strong signal that the Council will not accept violations by its member states.

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Code of conduct for private security companies

Increasingly, private companies are being entrusted with security tasks, especially in crisis areas. At the initiative of Switzerland, 58 of the biggest security companies have signed a code of conduct that obliges them to respect human rights and conform to the standards in their business policy.

After the end of the Cold War, Western countries made drastic cuts in their military budgets and thus increasingly outsourced military and security tasks to the private sector. Employed by governments, international institutions, the private sector, the media and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), security companies protect individual people, institutions or convoys mainly in crisis regions. They have sharply increased in number around the world; in some countries, private companies now play a greater role than the police or the military. The powers and controls exercised by these security companies have also been the subject of public controversy, especially in the context of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Private companies and their employees are subject to international humanitarian law and are therefore required to respect international human rights. However, until Switzerland became involved, there had been no initiatives to enforce existing international regulations concerning this global industry and provide recommendations for their implementation. The International Code of Conduct drawn up by the FDFA in collaboration with industry associations and NGOs is intended to ensure that the industry and its clients adhere to regulations. In November 2010 in Geneva, 58 security companies agreed with their signatures to abide by the human rights standards set out in the Code of Conduct: employees should only use weapons to defend themselves and others in life-threatening situations or to prevent a crime that would result in a high death toll; there is an absolute prohibition on torture, discrimination or human trafficking. The code expressly rejects active participation in military operations. For its part, the management of these companies must recruit their staff in accordance with certain criteria, provide them with suitable training and supervise their work.

It is important to note that the International Code of Conduct is not self-regulation. For example, the document was drawn up in a process involving all the relevant players and a start has been made on establishing an independent monitoring body. The FDFA is convinced that national legislators will use the Code for guidance. Governments, companies and humanitarian organisations will also include the rules of conduct in contracts that they sign with security companies. For example, the United Kingdom

has been making efforts for several years to regulate its domestic security industry; the government has now decided to use the results of the Swiss initiative as a guide for regulation. It is stressed in the International Code of Conduct that it is not a replacement for national provisions, government controls or future international regulations.

Governments, non-governmental organisations and the signatory companies have agreed to set up a monitoring system in the form of an ombudsman's office, which will receive complaints and launch investigations. The results will be published and brought to the government's attention. At the same time, the companies will be supported by a secretariat when implementing the measures.

Two years previously, the FDFA had already drawn up a document on the regulation of security companies that has now been signed by 35 countries. Known as the Montreux Document, it provides an overview of obligations under international law and places a duty on governments to guarantee that the Geneva Convention – encompassing the protection of people and other standards of international humanitarian law – will also be respected by governments when working with private military and security companies.

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Private security companies

"Non-state actors such as security companies play an increasingly important role in the conflicts. Placing an obligation on these firms to abide by international standards is therefore an important step towards the implementation of human rights and International Humanitarian Law."

Peter Maurer, State Secretary of FDFA

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Humanitarian policy and migration



Towards an internationally coordinated migration policy

Migration is a transnational phenomenon. A single country alone cannot meet all of the steadily intensifying challenges it poses. But migration also provides opportunities. The FDFA takes an active interest in ensuring that the subject of international migration is discussed in full.

International migration has seen a dramatic increase in line with globalisation: people are leaving their home country in order to find work and a livelihood elsewhere. Until a few years ago, the subject of migration was neglected in international politics, with the debate long being confined to asylum issues and the integration of migrants in the countries of the north.

However, national politics and global migration flows affect one another. Rational international cooperation in dealing with migration may help to create a situation where the negative consequences of migration can be combated more effectively and better use be made of its positive aspects. In 2001, Switzerland therefore launched the Berne Initiative to set a discussion in motion at international level. An expert committee chaired by Switzerland stressed in its final report that the migration policies of individual countries have to be coordinated if we are to maximise the benefits of migration and minimise the negative effects.

The FDFA is aiming to bring about a radical shift in approach to the discussion on international migration. Migration should not simply be regarded as a problem – especially in the countries receiving immigrants – the opportunities it offers both the countries of origin and of destination should also be discussed. For example, migrants contribute to economic growth and social development both in their destination countries and in their home countries. On the one hand, money transferred by migrants to their families at home (known as “remittances”) is having an increasingly important economic impact. In the Philippines, for example, transfers are now estimated to account for about 15 per cent of gross national product. On the other hand, migration promotes knowledge transfer, as workers acquire knowledge in the destination country that they can later use on their return to their home country. In return, migration enables host countries to fill gaps in their labour forces.

The risks of migration are the loss of expertise when highly qualified people leave a developing country or the lack of protection for migrants during and after their often very long journeys. In addition, more and more migrants worldwide do not have regular

residence status. These so-called irregular migrants remove themselves from legitimate controls on the one hand, and on the other, often fall victim to exploitation. Ways of encouraging circular migration, i.e. emigrants returning to their home countries, are also being discussed. Start-up assistance facilitates the reintegration of returning migrants into the workforce.

At the 61st session of the UN General Assembly in September 2006, migration was debated for the first time at ministerial level on the initiative of the then UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan (UN High-Level Dialogue on Migration and Development). Since then, discussions have centred on the connection between migration and development, labour migration, migrants’ rights and the fight against human trafficking and smuggling. Thanks in part to Switzerland’s commitment, the General Assembly will convene an informal thematic debate in 2011 and another High-Level Dialogue in 2013 on migration and development.

The first High-Level Dialogue culminated in the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). This informal forum is based on the voluntary participation of countries, and draws upon the expertise of non-governmental organisations. As a member of the Steering Group, Switzerland is actively involved in shaping the discussions. It is chairing the forum in 2011. The interdepartmental composition of the delegations (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Federal Department of Justice and Police and Federal Department of Economic Affairs), represented by a Special Ambassador for International Cooperation in Migration, is an illustration of the fact that all the relevant agencies are taking part in this debate and want to work together (whole-of-government approach).

The FDFA coordinates Switzerland’s role in the international dialogue on migration and also sets the focal points for discussion. Its main areas of interest are the issues surrounding human protection and migrants’ rights. For example, the FDFA intends to bring the subject of climate change and its effect on global migration into the international debate, as this topic is set to become even more urgent in the future.

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Migration
According to estimates of the International Organisation for Migration there are more than 200 million people living in a country that is not their own today. Migratory movements are on the increase all over the world. In 2008 migrants accounted for over USD 300 billion in money transfers (remittances) to developing countries according to the World Bank, well above the amount of official development aid provided by the industrialised nations. In some countries a third of families depend on these transfers to stay above the poverty line.
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Migration partnership: use the opportunities and solve problems

International migration has not only accelerated, it has also become more complex. The instruments created by the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) provide an opportunity for discussing the problems and opportunities of migration with the countries of origin and for undertaking measures that are useful to both partners.

Today, more than 200 million people are living in a country that is not their native country. The fall of the Iron Curtain and the belligerent confrontations in the Balkans and in Africa have contributed to a growing migration movement. Most of the migrants are in search of better employment prospects and therefore of a better way of life. Migration has consequences both for the country of origin and for the country of destination. Emigration can lead to the lack of a well-qualified workforce in the country of origin, while the target countries are able to fill their employment gaps through immigration. On the other hand, countries of emigration can benefit from financial payments being made by the migrants to relatives and from the transfer of knowledge through those who return. However, migration in the target country can lead to a subjectively experienced threat for its citizens. If migrants enter a country illegally, they are not protected by labour laws and run the danger of becoming victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

Through cooperation and joint projects between the country of origin and the target country, the opportunities associated with migration can be optimally utilised and challenges countered in the most appropriate way. Thus Switzerland has developed the innovative instrument of migration partnerships that emphasise the idea of cooperation. Representatives of Switzerland and the land of origin meet at least once a year for a dialogue that is basically focused on the following questions: How can the voluntary return of migrants to their country of origin and their re-integration be furthered? How can governmental migration authorities be strengthened in the country of origin? How can irregular migration be prevented? How can migrants be better integrated into the country of immigration and be protected from human trafficking? How can both countries contribute to the economic development in the country of origin and thus lessen migration pressure? And finally, how can the target country impart the knowledge and provide the skills that migrants can use upon their return.

The FDFA, together with the Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and the partner country, is developing projects which will further cooperation between both countries. In the country of origin, for instance,

these are aimed at improved information for potential emigrants through campaigns describing possibilities and risks, or at re-integration measures for those returning such as vocational advice, job placement and start-up aid for individual small businesses. The target country can improve education and advanced training for migrants. Formalities for financial transfers can be simplified and their cost decreased. The projects and programmes within the framework of migration partnerships are determined according to need and include activities abroad that play a role for migration such as civil peace promotion, furthering of human rights and social insurance agreements. The protection of migrants is of primary importance for the FDFA.

The FDFA and the FOM conclude migration partnerships with those countries that represent a priority for Switzerland. These are countries, for instance, whose citizens are entering Switzerland with increasing frequency, or because Switzerland wants to contribute to the development of their countries of origin through specific exchange programmes (such as stays for educational purposes). In 2009, talks were started with countries of the West Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo) and with Nigeria. Migration partnerships are focused on the long term and are meant to continue for as long as they are advantageous to the states involved. They are formalised through a treaty (binding international agreement), through a memorandum of understanding (non-binding international agreement) or through a letter of intent. The contents of a migration partnership are flexibly structured and change according to the country so that they can reflect the specific interests of each actor.

Various government offices are concerned with migration. The migration partnership thus aims to achieve a coherent policy that takes into consideration the interest of all participants (whole-of-government approach). Central actors in this connection are the FOM, which oversees Swiss migration policy, Political Division IV, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Other offices, such as the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Seco), are included according to need.

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Migration partnerships

Migration partnerships promote a readiness to engage in dialogue and cooperation. In the context of cooperation, questions relating to the return of migrants on the one hand and the causes of forced migration (poverty, conflicts and human rights violations) in the countries of origin on the other hand, can be linked. These exchanges between partners lead to a mutual understanding of each other's position and open new paths to constructive solutions for coping with migration-related problems. As the interface between domestic and foreign affairs, it is the duty of the FDFA not only to represent Switzerland's interests abroad but also the foreign point of view in the dialogue taking place at home.

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Internally displaced persons – refugees in their own country

The number of people who have become refugees in their own country has increased steadily in recent years. As part of its international political commitment, the FDFA is calling for internally displaced persons to be better protected and have their rights strengthened.

Because of hostilities or natural disasters, internally displaced persons have to leave all their possessions behind; they have no food, sanitary facilities, medical care or suitable housing. Unlike refugees, those affected have not crossed any national borders; they therefore do not enjoy a special legal status and receive little protection. A UN document containing guidelines on internal displacement that was drawn up in the late 1990s provides a normative framework for countries dealing with internally displaced persons. However, it is not legally binding.

Not all governments of countries that have internally displaced persons are equally willing to protect them and grant them rights. The fate of internally displaced persons is currently one of the priorities of Switzerland's human rights policy. The FDFA is calling for internal displacement to be placed on the political agenda of international organisations and treated as an urgent humanitarian problem. Governments of countries with internally displaced persons should be required, directed and, where necessary, given financial and staffing support to implement the guidelines on internal displacement within their political system. In 2005, intensive political lobbying by Switzerland and other like-minded countries resulted in the guidelines being included in the final document of the UN summit, thereby giving them greater weight. The FDFA supported the mandate of former Swiss Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Internally Displaced Persons, Walter Kälin, both financially and in terms of personnel.

Studies conducted in Sri Lanka, Colombia, Sudan and Georgia have shown that the solution to the problem of internal displacement is inextricably linked to establishing lasting peace. The FDFA has supported a study¹ by Walter Kälin and the Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement on the subject, in which the authors call for internally displaced persons and their needs to be incorporated into peace processes, this being the only way in which lasting peace can be achieved. The potential for conflict remains high as long as the displaced persons are denied the option to settle permanently in their place of origin or another place in their home country. A rise in crime can often be observed as a result of internal displacement; in addition, the displaced persons are drawn

into a spiral of violence, as the examples of Central America and Sudan show.

In order to raise awareness of the situation, the FDFA joined forces with the Brookings-Bern Project and the University of Javeriana to organise an event in Bogotá, Colombia in 2008, which was attended by representatives of internally displaced persons, government, donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The aim was to allow the voice of those affected to be heard in the peace initiatives, and to inform them of their rights and obligations. The FDFA's report on the event and three field studies in Colombia analyse the needs of internally displaced persons and make recommendations on how to return their land to them, compensate them and incorporate them into the workforce.

The FDFA has recorded its expertise on the subject of internally displaced persons in a number of handbooks. They contain recommendations to governments, the courts and NGOs on how to implement the guidelines to protect internally displaced persons. In the absence of an international convention on the rights of internally displaced persons, the FDFA drew up a set of instructions for international and non-governmental actors to make governments aware of the subject and support them in their efforts to permanently improve the situation of internally displaced persons.

The missions of Switzerland and the former Swiss UN envoy have now prompted several countries – including Nepal, the Central African Republic and Georgia – to include legal provisions on internal displacement in their agenda and to strengthen the rights of internally displaced persons. The challenge remains of how to strengthen the will and the capabilities in other countries to alleviate suffering.

..... **Internally displaced persons**

The number of internally displaced persons has risen to about 27 million in the last three decades – double the number of refugees. In more than 50 countries populations are being driven from their traditional living spaces. As well as armed conflicts and lack of security the reasons for this increasingly include disasters triggered by climate change. It can be concluded therefore that the predicted increase in natural disasters will result in the displacement of populations to an unprecedented extent.

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¹ Integrating Internal Displacement in Peace Processes and Agreements, Brookings-Bern Project, 2007

Measures to combat human trafficking

Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children who leave their country of origin owing to a lack of prospects end up in the hands of human traffickers. As an interface between foreign and domestic policy, the FDFA invites representatives of the countries of origin and Swiss experts to a round-table conference in order to find international solutions.

Each year, millions of people leave their homeland in order to find work and a livelihood elsewhere. They are fleeing poverty, discrimination or violence. The pressure to migrate is particularly powerful on women who are single parents or living alone in poverty. Often, they are recruited by human traffickers in their country of origin and leave their country under the illusion that they will find a regular livelihood elsewhere. However, by doing so, they frequently end up in the clutches of criminal organisations who keep the women under control by means of violence and threats. Hardly any manage to escape by their own efforts; victims must rely on outside help.

In Switzerland, various government agencies and institutions address the issue of human trafficking and associated matters, e.g. the police, the courts, welfare offices and victim support organisations. The FDFA uses its international relationships to link and further expert knowledge. The round-table conference brings together experts from Switzerland and from the victims' countries of origin. The subjects discussed mainly revolve around the preventive measures that the country of origin can take to curb the degrading trade in its people and the shape that cooperation between the two countries should take when victims are picked up in Switzerland, as well as the measures that the Swiss authorities must take to ensure that the rights of those affected are fully protected.

In 2010, the FDFA invited Romania and Austria to the round-table conference to discuss the subject of child beggars and child trafficking. Romania is the source not only of many victims who are sexually exploited in Switzerland but also of organised groups of beggars – many of them children. According to police reports, these children are forced to beg and steal and are often the victims of child trafficking. As experience from Austria shows, it is important that children who are picked up should be properly cared for locally so that they can subsequently travel back to their country of origin under professional supervision. In addition, cities, the police and welfare authorities have to collaborate closely. Reporting platforms that compile all the data on human trafficking in Switzerland are a suitable instrument for this purpose.

The year before, a delegation had been received from Hungary, a country that is a major source of victims

of sexual exploitation. Subjects discussed included how victims of human trafficking can be identified and how they can be protected and cared for.

As one of the preventive measures to tackle human trafficking for the purpose of exploitation in prostitution, the FDFA has instructed Swiss embassies in the countries of origin to attach conditions to the granting of visas for occupations such as that of cabaret dancer. Applicants must provide evidence that they have reached a minimum age and are informed by Swiss consulates about the risks of this occupation in the destination country. However, action is also required in Switzerland. For example, the laws must be designed to prevent abuse and guarantee victims protection. The institutions involved must be provided with sufficient resources.

In order to apprehend the human traffickers, an effective witness protection scheme is required: any women who are prepared to testify against their tormentors in court must be granted police protection, financial assistance and psychological counselling. The 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was the first to focus on the protection of victims.

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Human trafficking

The figures are shocking: depending on estimates, between 700,000 and 2.5 million people, 80% of them women, become victims of human trafficking each year. The majority of people, usually women, who are exploited in Switzerland, come from Eastern Europe, Thailand, Nigeria and South America. There is a connection between increasing migration and exploitation in prostitution. Where a country is engaged in combating human trafficking, these risks and the particular vulnerability of women in prostitution must also be discussed.
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“Our intention is to play an active role”

Ambassador Thomas Greminger succeeded Ambassador Peter Maurer as Head of Political Affairs Division IV (PA IV) in 2004. PA IV expanded the scope of its activities under his management. His aims were “to manage the Division well in a sensitive political and diplomatic environment, and to create a working atmosphere in which highly skilled and dedicated employees can develop their capabilities.” He handed over the post to Ambassador Claude Wild in August 2010.

Ambassador Greminger, how do you view the global situation today with regard to respect for human rights and human security?

Statistics show that the number of political conflicts has decreased. Nowadays, considerably more conflicts are resolved by means of negotiation than by military engagement. On a legal level, there has been a massive improvement globally in the protection of human rights thanks to the great efforts that have been made in the past three decades. Today, the main challenge and focus is in implementing these standards. Other forms of armed conflict, however, remain virulent. Some 52,000 people are the direct victims of politically motivated conflicts, more of them civilians than combatants. There are 200,000 indirect victims of conflict who have died of starvation or disease. The total number of victims of armed violence is 740,000. One major phenomenon associated with armed violence is the grey area between political and purely criminal violence (violence by youths, gang violence). New risks are set to take on greater significance, among them climate change and conflicts surrounding resources such as water.

Is the fact that conflicts are increasingly being resolved by negotiation the result of international efforts in this area?

Yes, or at least that is the line taken in the “Human Security Report” (Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada). The international community has developed and deployed a variety of instruments to promote peace; the techniques used to resolve conflicts nowadays are far more sophisticated. Against this backdrop, I think it is a plausible assertion. That said, the political situation in the world has also helped, specifically the end of the Cold War and the two dominant blocs.

PA IV has been in existence for ten years now. Why was this political affairs division established?

Article 54 of the Federal Constitution formulates Switzerland's foreign policy objectives. It states that Switzerland should promote respect for human rights and the peaceful coexistence of nations. A corresponding structure had to be set up to pursue these goals. Up to that time, we had not provided peace policy tools on a systematic basis, so our aim was to create them with PA IV as the centre of excellence. Civilian peacebuilding is an effective strategy of conflict management; this realisation has now taken root in all political camps, not least because civilian issues are no longer played off against military issues. This has freed us from the suspicion of nurturing ideologies. We also agree that, given the global security policy challenges that exist, a rich and stable country like Switzerland has a duty to contribute towards solving global problems. In this context, civilian peacebuilding and the protection of human rights are areas in which Switzerland is at a comparative advantage and can create added value for the good of the international community. However, I would like to emphasise that the tasks assigned to PA IV can't be done without political support; we continue to need strong backing from the FDFA, the Federal Council and parliament.

What qualities does Switzerland possess that qualify it so clearly for a role in peace policy and the protection of human rights?

It helps that we don't have a colonial past and that we are a small country. It means we aren't threatening. Neutrality under international law is certainly not a disadvantage, but it's not enough on its own. It's important for us to adopt a consistently impartial position. In addition, we're not part of a powerful regional organisation, and this gives us more room to manoeuvre. We are not required to adopt the list of terrorists drawn up by the EU, for example. We are free to talk to anyone who, in our opinion, has a political agenda. And if we can't engage in dialogue ourselves for political reasons, we call on private mediators – non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the same time, I would like to emphasise that we can't solve conflicts without forming alliances with powerful partners. A combination of “soft” and “hard” power is nearly always needed. Nowadays, we are perceived internationally as a competent partner because of our expertise in peace policy.

The commitments undertaken by PA IV have increased continuously, with the current annual budget totalling CHF 63 million. What are the principles on which you “invest” this money?

The budget has increased as the Federal Council and parliament have consciously committed themselves to civilian peacebuilding and to strengthening human rights. The intention is to expand these tools and consolidate efforts. The considerable impact that we achieve with relatively little funding is in part due to our principle of positioning ourselves as agents or co-agents, with the intention of playing an active role ourselves. Major financial contributions to peace-policy initiatives, on the other hand, are not part of our repertoire.

How does Switzerland benefit from the work done by PA IV?

On the one hand, PA IV's work is the kind of contribution to a cooperative international security policy that is expected of a rich, globalised country. On the other, it helps to prevent irregular migration. Peace and stability in other countries are also in the economic interests of our own country, i.e. in terms of trade and investment. And finally, peace-policy involvement facilitates general access to major political players like the USA. Mediation between Armenia and Turkey and the nuclear talks with Iran paved the way to discussions with Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Other peace-policy activities led to intensive cooperation with the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This, in turn, gives us an advantage in solving other types of problems, such as in dealings with Libya. At the same time, though, it would be wrong to portray peace policy as a magic formula for solving all foreign policy problems. It is not a substitute for discussion and decisions on other foreign policy issues such as European integration.

What were PA IV's main focal points under your leadership?

Our goal is to make substantial contributions towards resolving conflicts, protecting human rights and humanitarian international law, and achieving a modern migration policy based on the principles of human security. On one hand, we emphasise an operational focus on conflict resolution – we want to be able to provide very tangible added value. In other areas we help to improve the framework conditions, for instance in the protection of human rights and a human migration policy. Another major area of activity is policy work, in other words the political and normative development of an issue. Wherever possible, we try to combine these levels of activity by feeding the lessons that we have learnt in an operational context into policy development discussions, for instance with the United Nations. Ultimately, the emphasis we give is always a mixture of top-down and bottom-up impulses, i.e. the requirements defined by the Federal Council and the Head of the Department, and the priorities identified by PA IV itself, which are then incorporated into mid-term and annual planning.

To what extent does Switzerland pursue a niche policy?

No matter where we get involved, we always have to be part of an intelligently thought-out network. Sometimes we take the lead; sometimes we provide useful input. There is no doubt that we are niche players in situations where conflicts are dominated by the “permanent five” (the five major powers in the Security Council). The classic example here is the conflict in the Middle East. PA IV is also a niche player sometimes within the Swiss Confederation itself. Where migration is concerned, for example, it is a junior partner and provides ideas for shaping a migration policy that is dynamic and respects human dignity.

You worked in this field for around eight and a half years, six of them as Head of PA IV. What events would you describe as the high and low points of this period?

One highlight was certainly the establishment of the Human Rights Council and our contribution to improving its performance. However, expectations were very high when it was set up, so the reality was almost predestined to be a more sobering experience. One major success was the creation of an international instrument for tracing small arms, even though it cannot yet be taken for granted that this instrument is consistently applied in practice. Our work on formulating a Code of Conduct for private security companies was also successful. The USA even wants to incorporate this code into its legislation. At operational level, our greatest successes in mediation work were probably in Nepal and in the process of rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey. In Burundi, we succeeded in involving the FNL (an armed group that represents the interests of the Hutu people) in the peace process. In the Middle East and in the Western Balkans, we were also able to provide significant impetus, even though we are not among the key players in these regions.

In many cases, the low points are at least tied up with partial successes. In Colombia, for instance, it was not possible to achieve a breakthrough in the peace process involving the parties, despite considerable efforts. However, this particular commitment helped us to play an important role in the area of dealing with the past. The same is true of our mediation between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government. Formal peace was not achieved, but the northern part of Uganda is peaceful now, and the refugees have been able to return home. It's important to show perseverance and not to be discouraged too quickly by things that go wrong. We always have to remind ourselves that, ultimately, it is only the parties who can make peace; external third parties like ourselves play only a catalytic, supporting role.

What events particularly stand out in your mind?

One powerful recollection is of 2006, in which we gave the Colombian Ambassador the proposal that we had worked out in conjunction with France and Spain for the creation of a temporary “meeting zone”, so that peace negotiations between the government and the FARC could be sounded out. The agreement was sent to the FARC and the Colombian government at the same time, with the message that their responses should be sent confidentially. Less than 24 hours later, the government announced at a press conference that it had accepted the proposal. It was immediately clear to me that this most likely meant the plan had failed, as the FARC would probably be unable to accept the proposal following such a public announcement by the government. For years, there was unfortunately no alternative to this idea of a meeting zone. In contrast, I experienced a moving event in August 2009 in Nepal. We were travelling with a large delegation to the opening of the Swiss Embassy in Kathmandu. Although there were no Swiss ministers in our group, we were received by the President, the Prime Minister, other relevant ministers and all the party leaders within a short space of time. This honour was very clearly bestowed in recognition of the role we had played in mediating the peace process in Nepal.

Which experiences during your time as Head of PA IV would you describe as lessons learnt?

Initially, we didn't realise that you have to be fairly selective in your geographic focus if you get involved in peace policy. After all, you need time to position yourself, forge relationships and establish the necessary trust. The same is true of the topics in which we are involved. Peacebuilding is a very complex process, and there is a great temptation to want to play a bit of a role in everything. At the end of the day, we have to focus our efforts on those areas where demand exists and where we can contribute very specific expertise. We have systematically expanded our mediation and process skills, and this is also acknowledged internationally. Much the same is true of the topics of power sharing, federalism and dealing with the past.

Another lesson learnt is that appropriate capacity has to be available at all times if it is to be effective. It's not enough to have purely academic knowledge; the knowledge has to be adapted to the situation in a specific peace process. This, ultimately, is the fine art of peacebuilding. We have to establish and develop this expertise both inside and outside of the Department. Today, we have a pool of experts and strategic partners who are able to provide key knowledge. One example is the Small Arms Survey, the world's leading centre of excellence on small arms. Without this expertise, we would not have dared to propose the national small arms tracing instrument to the United Nations or to conduct the negotiations. Another thing I have learnt is that conflict management and peacebuilding are also about networks. Switzerland cannot achieve peace anywhere on its own – this can only be done with alliances adapted to the specific context.

Thomas Greminger

Thomas Greminger was born in Lucerne in 1961. He studied history, economics and political science in Zurich and obtained his doctorate in history. In 1990, he started working for the FDFA, beginning his career as an attaché in the Swiss embassy in Tel Aviv. In 1996, he became head of the politics and research section of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and from 1999 to 2001 he was chargé d'affaires at the Swiss embassy and SDC coordinator in Mozambique. In 2001, he became deputy head of Political Affairs Division IV and head of the peace-policy section. In 2004, he was raised to the rank of ambassador and became head of Political Affairs Division IV. Since the start of September, Thomas Greminger has been head of the Swiss delegation to the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and permanent representative of Switzerland to the United Nations and to the international organisations as well as to the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in Vienna.



Voices from politics, the economy, science and civil society



Switzerland, with its humanitarian tradition and based on its foreign policy maxims, is strongly committed to civilian peacebuilding and the promotion of human rights. Peace and security are essential needs of each individual. This humanitarian commitment is tremendously important in order to protect people from violence, repression and despotism. Switzerland makes an important contribution in this area – both with bilateral programmes and on a multilateral level.

Christa Markwalder

President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council, Bern

Twenty years ago, no-one would have thought that Switzerland would one day run its own very proactive foreign policy structure for the promotion of peace and human rights. The predominant attitude at the time was that the best foreign policy of a neutral state was no foreign policy at all. Of course, our wish for the future is that the objectives pursued by Political Affairs Division IV will also be reflected in Swiss foreign economic policy and in international finance policy. At present, Swiss policy is characterised in this respect by a lack of coherence, such as with regard to development cooperation. This does not detract from the value of Political Affairs Division IV, but shows where the Federal Council still has work to do.



Peter Niggli

CEO of Alliance Sud, the development policy working group of Swissaid, Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund, Bread for All, Helvetas, Caritas and HEKS (Swiss Interchurch Aid).



Our well-established and very constructive dialogue with PA IV provides us with valuable insights into the evolving nature of the business and human rights discussion. This supports us in our continued implementation of the UBS Statement on Human Rights. We also value other contributions PA IV has made, and continues to make, to advancing the “translation” of human rights into a concrete business context, for example via the UN Global Compact Swiss Network or – in past years – the Who Cares Wins financial sector initiative. Going forward, we confidently look to PA IV’s continued and active input and support, particularly as businesses move to internalize the UN Framework for Business and Human Rights.

Christian Leitz

UBS AG, Head Corporate Responsibility Management



Liselotte Arni

UBS AG, Head Environmental & Social Risk



I have greatly appreciated the pioneering role of Political Affairs Division IV in the area of business and human rights. For example, the “Guías Colombia” initiative for human rights and security in Colombia brings together companies, NGOs, government representatives and trade unions. I hope that Political Affairs Division IV will continue its practice-oriented involvement in this field in the future.

Christian Frutiger

Public Affairs Manager Nestlé S.A.

Under the stewardship of Ambassadors Peter Maurer and Thomas Greminger, Political Affairs Division IV of the FDFA has quickly become a centre of competence for the promotion of civilian peacebuilding and the protection of human rights. Three factors were crucial in this. Firstly, specialisation in specific themes and geographical areas has enabled the limited available funds to be clearly targeted. Secondly, Political Affairs Division IV aims to pursue a comprehensive approach to peace promotion. In countries such as Nepal or Sudan, the combined use of civilian, military and development policy tools has produced positive results to date. These coordinated efforts will be continued. Thirdly, Political Affairs Division IV has specifically promoted cooperation between the state, academia and non-governmental organisations. A good example of this is the Mediation Support Project, in which not only Political Affairs Division IV is involved but also the Centre for Security Studies (CSS) at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich and the NGO swisspeace. Continuing the commitment to the promotion of civilian peacebuilding and protection of human rights is in Switzerland’s interest. Political Affairs Division IV has done very valuable preparatory work in recent years.



Andreas Wenger

Professor of Swiss and international security policy, ETH Zurich, and Head of the Centre for Security Studies, ETH



Article 54 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation states: “The Confederation [...] shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources.” Switzerland is thus stating that the environment is very important to it and that we can only be successful if other countries have good reason to hope. Political Affairs Division IV of the FDFA turns these words into action. The exact goal of the Federal Constitution will probably not be fully achieved, but the road there is very important. As a foreign affairs politician, I am very happy to support this goal.

Geri Müller

Member of the Foreign Policy Committee of the National Council

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