



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of
Foreign Affairs FDFA

ABC Switzerland UN



Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Glossary | 10 |
| Organisation chart of the UN | 28-29 |

Introduction

We count on worldwide harmonised security systems when travelling by air, and we take it for granted that the Internet functions around the world. When major disasters hit, we assume that international aid is coordinated. And when a pandemic breaks out, we count on someone somewhere to monitor its course.

This confidence is founded on global cooperation, the need for which was clear long before a comprehensive world organisation came into existence. For instance, the Universal Postal Union, founded in 1874 and with its seat in Bern, arose from the economic need to send and receive letters everywhere in the world.

Nowadays, almost all areas of global cooperation are integrated in the United Nations (UN) and the UN system or have a political presence there. The UN was founded in 1945, in the final stages of the Second World War, with the objective of ensuring peace and security throughout the world in the future. Its headquarters are in New York, where its most important organs, the General Assembly and the Security Council, convene. The UN's second office is in Geneva, in the previous headquarters of the ill-fated League of Nations that was founded after the First World War. A large number of UN specialised agencies are based in Geneva – some of which have existed far longer than the UN itself. The UN's other offices are based in Vienna and Nairobi.

A voluntary association

At the UN, nations are united, not unified. The difference is important: The UN is not a world government, rather a voluntary association of independent states. Today, there are 193 member states.

The UN is the only universal political organisation, and it's a multifunctional body: a producer of reliable global data, worldwide coordinator in times of disaster, one of the world's largest development organisations, a forum for political debate on global issues, and the place where international standards are developed. The UN General Assembly – which applies the principle of “one state, one vote” – is like a world exchange for formulating political ideas and searching for common denominators with global validity. At the UN, member states reach agreement on interpreting common values and legal minimum standards. In an organisation of 193 member states with equal rights, this is not a simple matter, and it can often only be achieved at the expense of clarity or content. UN processes are tedious and complex, and its documents difficult and complicated. Anyone who wants to change something in New York, Geneva, or Vienna needs considerable patience, a tough skin, and the equanimity to accept progress in small steps.

The UN does not have a lot of power. With the exception of the Security Council, which can make legally binding decisions to impose economic and military sanctions, the decisions of its bodies do not bind its members legally. However, it would be a mistake to underestimate the UN. As a universal institution, it has unique legitimacy, and the texts of the resolutions adopted in Geneva and New York can have real political impact. Citizens of a member state who vote in favour of a particular UN resolution can hold their government accountable for it.

For peace and human rights

The United Nations is a child of our times. It arose as a result of the need to create an organisation of states that would render another world war impossible. The UN's values are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and its objectives are set out in the Charter. They are: the maintenance of international peace and security; the protection of human rights; decolonisation and the development of newly independent states.

Initially, with only 51 founding members, the UN was not a universal organisation. This was one reason why Switzerland did not become a member at this stage. However, in 1946 Switzerland became an observer in the General Assembly – it was the first state to receive this status. It was only in 2002 that the people of Switzerland voted in a national referendum in favour of full membership. Switzerland is the world's only country whose UN membership is based on a referendum.

The Swiss electorate rejected the first referendum on Swiss UN membership outright in 1986. By the time the second popular vote was held, however, the world had significantly changed: the Cold War and the UN's resulting paralysis were things of the past. Opportunities to make political use of the UN's institutions opened up, while the need for political action by the organisation also grew. The UN and its Secretary-General have been involved in resolving numerous crises, conflicts, and wars. So many in fact that it seems to have reached its limits: there have never been as many UN troops ("blue helmets") on peace missions as those deployed today. And never before has there been a louder call for all available resources to protect civilian populations. While the end

Votation populaire du 3 mars 2002
Explications du Conseil fédéral

1 Initiative pour l'adhésion à l'ONU

2 Initiative pour une durée du travail réduite

On 3 March 2002, the Swiss electorate voted with a majority of 54.6% in favour of Switzerland joining the United Nations. Sixteen years earlier, the people of Switzerland had resolutely rejected UN membership in a referendum.

The infographic features a background of a grid of small icons: green and yellow circles on the left and white crosses on the right. A central image shows a mountain landscape under a cloudy sky.

of the Cold War did not usher in a world without conflict and wars, it caused a loss of global overview and an increase in complexity as well as a willingness to resort to force. At the same time, the revolution in information and communications technology created a new global immediacy that raised expectations on the UN's institutions.

Switzerland and the UN

Switzerland joined the United Nations because its foreign policy objectives coincide with the principles and purposes of the UN. To ensure independence and well-being, the Swiss Federal Constitution demands "alleviation of need and poverty in the world", "promotion of democracy", "respect for human rights", "peaceful co-existence of nations", and "preservation of the environment". These objectives are almost identical to the objectives set out in Article 1 of the UN Charter.

It is good for us if conflicts can be resolved peacefully. It is good for us if disparities in levels of development in the world diminish, because we are economically active around the world and seek new markets. It is good for us if people can envision future prospects without having to leave their homes and go abroad, because migration can also create problems. A country such as Switzerland – small, economically open to the world, and without alliances – sees advantages in a strong and credible UN.

Switzerland takes the UN seriously. Its missions to the UN offices in New York, Geneva, and Vienna actively participate in the organisation's work. Switzerland wants to see an effective UN, one that fulfils its mandate and is understood by people throughout the world. Within the UN, Switzerland is committed to ensuring responsible use of resources, responsibility for lean and flexible management, for coherence and efficient coordination, for a "green economy", for consistent pursuit of human rights, and more transparency in Security Council activities.

In the last 10 years as a member, Swiss representatives to the UN have learnt that it is better to sit at the negotiating table than to wait outside. They have learnt that it accomplishes little when an individual member state lectures the other 192 members about how things should be done. Going it alone achieves little. They have learnt what the original Swiss Confederates understood: It helps to combine interests and pursue plans collectively.

Switzerland's profile

Swiss representatives at the UN have also learnt that Switzerland can achieve results in concert with other nations when it knows what it wants. They have learnt that you do not have to run with the herd to gain influence. They see advantages in not belonging to a bloc and not having a colonial past. This sharpens Switzerland's profile.

Switzerland is active at the UN. As a member of the "Small Five" group of countries, it has been working for several years to bring about improvements in the working methods of the Security Council – the 15-member-strong body that can counter threats to peace with binding coercive measures such as freezes on individuals' bank accounts and bans on travel abroad. Together with nine like-minded countries, Switzerland is demanding more legal security and respect for rule-of-law principles in decisions to impose such sanctions. Together with a coalition of states, Switzerland made a decisive contribution to the creation of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. In the Budget Committee of the General Assembly, as well as the budget bodies and the administrative boards of the UN's funds and programmes (e.g., UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP), Switzerland is committed to ensuring efficiency and effectiveness, cooperation and coordination.

Switzerland's commitment to the UN has brought it further recognition and understanding. Seen in this way, Switzerland's active membership

of the UN contributes to improving conditions for safeguarding its interests in the world. At the UN, Switzerland shows that it wants to be a good neighbour in the global village. Good neighbours participate in village life, get involved where needed, and participate in community assembly activities even when they do not agree with all its decisions.

The Federal Council wants to strengthen Switzerland's commitment and has registered its candidacy for a seat on the Security Council for the 2023–24 period with the Western European and other States Group (WEOG).

Switzerland bases its participation in the UN and possible Security Council membership on support at home. In a direct democracy, domestic support can only be expected if sovereign citizens understand the UN. This edition of the “ABC” is intended to make a small contribution toward achieving this end.



Glossary

A

Actors

The UN is based on the principle of one country, one vote. Each member state, be it as big as China or as small as Vanuatu, participates in the UN on an equal footing – with the exception of the Security Council. However, because not all member states can assert their positions with equal effectiveness, states frequently come together with other states with which they share interests to participate in negotiations as a group and to champion mutually coordinated positions. There are various coalitions focusing on different issues. Some important political groups are:

- the European Union (EU), which has observer status at the UN
- the Group 77 and China (G77 and China), which mainly represents the interests of developing and emerging countries
- the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which sees itself as the voice of the Islamic world and seeks to improve cooperation among its 57 member states

B

Blue helmets

The UN is conducting > *Peacekeeping operations* in various regions of the world. Depending on the type of mission, armed soldiers (“blue helmets”), police officers, or military observers (“blue berets”) are deployed. States provide them on a voluntary basis.

Switzerland participates with civilian and military personnel in several peacekeeping operations. Swiss military involvement is subject to various legal requirements. It requires a mandate from the UN or the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and excludes participation in combat operations for peace enforcement. Armed deployments for periods exceeding three weeks or invol-

ing more than 100 servicemen requires the approval of the Federal Assembly.



Charter of the United Nations

The UN Charter is an international law treaty establishing the United Nations. It sets out the rights and obligations of member states and defines the responsibilities and organs of the United Nations as an > *International organisation*. It lists six principal organs and four principal purposes.

The principal organs of the UN are

- the > *General Assembly* (consisting of representatives of states), which debates issues of international concern
- the > *Security Council* (composed of 15 member states), which bears the main responsibility for maintaining world peace and international security
- the > *Economic and Social Council* (composed of 54 member states), which is responsible for coordinating economic and social activities of the UN
- the > *United Nations Secretariat*, which administers the UN and implements decisions of UN bodies
- the International Court of Justice, which is the principal judicial organ of the UN (> *International justice*)
- the Trusteeship Council, which has suspended operations

The principal purposes of the UN are

- to maintain international peace and security
- to develop friendly relations among nations
- to solve international problems of economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character
- to promote and strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms for all

The efforts of nations to attain these common aims should be harmonised within the UN. The obligations established by the Charter, for example, to enforce the > *Security Council's* > *Sanctions*, take precedence over other international treaty obligations of the member states.

Children

Children need special protection. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was established in New York in 1946. It promotes the rights and welfare of children and women around the world. UNICEF has set itself five priorities related to the > *Millennium Development Goals*:

- child survival and development
- basic education and gender equality
- children and HIV/AIDS
- protecting children from violence, exploitation, and abuse
- policy advocacy and partnerships for children's rights

UNICEF bases its efforts in these priority areas on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Switzerland has also ratified.

UNICEF is Switzerland's most important partner in providing long-term assistance to children in developing and transition countries. The Swiss UNICEF Committee supports national government efforts and contributes – as do 36 other national committees – to financing UNICEF programmes.

Since the final years of the 20th century, the > *Security Council* and the > *General Assembly* have raised the issue of child abuse in armed conflict (> *Protection architecture*).

Combating crime

With the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime of 15 November 2000 (the “Palermo Convention”), the international community created an instrument to combat global criminal organisations. The parties to the Convention have committed themselves to international cooperation based on predetermined standards.

Switzerland ratified the convention as well as two protocols on human trafficking and human smuggling in 2006. It took a particularly active role regarding human trafficking. In a diplomatic initiative, Switzerland demanded that the fundamental principles for effectively combating this crime be concretised and that binding guidelines are developed.

Convention

This is a standard term used to describe multilateral, legally binding agreements that are usually concluded under the auspices of > *International organisations* and which regulate issues of international relations or international law. Examples: Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against > *Women*.



Coordination of Switzerland's UN policy

Swiss UN policy is coordinated in Bern by the “UN Coordination Section” of the United Nations and International Organisations Division within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).

UN Coordination is the main point of contact for Switzerland's permanent missions in Geneva, New York, and Vienna, providing them with instructions for interventions, votes, and elections. In collaboration with the other departments, it determines the thematic priorities and mandates for negotiation with various UN bodies. It also serves as a contact point for parliamentarians, non-governmental organisations, and other interested parties, ensures access to all important information and provides reports on UN activities to Parliament and the Federal Council.



The former Swiss foreign minister, Joseph Deiss, was president of the UN General Assembly in 2010-2011. The presidency of the General Assembly, which is limited to one year, is formally the highest office within the UN.

Counter-terrorism

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 made the fight against terrorism an important issue also at the UN. A number of > *Resolutions* and > *Conventions* support multilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorist activities. The > *Security Council* passed Resolution 1373 on 28 September 2001, requiring all member states to take concrete measures, and in September 2006 the > *General Assembly* adopted the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Global Strategy stipulates, *inter alia*, that the Security Council may impose targeted > *Sanctions* against individuals (freezing of assets and travel restrictions).

In 2007, Switzerland, together with Costa Rica, Japan, Slovakia, and Turkey, launched an international process for global cooperation in combating terrorism. It provides for the creation of a network of counter-terrorism focal points. Switzerland also actively works together with the relevant sub-committees of the Security Council. Since 2008, Switzerland and 10 like-minded partners have been working to ensure stricter observance of rule-of-law principles when determining targeted sanctions against individuals. The Security Council has made several step-by-step improvements that meet some of Switzerland's demands. For example, it created an Office of the Ombudsperson that can examine sanctions against Al Qaeda and take decisions.

D

Development cooperation*

One of the UN's main tasks is to reduce economic and social disparities between member states and to improve everyone's opportunities for the future. During the UN's initial phase, decolonisation was at the core of its efforts: when the UN was founded in 1945, large parts of the Southern Hemisphere were held in colonial dependency; independent states had yet to be established. Today the > *UN system* as a whole makes the most far-reaching contributions to development cooperation. A wide range of issues related to development cooperation are discussed in

* Additional information on development cooperation can be found in the "ABC of Development Policy" and ordered from publikationen@eda.admin.ch

the > *Economic and Social Council* and its subsidiary bodies, as well as in the Second Committee of the > *General Assembly*.

Disarmament

The maintenance of international peace and security is a primary goal for Switzerland and the UN. Disarmament, limiting global military spending, arms control, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other prohibited weapons (> *Non-Proliferation*) are central concerns of the UN. The UN provides the framework for multilateral negotiations on weapons bans, restrictions on use, and export controls. Numerous conventions have been concluded under its umbrella, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968), the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (1972), the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (1996), and the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons (2001).

Switzerland is active in numerous multilateral forums and has been a member of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD) since 1996. The CD, which is limited to 65 member states, is the world's sole standing negotiating body on issues of disarmament, arms control, and non-proliferation. Although formally independent, it is closely linked to the UN: The Director-General of the UN's Geneva office is also the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament.

E

Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is the principal organ of the United Nations for the coordination of economic and social activities. It implements resolutions passed by major conferences and summits and serves as a link between the UN and its specialised agencies. It is also an election body for numerous subsidiary organisations of the UN. ECOSOC meets alternately in Geneva and New York.

ECOSOC is an important UN body for Switzerland. For example, it acts as a forum for discussion on sustainable development, the follow-up to the > *Millennium Development Goals*, and promotion of human security – all of which are priority themes of Switzerland’s UN policy. Besides taking an active part in debates and negotiations, as a full member of ECOSOC (2011–2012) Switzerland can also participate in elections and votes.

Environment

Environmental problems are not confined within national borders. Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources are fundamental prerequisites for sustainable development. The world community has dealt intensively with the issue for four decades. Some important milestones in international environmental policy are:

- the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972
- the UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (“Earth Summit”)
- the “Rio+10” Conference in Johannesburg in 2002
- the “Rio+20” Conference to be held again in Rio de Janeiro in 2012

The definition of “sustainability” adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 remains valid today: Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In addition to conferences (> *Summits*), a variety of international bodies and conventions deal with environmental issues. Within the UN, the Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are particularly worth mentioning.

Switzerland attaches great importance to international cooperation on environmental issues. It is committed to enhance coherence and in-

crease synergies between the various actors. Given the UNEP Regional Office for Europe and a significant number of non-governmental organisations and academic institutions dedicated to environmental issues, Geneva ranks as the most important centre of international environmental policy. The presence of a variety of > *International organisations* from all policy areas facilitates cooperation and coordination.

F

Fact-finding mission

The purpose of fact-finding missions is to investigate suspected serious rights violations. The commissioned experts do not render a judgement; instead, they ascertain the facts and make recommendations to the conflicting parties. UN fact-finding missions can be commissioned by the > *Security Council*, the > *General Assembly*, the > *Human Rights Council*, and the > *Secretary-General*.

Food security

The right to food is a > *Human right*. Food security can be guaranteed when sufficient healthy food is available to all people. Inadequate investments in agriculture and rural development, on one hand, and climate change, the biofuels boom, population growth, and speculation in international commodity markets and related volatility of commodity prices, on the other, have a negative impact on food security. Despite the continual expansion of arable land, the number of people suffering from malnutrition exceeded one billion in 2009.

Three organisations within the UN deal with issues of food production and supply:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), headquartered in Rome, works to improve production and distribution of agricultural and food products around the world.
- The World Food Programme (WFP) provides emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters and droughts as well as during con-

flicts; it also provides long-term assistance to people in regions beset by food insecurity. The WFP is Switzerland's most important > *Humanitarian aid* partner in the area of food aid. It maintains a liaison office in Geneva.

- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) works to promote agricultural development and reduce poverty in rural areas of developing countries. Switzerland has been an IFAD member since its foundation in 1977.

Founding of the United Nations

The United Nations (UN) > *Charter* was signed by the 51 founding member states at the close of the Second World War and entered into force on 24 October 1945. The main goal of the new organisation was to preserve the newly restored world peace and international security. In view of the experience of a world war triggered by the Great Depression and fascist dictatorships, the Charter declares that freedom and respect for human rights as well as economic and social development are preconditions for lasting peace.

The United Nations' indirect precursor was the League of Nations, which was founded after the First World War with the aim of strengthening international cooperation and safeguarding world peace. Because the League of Nations failed to achieve this aim, during the Second World War preparations began to establish a successor organisation. Referring to themselves for the first time as the United Nations, 26 states signed the Washington Declaration on 1 January 1942. In this declaration, the states undertook to support each other against Germany, Italy, and Japan, i.e., against the states responsible for the world war raging at the time. The plan was given concrete shape in 1944 by China, the Soviet Union, the United States, and the United Kingdom at the Dumbarton Oaks Conference. The Charter was opened for signature in the summer of 1945 at an international conference in San Francisco.

Francophonie

The “Organisation internationale de la Francophonie” (OIF) encompasses 56 states and governments and 19 observers from all five continents which have links to the French language. The most important tasks of the OIF include:

- promotion of the French language and of cultural and linguistic diversity
- promotion of peace, democracy, and human rights
- support for education, training, teaching, and research
- focusing development cooperation on sustainability and solidarity

Switzerland participates in all OIF bodies (summit, ministerial conference, permanent council, specialised and permanent ministerial conferences) and in the work of all its institutions. In 2010 it organised the XIIIth Francophonie Summit in Montreux, after which it chaired the Ministerial Conference of the Francophonie for two years.

Funding the United Nations

UN activities are funded through mandatory contributions from member states and through voluntary contributions. While > *Development Co-operation* and > *Humanitarian aid* are mainly funded through voluntary contributions, mandatory contributions cover the regular UN budget and the cost of > *Peacekeeping operations*, the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, and renovations of the UN headquarters in New York and the UN office in Geneva. Mandatory contributions to the UN amounted to approximately USD 10 billion in 2010. The share of the regular budget that each member state has to pay is reassessed by the > *General Assembly* every three years.

With a share of 1.13% of the regular budget, Switzerland is one of the top contributors (ranked 16 of 193). It is a member of the Geneva Group, which was established in 1964 at the initiative of the United States and

the United Kingdom to facilitate exchanges on UN budget and management issues. This informal group currently comprises all countries, except China and Brazil, who pay more than 1% of the UN's regular budget. Besides Switzerland, the Geneva Group's member countries are Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, South Korea, Russia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The countries comprising the Geneva Group contribute approximately 80% of the UN budget.

Switzerland advocates cost-conscious use of resources and greater efficiency.





As UN Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace between 2001 and 2007, former Swiss federal councillor Adolph Ogi supported countless projects, including the International Year of Sport and Physical Education in 2005.

G

General Assembly

The General Assembly is one of the principal UN organs. Each of the 193 member states (as of 2011) has one vote. The General Assembly serves as the forum for global political debate and determines the international community's common political denominator. The General Assembly makes decisions on summit modalities (> *Summits*) and the UN budget. It issues binding instructions to the UN apparatus. It can set standards and adopt political > *Resolutions* which, however, are generally non-binding on member states. General Assembly resolutions formally require a simple majority and resolutions on important questions a two-thirds majority. In practice, consensus is sought.

The General Assembly's six main committees deal with a wide range of issues:

- Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee)

- Economic and Financial Committee (Second Committee)
- Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (Third Committee)
- Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (Fourth Committee)
- Administrative and Budgetary Committee (Fifth Committee)
- Legal Committee (Sixth Committee)

The General Assembly meets in annual sessions that begin in mid-September. The President and the Office of the General Assembly are elected for a one-year term. The presidency of the General Assembly is formally the highest UN office. Former Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss was the first Swiss national to hold the office of President of the UN General Assembly, from 14 September 2010 to 13 September 2011.

General debate

After the opening of the new session of the UN > *General Assembly*, the heads of state and government or their representatives come together for several days in the third week of September for general debate. The main theme of the general debate is proposed by the president-elect of the General Assembly after informal discussions with the member states, the > *Secretary-General*, and the acting president of the General Assembly. Switzerland is usually represented by the president of the Swiss Confederation. The Swiss president is therefore fairly high on the list of speakers and garners a relatively high degree of attention.

General debate is part of the UN General Assembly's "high-level week" during which high-level meetings on specific topics take place.

Genocide

Actions that aim at complete or partial annihilation of a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group qualify as genocide. These actions include notably:

- killing
- inflicting serious physical or mental injuries
- measures designed to prevent births or physically eliminate a particular group
- enforced transfer of children to another group

The United Nations adopted a convention in 1948 to prevent and punish genocide. The UN > *Secretary-General* is assisted by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect.

Global governance

Global governance can be defined as the sum of laws, norms, strategies, and institutions that regulate international relations among private citizens, society, markets, and states. Because of its universality and diversity, the UN is the pre-eminent forum for dealing with issues of global governance. However, other bodies that are less universal but more willing to take decisions also address such questions. The Group of Twenty (G20), representing the leading industrialised and emerging economies, has recently become a major player. The Global Governance Group (3G), which counts Switzerland among its approximately 30 members, advocates better cooperation between the UN and the G20.

H

Headquarters agreements

Agreement between an > *International organisation* and the > *Host state*, i.e., the state on whose territory the organisation has its headquarters. The agreement determines the legal status of this organisation by making provision for the privileges and immunities of the organisation itself, its staff, representatives of the organisation's member states, as well as experts on assignment. Switzerland has signed such agreements with a

total of 25 international organisations, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Health

Health issues have become more important internationally as a result of globalisation. Pandemic infectious diseases such as the H1N1 flu of 2009, the cross-border trade in counterfeit medical products, as well as successes in the fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria make it clear that internationally coordinated responses to cross-border health issues have become unavoidable.

Within the UN, the World Health Organization (WHO), headquartered in Geneva, takes primary responsibility for health issues and for establishing international norms and standards. Switzerland was one of the founding members of the WHO in 1946. During the 2011–2014 period, Switzerland is represented in the Executive Board.

Numerous other actors (such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria as well as many NGOs and private actors active in the health sector) complement WHO's work and underscore Geneva's role as a key location for international health issues.

Host country

From a legal perspective, the UN is an entity in itself which belongs to no state. It maintains special relations with the institutions' host countries. Its rights and obligations are subject to binding rules.

Thanks to Geneva, the most important centre of multilateral cooperation after New York, Switzerland has a long tradition as host to international conferences and as the seat of > *International organisations* and diplomatic representations. This tradition goes back to the founding of the

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva in 1863. The privileges, immunities, and facilities as well as the financial subsidies granted by Switzerland as a host state are set out in the Host State Act of 1 January 2008 and in the Host State Ordinance.

Switzerland's host state policy is focused on five key thematic areas:

- peace, security, and disarmament
- humanitarian affairs and human rights
- health
- labour, the economy, and science
- sustainable development and conservation of natural resources

Switzerland guarantees the smooth functioning of operations with effective security arrangements, a wide range of excellent conferences, and office facilities as well as a modern legal system.

Humanitarian aid

Saving lives, relieving suffering, helping to overcome crises and conflicts: humanitarian aid targets people in need regardless of race, gender, language, religion, political opinion, or social status. It is based on a series of international agreements such as the Geneva Conventions and the UN Refugee Convention. The UN plays a crucial role in coordinating international humanitarian aid.

Within the UN, Switzerland works in particular with the World Food Programme (WFP), the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the UN Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). The Swiss Confederation's humanitarian aid is continuously expanding its international presence and its cooperation with the principal multilateral humanitarian organisations.

Human rights*

Human rights are those rights to which every human being is entitled, regardless of skin colour, nationality, political or religious convictions, social status, gender, or age. Human rights are protected at the international level through a system of > *Conventions*, > *Resolutions*, and declarations by > *International organisations*, as well as by customary international law. At the global level, human rights protections are developed within the UN framework. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 is an important starting point. Respect for and promotion of human rights is one of Switzerland's five foreign policy objectives.

Human Rights Council

The task of the UN Human Rights Council, headquartered in Geneva, is to promote and protect human rights. The Council reports directly to the > *General Assembly*. It meets at least three times a year for at least 10 weeks. The Human Rights Council has various instruments at its disposal, such as "special procedures": experts examine the human rights situation or an important issue in a country and make recommendations to improve human rights protection. The Human Rights Council can also convene special sessions and thus respond rapidly to alarming human rights situations. The Universal Periodic Review is an instrument available to the Council to periodically monitor the human rights situation in UN member states.

The UN General Assembly elects the 47 members of the Human Rights Council by an absolute majority for a three-year term. Countries that declare their candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council must make voluntary human-rights commitments. In the event of serious and systematic human-rights violations, the UN General Assembly can suspend a member of the UN Human Rights Council by a two-thirds majority. Libya was the first member to be suspended (in March 2011).

* Additional information on the topic of human rights can be found in the "ABC of Human Rights" and ordered from publikationen@eda.admin.ch



The United Nations System

UN Principal Organs

General Assembly

Security Council

Economic and Social Council

Secretariat

International Court of Justice

Trusteeship Council⁵

Subsidiary Bodies
Main and other sessional committees
Disarmament Commission
Human Rights Council
International Law Commission
Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

Subsidiary Bodies
Counter-terrorism committees
International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)
International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)
Military Staff Committee
Peacekeeping operations and political missions
Sanctions committees (ad hoc)
Standing committees and ad hoc bodies

| Functional Commissions | Regional Commissions |
|--|--|
| Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice | ECA Economic Commission for Africa |
| Narcotic Drugs | ECE Economic Commission for Europe |
| Population and Development | ECLAC Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean |
| Science and Technology for Development | ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific |
| Social Development | ESCWA Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia |
| Statistics | |
| Status of Women | |
| Sustainable Development | |
| United Nations Forum on Forests | |

Departments and Offices

| | |
|--|---|
| EOSG Executive Office of the Secretary-General | DM Department of Management |
| DESA Department of Economic and Social Affairs | DPA Department of Political Affairs |
| DFS Department of Field Support | DPI Department of Public Information |
| DGACM Department for General Assembly and Conference Management | DPKO Department of Peacekeeping Operations |
| | DSS Department of Safety and Security |
| | OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |

Programmes and Funds

UNCTAD United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

- ITC** International Trade Centre (UNCTAD/WTO)

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

- UNCDF** United Nations Capital Development Fund
- UNV** United Nations Volunteers

UNEP United Nations Environment Programme

UNFPA United Nations Population Fund

NOTES:

- UNRWA and UNIDIR report only to the General Assembly.
- IAEA reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly.
- WTO has no reporting obligation to the General Assembly (GA) but contributes on an ad-hoc basis to GA and ECOSOC work inter alia on finance and developmental issues.
- Specialized agencies are autonomous organizations working with the UN and each other through the coordinating machinery of ECOSOC at the intergovernmental level, and through the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) at the inter-secretariat level. This section is listed in order of establishment of these organizations as specialized agencies of the United Nations.
- The Trusteeship Council suspended operation on 1 November 1994 with the independence of Palau, the last remaining United Nations Trust Territory, on 1 October 1994.

This is not an official document of the United Nations, nor is it intended to be all-inclusive.

UN-HABITAT United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNHCR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund

UNODC United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNRWA¹ United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UN-Women United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

WFP World Food Programme

Research and Training Institutes

UNICRI United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

UNIDIR¹ United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research

UNITAR United Nations Institute for Training and Research

UNRISD United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

UNSSC United Nations System Staff College

UNU United Nations University

Other Entities

UNAIDS Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNISDR United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

UNOPS United Nations Office for Project Services

Related Organizations

CTBTO PrepCom Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization

IAEA² International Atomic Energy Agency

OPCW Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

WTO³ World Trade Organization

Advisory Subsidiary Body

UN Peacebuilding Commission

Specialized Agencies⁴

ILO International Labour Organization

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHO World Health Organization

World Bank Group

- **IBRD** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- **IDA** International Development Association
- **IFC** International Finance Corporation
- **MIGA** Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency
- **ICSID** International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes

IMF International Monetary Fund

ICAO International Civil Aviation Organization

IMO International Maritime Organization

ITU International Telecommunication Union

UPU Universal Postal Union

WMO World Meteorological Organization

WIPO World Intellectual Property Organization

IFAD International Fund for Agricultural Development

UNIDO United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNWTO World Tourism Organization

Other Bodies

Committee for Development Policy

Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

Other sessional and standing committees and expert, ad hoc and related bodies

OHCHR Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services

OLA Office of Legal Affairs

OSAA Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

OSRSG/CAAC Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict

UNODA Office for Disarmament Affairs

UNOG United Nations Office at Geneva

UN-OHRLS Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States

UNON United Nations Office at Nairobi

UNOV United Nations Office at Vienna

I

International Geneva

After New York, Geneva is the largest centre of international cooperation. Thirty-one > *International organisations* (36 across Switzerland), 240 > *Missions*, representations, and delegations, as well as some 250 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are headquartered in Geneva. They ensure that Geneva has a busy calendar of conferences and meetings. The international community in Geneva comprises some 40,000 people. Several thousand meetings and conferences with more than 170,000 delegates take place in Geneva every year, making the city the most important centre of multilateral cooperation after New York, as well as the UN's biggest workplace in the world.

International organisations continue to establish themselves in Geneva, not least because of the city's high academic standards in the field of international studies. Their activities focus, among other things, on peace policy, human rights, health, and employment. This has resulted in a lively international exchange in the search for solutions to global problems.

International justice

To ensure respect for international law and > *Human rights*, the international community has created various courts and tribunals at the universal and regional levels.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague provides the cornerstone of the international justice system, being the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. Only states can be plaintiffs and defendants at the ICJ. Its authority, based on the principle of the pre-eminence of law, enables it to make an important contribution to settling disputes between states peacefully.

Since the 1990s, several tribunals have been called upon to judge war crimes: the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (1993), the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (1994), the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the prosecution of Khmer Rouge crimes (2004). Carla Del Ponte, a Swiss national, was chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

The creation of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague in 2002 has given the international community a permanent judicial authority of universal character to prosecute > *Genocide*, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, as well as the crime of aggression.

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, which began its work in 1996, may be invoked by the States Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982.

International Law Commission

A subsidiary organ of the UN > *General Assembly*, the International Law Commission consists of 34 recognised experts in international law, each elected by the General Assembly for a five-year period. It meets in Geneva. The Commission develops and codifies international law. In this context, the Commission prepares draft treaties for submission to the General Assembly, which can then recommend that the UN member states conclude a multilateral international treaty (> *Convention*) based on the draft. The most important treaties concluded in this way are the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Lucius Caflisch, a Swiss national, sits on the International Law Commission.



As a result of violent conflicts or environmental disasters, an estimated 27 million people throughout the world have been driven from their homes to find refuge in other parts of their own countries. UN agencies and NGOs are working to improve the situations of these people.

International organisations

An international organisation is a permanent association of at least two states concerned with autonomous execution of specific tasks. For this purpose it is equipped with at least one organ to act on its behalf. International organisations are usually established on the basis of a multilateral constituting agreement (also known as a statute or a > *Charter*) that defines the organisation's remit and its organs. The most notable example of a truly universal international organisation is the > *United Nations*.

J

Jobs

Some 95,000 people, including 980 Swiss nationals, work at the UN. The number of Swiss nationals is by and large commensurate with Switzerland's size and its financial contributions to the UN. Swiss international civil servants come from all walks of life and are deployed around the world. They range from the Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Democratic Republic of Congo, to an irrigation specialist seconded to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Jordan, to a human resources specialist at the UN's New York headquarters.

Jobs in the > *International organisations* are much sought after. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) therefore supports well-qualified Swiss nationals who apply for and are appointed to such jobs. For example, the FDFA funds various junior positions at the UN through the “Junior Professional Officer Programme” and organises the annual “International Career Day” (to subscribe to the newsletter, email: pd-aio@eda.admin.ch).

L

Languages

In the UN, there are six official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish), two of which are working languages (English and French). All session documents, draft resolutions, minutes, and reports must be available in all six official languages. The two working languages are used for organisational processes and official statements of the > *United Nations Secretariat*.

The most important documents are translated into German by the German translation service of the UN. This service is funded by Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Liechtenstein.

M

Mediation

Mediation is an instrument of diplomacy. Modern mediation is understood to be the constructive support for peace processes by third parties with the aim of developing long-term sustainable solutions with all those concerned. This instrument is used frequently in international peace processes. Complex negotiations can take months or years.

The UN is very active in mediation. Within the UN framework, Switzerland contributes both financial and human resources to various mediation projects. For example, in 2011 it made contributions to the peace mission in Nepal and mediation between Gabon and Equatorial

Guinea. In addition, Switzerland works closely with the UN to establish uniform standards and guidelines for mediators.

Switzerland also conducts mediations in its own capacity – for example, between Turkey and Armenia, in Nepal, and in the Middle East.

Migration

According to UN estimates, more than 3% of the world's population – about 214 million people – are currently living outside their country of origin. Migrants leave their home countries for a variety of reasons, in search of work, as > *Refugees*, displaced persons, or to join their family abroad.

Migration is now a key political and social issue around the world.

The relationship between migration and development plays an important role. The Global Forum on Migration and Development was launched in 2006 on the initiative of the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Open to all UN member states, it facilitates informal exchange of experiences and cooperation between countries of origin and destination countries. Switzerland chaired the Forum in 2011.

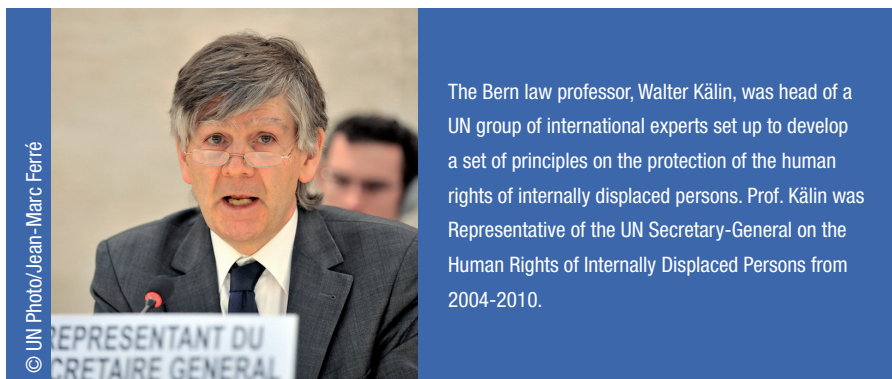
Millennium Development Goals

In order to halve absolute poverty by 2015, the international community has for the first time agreed on common development goals. The eight development goals incorporate resolutions adopted during world summits in the 1990s. They apply to developing and industrialised countries alike:

1. Halving poverty: By 2015, the number of people living on less than 1 US dollar a day is reduced by half.
2. Education: All children can attend and complete primary school.

3. Gender equality: Gender equality is promoted, especially in primary and secondary education.
4. Infant mortality: The under-five mortality rate is reduced by two thirds.
5. Maternal mortality: Maternal mortality is reduced by three quarters.
6. Communicable diseases: The spread of AIDS, HIV infections, malaria, and other serious diseases is combated systematically.
7. Environment: Access to drinking water is improved, and growth of urban slums is stemmed. Renewable energy sources are increasingly available to the poor.
8. Partnership: Build a global development partnership between industrialised and developing countries.

The UN and the World Bank report annually on the achievement of these objectives.



Mission

Representation of a state abroad or in an > *International organisation*. As a UN member, Switzerland, like most other member states, maintains an official diplomatic representation (“Permanent Mission”) to the > *United Nations Office* and to other international organisations in Geneva. Tasks of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland include representing Swiss interests, liaison activities, negotiating, providing information, participating in activities of various organisations, and protecting international interests. As a representative of the > *Host country* Switzerland, the Permanent Mission must also ensure that international organisations based in Geneva be provided with adequate working and living conditions.

N

Neutrality

The legal status of a state that permanently or temporarily renounces participation in any armed conflict. Essentially, a neutral state has the following rights:

- Its territory is inviolable.
- Private companies on its territory may trade freely with warring states.
- The freedom of private companies to trade also applies to weapons, munitions, and other war materiel.

Above all, neutral states have a duty to refrain from participating in armed conflicts between other states. They are expressly prohibited from supporting belligerents with weapons or troops and consequently may not be members of a military alliance. Furthermore they may not allow warring parties to use their territory for military purposes. Any restrictions they adopt on trade in weapons, munitions, and other war materiel must apply equally to all belligerents. A neutral state must be able to defend its own territory, if necessary by military force.

The status of neutrality is not relevant in case of economic sanctions. Neutral states may participate in applying > *Sanctions* adopted by the United Nations, the European Union, or any other group of nations. Nor is neutrality relevant in case of military sanctions adopted by the UN > *Security Council* acting under Chapter VII of the > *Charter of the United Nations*. UN military sanctions should not be equated with war as defined in the law on neutrality but rather with legal measures to enforce Security Council decisions to restore peace and international security.

Non-proliferation

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other banned weapons is a key aim of both the UN and Switzerland. Switzerland seeks comprehensive, worldwide elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (> *Disarmament*). It is also imperative to prevent such weapons from falling into the hands of armed non-state actors. From a Swiss perspective, disarmament and non-proliferation are two mutually complementary and related objectives. Switzerland has ratified all relevant international treaties and is working in numerous multilateral forums, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to ensure their universal validity and to close any loopholes they may contain. Switzerland also supports international control measures (export controls) and implements the UN Security Council's non-proliferation measures.



Observers

The > *General Assembly* can grant observer status to states, state-like entities, or international organisations. Various rights are associated with this status, such as the right to speak in debates and to participate in negotiations. In addition to the Vatican and the Palestinian Authority, some 70 intergovernmental organisations and a number of international organisations of universal character have observer status,

for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross. Switzerland had this status from 1946 until it joined the UN in 2002.

P

Palais des Nations

The building complex of the Palais des Nations in Geneva's Ariana Park was initially (from 1929) the seat of the League of Nations. After the League's dissolution in 1946, it became the seat of the > *United Nations Office at Geneva*, which is the largest UN office outside of the UN headquarters in New York. Today the Palais des Nations houses the > *United Nations Office* and the > *Human Rights Council*.

This historic building, with its 34 conference rooms and some 2,800 offices, is about to be completely renovated in accordance with environmentally friendly Swiss Minergie standards. The costs will be borne by the UN member states.

Peacebuilding Commission

The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in 2005 by a joint > *Resolution* of the > *General Assembly* and the > *Security Council*. Its mission is to prevent the failure of peace processes.

Roughly half of all countries that emerge from war lapse back into violence within five years. The Security Council, together with the largest troop-contributing member states, the most important development agencies, and the most severely affected states, are represented in the PBC. The PBC accompanies and supports "post-conflict states", promotes dialogue among actors, coordinates work in the fields of security, development, and humanitarian aid, and helps to mobilise resources. It comprises 31 members, each elected for a two-year term. Country-specific committees deal with Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Conakry, and

the Central African Republic (as of 2011). Switzerland has headed the Burundi Committee since 2009.

Peacekeeping operations

International peacekeeping operations are an instrument of the international community for conflict resolution and crisis management. Within the framework of UN peacekeeping missions, civilian, military, and police personnel support security, political processes, and peacebuilding efforts in countries in conflict. Peacekeeping operations are one of the UN's most effective instruments in the area of peace and security. Peacekeeping operations are approved by the > *Security Council* and are based on three principles:

- impartiality
- the consent of the conflicting parties to deployment of peacekeeping troops
- avoidance of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate

Poverty reduction

Reducing poverty is one of the core UN tasks and one of Switzerland's five foreign-policy objectives. Poverty reduction at the international level is > *Development cooperation*.

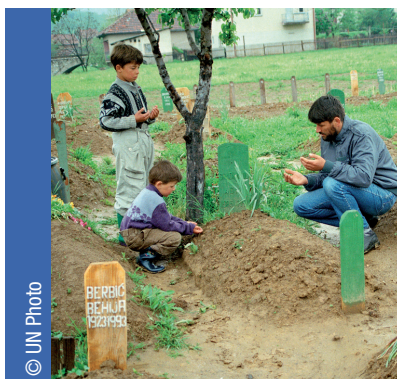
Even today, over one billion people have to live on less than one US dollar a day. Poverty is not only a material problem; it also excludes people from political and cultural life. Securing economic, political, and cultural rights is therefore a prerequisite for poverty reduction. Significant progress has been made over the past 20 years. For example, a number of Asian countries now enjoy greater food security, thanks to efficient crop-growing methods. At the same time, rapid economic growth in these countries has substantially reduced the proportion of people living

in poverty. With the > *Millennium Development Goals*, the international community committed itself for the first time to a set of common goals to combat global poverty.

Procedure

The UN is an organisation of sovereign member states that freely negotiate their procedural rules. In the > *General Assembly* the rules of procedure govern how decisions are made – for example, to adopt a > *Resolution*. While decisions on issues such as peace and security require a two-thirds majority, a simple majority suffices for other decisions. General Assembly resolutions do not normally bind member states. To ensure that resolutions are as legitimate and binding as possible, the General Assembly seeks consensus. Tough negotiations are sometimes necessary to reach a compromise acceptable to all.

The > *Security Council* has not yet been able to agree on definitive rules of procedure but only on provisional ones. Switzerland – along with Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, and Singapore (> *Small Five*) – is committed to bring about more transparency and greater participation by the 178 non-members of the Security Council in its work (> *Reform*).



Wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s caused immeasurable suffering, presenting the international community with an enormous challenge.



© UN Photo/Marie Gandois

The Swiss national, Carla Del Ponte, was chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for Ex-Yugoslavia and for Rwanda from 1999-2007. These courts were established on the basis of UN Security Council resolutions for the purpose of punishing war criminals.

P

Prohibition on the use of force

The driving force behind the creation of the UN in June 1945 was the call: “No more war; war never again”. Two world wars, that cost tens of millions of lives convinced governments and peoples alike that a new world order must make a recurrence of such disasters impossible. Henceforth, all states were to assume shared responsibility for peace and contribute to the collective security of the international community to repel any future aggression. States were to commit to settling their disputes by peaceful means and to use force only in self-defence. Prohibition on the use of force is set out in Article 2, paragraph 4 of the UN > *Charter*. In situations where conflict threatens, the > *Security Council* monitors peace and intervenes with peace support measures (Chapter 6 of the Charter) and binding coercive measures (Chapter 7 of the Charter). Enforcement of the measures is left to the discretion of member states. The UN has neither a police force nor an army.

Recently, there has been a growing need for UN action in conflict situations. A factor that makes matters increasingly difficult is the fact that armed conflicts no longer consist primarily of disputes between states and governments but between armed non-state and parastatal groups.

Protection architecture

Civilian populations suffer particularly severely in modern conflicts that not only involve armies but also private and semi-private armed groups. Children and women, the most vulnerable groups within the population, are particularly affected by such conflicts. Children are forced into military service, and women are systematically humiliated and raped. In light of atrocities committed in the Balkans and in Africa, the UN > *Security Council* has adopted a series of > *Resolutions* to protect children in armed conflict (1999), to protect the civilian population in general (1999), and to promote greater attention to the role of women in the UN's peace and security work (women, peace, and security, 2000). Taken in their entirety, these resolutions form the basis of a politico-legal "security architecture".

R

Reform

The UN must constantly adapt to the needs of the time. Consequently it has repeatedly implemented reforms since its > *Founding* in 1945. Switzerland actively supports the ongoing reform process. On the one hand, it focuses on the reform of working methods of the > *Security Council*. On the other hand, it commits itself to UN management reform.

Switzerland has developed a series of reform proposals for the Security Council in a joint > *Small Five* initiative with Costa Rica, Jordan, Liechtenstein, and Singapore. It targets management reform at the basis, structures, and processes of the UN's management. For example, the > *Secretary-General* should gain greater managerial freedom. In return, this requires strengthening internal and external supervisory mechanisms as well as increasing the general accountability of management to member states. Switzerland also commits to an efficient and transparent budget process.

Refugees

Anyone forced to leave one's home country out of a justified fear of persecution meets the official definition of a "refugee", whether the cause is his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political convictions. It was estimated in 2011 that about 11 million people around the world were refugees. The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, supplemented by the Protocol of 1967, regulates the status of refugees. In this context, the principle of non-refoulement is particularly important. This prohibits repatriation of individuals to states where their lives or physical integrity are in danger.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Geneva assumes responsibility for protecting and supporting refugees. Together with humanitarian partner organisations, it assists refugees when returning and/or when starting life in a country of asylum or in a third country. The UNHCR is one of four main beneficiaries of Swiss multilateral > *Humanitarian aid* (CHF 25 million in 2011).

Resolution

Decisions taken by > *International organisations* and international conferences are called resolutions. Resolutions have a standardised format. They begin with a preamble followed by a number of operative paragraphs. Most resolutions are not legally binding but have the character of a recommendation, as is the case for resolutions of the UN > *General Assembly* (with the exception of those parts governing UN internal law). On the other hand, > *Security Council* resolutions have immediate effect and bind all states. Occasionally, other terms replace "resolution", including decision, recommendation, declaration, or other similar terms.

S

Sanctions

Measures (diplomatic, economic, or military) taken by a state or an > *International organisation* to stop a threat to peace.

The UN > *Security Council*, on behalf of the international community takes responsibility for declaring what sanctions should be taken against a state or individual that endangers international peace and security. The World Trade Organisation decides on sanctions in cases of violations of international trade rules. In other areas, states may take whatever non-military sanctions they deem necessary, providing they are proportionate to the damage inflicted by the offending state. The UN > *Charter* prohibits the use of force.

Secretary-General

The Secretary-General heads the > *United Nations Secretariat*. His role goes beyond that of an administrator and manager. Based on his right of initiative, the Secretary-General can also bring specific problems to the attention of the various UN bodies. He can also offer his good offices to resolve disputes between member states. The Secretary-General is appointed by the > *General Assembly* on the recommendation of the > *Security Council* for a five-year term. South Korean Ban Ki-moon has been the UN Secretary-General since 2007. In 2011 he was re-elected for a second term until 2016.

Security Council

The Security Council bears the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. On one hand, it deals with specific conflict situations, on the other, with inherently conflictual issues such as protection of civilians (> *Protection Architecture*). The Security Council is composed of five permanent members (USA, Russia, China, United

Kingdom, and France) and 10 non-permanent members elected by the > *General Assembly* for two-year terms.

Security Council decisions on all substantive matters require the affirmative votes of nine members. Each permanent member can block a resolution by means of a veto (> *Veto Powers*). The veto right makes it more difficult to pass resolutions but also encourages the search for consensus solutions. > *Sanctions* adopted by the Security Council against a state or individual that endangers international peace and security are binding on all UN member states.

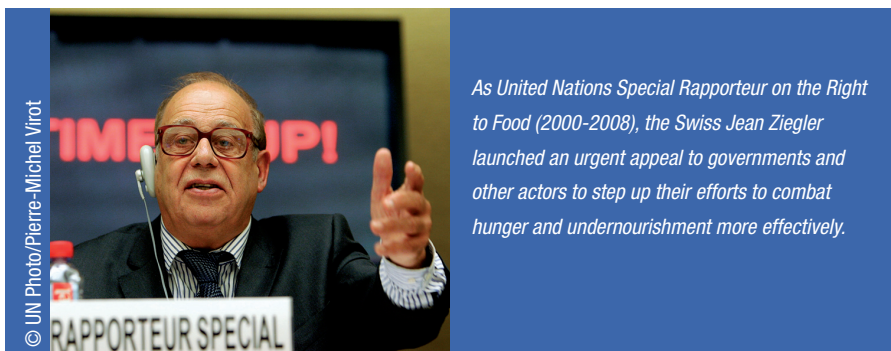
A discussion about > *Reform* of the Security Council has been under way for some time. Switzerland participates actively in this discussion (> *Small Five*). Switzerland seeks a seat in the UN Security Council in 2023–24. The elections are scheduled for 2022.



Small Five

The “Small Five” refers to Costa Rica, Liechtenstein, Jordan, Singapore, and Switzerland, which have for several years jointly called for improvements in the working methods of the > *Security Council*. The name “Small Five” is a reference to the “Permanent Five”, the five > *Vetopowers*. The Small Five demand:

- transparent decision-making processes
- improved opportunities for participation by states not represented on the Security Council
- closer consultation among the Security Council, the troop-contributing countries, neighbouring states concerned, and regional organisations
- better use of experiences made during the implementation of resolutions
- stricter observance of rule-of-law principles in targeted sanctions against individuals



Summits

UN summit meetings are high-level events focused on specific current issues. A final declaration summarises specific and verifiable action programmes. Summit meetings differ markedly from the > *General Assembly*, not only in procedure but also during the preparatory phase. Regional actors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play an important role in this respect. They present their positions and demands at events parallel to the conferences.

Some important UN summits were:

- the conference on the environment in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (“Earth Summit”) and its follow-up conferences (> *Environment*)
- the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995
- the > *Millennium Development Goals* conference in New York in 2010

Swiss nationals at the UN

More than 900 Swiss nationals work at the UN. A number of Swiss nationals have obtained top positions: Carla Del Ponte (from 1999 to 2007 Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals of the former Yugoslavia and of Rwanda), Adolf Ogi (from 2001 to 2007 Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace), Joseph Deiss (2010/2011 President of the 65th session of the > *General Assembly*), Konrad Osterwalder (since 2007 Rector of the > *United Nations University*), Nicolas Michel (from 2004 to 2008 Legal Adviser to the UN), Lucius Cafilisch (since 2006 member of the > *International Law Commission*), Walter Kälin (from 2004 to 2010 Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced People, since 2011 Member of the Advisory Board of the UN Peacebuilding Fund).

During elections to the governing bodies, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs supports Swiss candidates with election campaigns among members of the electoral body (usually member states). In con-

trast, Swiss nationals generally obtain posts in the executive bodies by appointment.

T

The fight against drugs

The manufacture, trade, sale, and consumption of illegal drugs cause problems at the national and international levels. For example, international drug cartels undermine state structures and infiltrate legitimate business operations (money laundering). The UN has various instruments at its disposal to tackle drug problems at the international level:

- The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) is the principal intergovernmental body on drug-related matters. It issues guidelines for international cooperation in the fight against drugs.
- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), headquartered in Vienna, coordinates drug control activities, carries out projects, and publishes reports. It serves as the secretariat for the CND and the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB).
- The INCB monitors compliance with various conventions in the field of drug control. The conventions require member states to monitor production and distribution of illegal drugs, to reduce demand, and to prevent abuse and smuggling of drugs. Switzerland has ratified all three conventions.

U

UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialised agency of the UN based in Paris. Its primary objective is to preserve peace through international cooperation and understanding. It is committed to poverty reduction, sustainable development, and a dialogue among civilisations.

UNESCO created the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, as an instrument to preserve the

cultural and natural heritage. Switzerland acceded to the Convention in 1975. To date, 11 properties in Switzerland have been included in the World Heritage Sites list, including prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps, the Rhaetian Railway in the Albula/Bernina landscapes, and the Convent of St Gall. In addition, the Entlebuch region and the Swiss National Park have been designated UNESCO biosphere reserves. Biosphere reserves are internationally representative model regions for sustainable development.

The liaison body between UNESCO and Switzerland, the Swiss Commission for UNESCO, consists of 20 experts appointed by the Federal Council. Its secretariat is attached to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

United Nations (UN)

The UN is an > *International organisation* of global reach. It has 193 member states (as of 2011) and provides a forum to discuss all topics of international significance. The UN promotes international peace and security, defence of > *Human rights*, reduction of social inequalities, protection of the environment, and provides > *Humanitarian aid* in international emergencies. The > *UN System* comprises a variety of more or less independent entities with varying relationships to the > *General Assembly*.

Switzerland joined the UN as a full member in 2002. Between 1948 and 2002 the Swiss Confederation had observer status and was a member of many specialised agencies.

United Nations Office at Geneva

The United Nations Office in the > *Palais des Nations* in Geneva (UNOG) has 5,250 employees, the largest UN office outside its headquarters in

New York. UNOG supports the activities of a variety of intergovernmental agencies, UN specialised agencies, programmes, funds, and other institutions that deal with important global issues such as peace, security and disarmament, humanitarian affairs and human rights, health, employment, business and science, sustainable development, and conservation of natural resources. UNOG serves as a hub for several thousand international meetings and conferences every year. Two thirds of the entire United Nations system activities take place in > *International Geneva*. The Director-General heads the office and reports directly to the > *Secretary-General*.

United Nations Secretariat

The Secretariat, headquartered in New York, is the UN's principal administrative organ. It takes responsibility for the organisation's daily operations, provides administrative support to the other principal UN organs, and carries out their mandates. It is headed by the > *Secretary-General*. The UN Secretariat comprises numerous divisions and employs nearly 9,000 people worldwide. The > *Reforms* currently under way aim to make the UN function more efficiently.



The Swiss Armed Forces have participated in peacekeeping missions abroad since 1953. From 2003–2008, for example, Switzerland took part in the UN-mandated International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with a contingent of 31 officers.

United Nations University

The United Nations University (UNU) was founded in 1973. To date, UNU is represented by institutes in 14 countries. The UNU is not a traditional university with a fixed faculty. Its various institutes work together with local partners and usually have a “twin institute” in the Third World. UNU conducts interdisciplinary and international research within research communities on pressing global issues such as development economics, sustainable development, food, etc. Dr. Konrad Osterwalder, former rector of the ETH Zurich, heads the UNU since 2007. He reports directly to the UN > *Secretary-General*.

United Nations Year

The UN dedicates days, weeks, years, and decades to particularly important political, social, cultural, humanitarian, and human rights issues. These observances raise awareness and introduce theme-oriented activities. Examples are World AIDS Day on 1 December, the UN International Year of Cooperatives 2012, and the Decade of Biodiversity 2011–2020.

UN system

The United Nations system comprises a large number of funds, programmes, and specialised agencies. Funds and programmes (such as the UN children’s fund UNICEF) are operationally oriented subsidiary bodies of the > *General Assembly* financed through voluntary contributions (> *Financing of the UN*) and have their own governing bodies. Specialised agencies are separate, legally autonomous > *International organisations* linked to the UN through agreements (e.g., the World Health Organisation WHO).

V

Veto powers

The five veto powers are the five permanent members of the > *Security Council* (USA, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France). Each permanent member has the power of veto and can thus block resolutions. Since the Security Council was founded in 1946, there have been almost 300 vetoes. Limiting the exercise of the veto and increasing the number of members are two topics on which debate over reforming the Security Council revolves (> *Reform*).

W

Women

Equal opportunities for both genders and inclusion of women in all key areas are important UN concerns. Since 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women has provided the UN with a legally binding instrument to implement women's rights. To date, 186 UN member states, including Switzerland, have acceded to the Convention. A committee monitors implementation of the Convention in the signatory states. The States Parties undertake to submit regular reports to the committee on what measures they are taking.

© UN Photo/Paulo Figueiras



There can be no lasting peace without justice: This was the guiding principle of the Swiss legal expert, Nicolas Michel, during his term as legal adviser to the UN Secretary-General from 2004-2008. As Under-Secretary-General, he was the UN's most senior lawyer.

The fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, presented a series of demands in a Platform for Action. Within the United Nations, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) deal specifically with women's issues. Since 2011, the newly created entity UN Women has coordinated the gender-related activities of various UN bodies and programmes. It also advises member states and carries out projects.

Imprint

Publisher

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)
3003 Bern
www.eda.admin.ch

Design

Swiss Federal Chancellery / Peter Auchli

Orders

FDFA Information

Tel.: +41 (0)31 322 31 53

E-Mail: publikationen@eda.admin.ch

Contact

United Nations and International Organisations Division

Tel.: +41 (0)31 323 23 46

E-Mail: pd-aio@eda.admin.ch

This publication is also available in French, German, and Italian.

Bern, 2012