



Factsheet Swiss Positions for Rio+20

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Switzerland sets its priorities in relation to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio de Janeiro in the following four main areas:

- 1. A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;**
- 2. Strengthening international environmental governance;**
- 3. Creating a Sustainable Development Council;**
- 4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).**

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1. Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

A lot of progress has been made since Rio 1992, but we still need more efforts with regard to sustainable development. The world faces major challenges such as poverty and social disparities, a growing world population, changing consumption and production patterns and continued deterioration of the environment. While growth is crucial for poverty eradication, efforts have to be made in order to assure that economic development patterns are sustainable. The current economic structures, rules and activities are not able to respond to these challenges in a way that leads the world towards a sustainable future. Consumption and production patterns have to respect the earth's limits. Hence, low carbon development and pro poor growth are essential for our common future.

A green economy has the potential to transform the current economic development in a sustainable one. Switzerland understands green economy as a tool to achieve sustainable development.

The transition to a green economy is already underway. Green economy policies have already been implemented in developed and developing countries. Switzerland has for example been working since more than 10 years together with UNIDO and UNEP to establish Cleaner Production Centers in developing countries.

Rio+20 offers an opportunity to mainstream and scale-up existing activities and encourage new actions for the transition to a green economy. This contributes ultimately to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

A green economy is relevant to all countries and all economies, be they state or more market-led. However, each country has to define its own way for a transition to a green economy and thus make its own policy choice.

Switzerland therefore proposes that we decide at Rio+20 that each country develops its own national green economy action plan, which contains the policy mix that fits its needs. These action plans would be part of national sustainable development strategies or national poverty eradication strategies.

In addition, Switzerland is convinced that we need international cooperation for supporting the development of such national green economy action plans. It is important to make best use of limited resources by exchanging best practices, providing tools and support for green economy policies that contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

In this context, Switzerland proposes an international green economy roadmap or platform as one of the outcomes of Rio+20. It would provide the necessary framework of the international cooperation to support the development of national green economy action plans by bringing together the existing know-how, enable the exchange among countries and their experience, provide the tools necessary for the relevant policy-mix in each country and make the link to the relevant means of implementation from different sources.

Switzerland expects that the Rio+20 Conference will agree on the following three elements on a green economy: first, the context of and general commitment to a green economy in accordance with the overall sustainable development framework. Second, concrete policy options and measures. And finally, a framework to support implementation such as national action plans – in coordination with national sustainable development strategies or national poverty eradication strategies – and an international roadmap.

2. Strengthening international environmental governance

As we have not been able to stop and reverse environmental degradation, there is widespread agreement that the current international environmental governance system is inadequate to effectively address the challenges. The main weaknesses of the current system are well known such as its fragmentation, lack of coherence, insufficient institutional leadership as well as lack of and inefficient use of limited resources. The need for strengthening international environmental governance (IEG) has been recognized by the international community various times including at the highest political level. There have been ongoing intergovernmental deliberations for more than ten years. The time has come to bring these deliberations to a meaningful conclusion. A strengthened international environmental regime that contributes to a better institutional framework for sustainable development is therefore one of the most important issues on the agenda of the Rio+20 Conference.

Switzerland expects the Rio+20 conference to agree upon a package of reform measures that will allow the institutional framework to better perform its core functions of providing credible scientific information on environmental matters, developing global authoritative policy responses while ensuring coherence amongst institutions and instruments as well as facilitating the implementation of these policy responses through adequate financing.

Much of the discussion in the last two years has focused on the question whether the legal status of UNEP should be changed from a programme to a specialized agency. Switzerland considers this question as secondary. First, agreement needs to be reached on which aspects of international environmental governance need to be improved through what measures. Once there is a common understanding on this, we will also be able to resolve the question of UNEP's legal status.

The following elements should be part of the reform package on strengthening international environmental governance:

- Only a body with **universal membership** can effectively serve as the principal forum for international environmental policy making.
- The role to **provide oversight, guidance and coordination of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)** needs to be recognized and strengthened.
- In order to achieve effectiveness, efficiency and coherence on international environmental matters, **synergies within thematic clusters** of MEAs need to be enhanced.
- A **UN system-wide strategy for environment** needs to be developed.
- A **system of assessed contributions** to the core budget needs to be established.
- A **system-wide capacity-building framework** for strengthening national capacities required to implement multilateral environment agreements and agreed international environmental objectives should be developed.
- A **stronger link between global environmental policy making and financing** needs to be established.
- **The presence at the regional level should be increased.**
- **The science-policy interface should be further strengthened.**

3. Creating a Sustainable Development Council

Switzerland expects that Rio+20 Conference will decide on an ambitious and effective reform package. While a considerable amount of progress has been achieved in implementing sustainable development during the 20 years since the concept was broadly recognized at the international level, much still needs to be done to make the world's development really sustainable and to improve international governance of sustainable development.

Switzerland proposes strengthening the international framework for sustainable development by creating a Sustainable Development Council. The concrete mandate and structure of such a Council will be subject to UN-led negotiations under the auspices of the UN General Assembly after the Rio+20 Conference. However, at the Rio+20 Conference we could already agree on some of the following elements:

- a) To give sustainable development a prominent place in the UN system and in global governance, the Sustainable Development Council could be created as a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly, without the need of an amendment to the Charter. It would replace the Commission on Sustainable Development, which fell short in delivering the desired results. This new Council would promote effective implementation and institutional coherence within the UN system.
- b) To assess progress, the Council would be equipped with a Progress Assessment Mechanism that encourages States in a constructive spirit to explain their policies, to share experiences and lessons learned in the crafting and implementation of sustainable development strategies and other instruments aimed at fostering sustainable development.
- c) To support international cooperation, the Council could be the platform for exchanging best practices and experiences with tools for implementing sustainable development and poverty eradication. The Council could be the designated organ for assessing the progress made in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- d) To keep sustainable development high on the agenda and give it a more continuous political attention, the Council could convene periodic high-level exchanges on sustainable development, for instance when leaders meet at the opening of the new session of the UN General Assembly. Such a high-level segment could contribute to the agenda setting and address emerging issues by bringing together high-level state representatives, heads of international institutions and representatives of civil society and the private sector.
- e) To ensure legitimacy, the Sustainable Development Council would have a broad and balanced geographical and political membership and fully engage relevant international institutions — including United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions — as well as non-State actors from civil society, the private sector and science.

The creation of a Sustainable Development Council does not contradict further efforts to reform ECOSOC. On the contrary, we urge the member states to elaborate on ways on how to further strengthening the work of the ECOSOC.

Switzerland welcomes that the creation of a Sustainable Development Council is now discussed in the preparatory process of the Rio+20 Conference as one of the most promising options to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Switzerland will actively advocate the creation of a Sustainable Development Council during the negotiation process. Creating a new a Council on Sustainable Development will reflect political courage and real determination to improve the institutional framework for sustainable development and to ensure an effective follow-up to the Rio+20 outcome.

4. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Switzerland welcomes the idea of establishing a set of global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such a set of goals can be an effective tool for guiding the international community in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. As the SDGs would allow focusing the activities of UN entities and other relevant actors and facilitate cooperative and coordinated action towards common priorities, they would contribute to better coordination and coherence. The SDGs would also provide a framework for international cooperation and for review of progress.

At the Rio+20 Conference, an agreement should be reached that goes beyond the decision to establish Sustainable Development Goals. The international community needs to agree on four additional features: 1. The main characteristics of the goals, 2. The principal themes to be covered, 3. The process for their detailed elaboration, and 4. The way progress in their achievement will be measured.

From Switzerland's point of view, the main characteristics of the SDGs should be:

- reflecting a balanced treatment of the three dimensions of sustainable development;
- integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development in each of the goals;
- be concise, action-oriented, measureable and limited in number;
- be universal and applicable to all countries while allowing for different paths to achievement.

The Rio+20 Conference also provides an opportunity for identifying principal themes to be covered by the SDGs. Further discussions need to take place in this regard in the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference. Expertise from various instruments and processes should be taken into account in identifying the themes, such as reviews of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Global Environmental Outlook reports, the Report of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change as well relevant reports on social aspects. The selection of themes will have to address the need for further poverty eradication, development and equity, the planet's boundaries as well as the challenges of sustainable management and equitable access to its resources, and the relevant social dimensions.

Regarding the process for the establishment of SDGs, Switzerland is of the opinion that the SDGs should be developed through a transparent UN system-wide process led by the UN Secretary-General. The process should build upon an evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the preparations for the post-2015 UN development agenda and should eventually lead to one single set of global goals in 2015. We are convinced that intergovernmental negotiations could not yield the desired results. Once the international community has given clear guidance at the Rio+20 conference, the further process for the elaboration of the SDGs should be mainly expert driven, while ensuring the involvement of member states as well as relevant stakeholders as appropriate.

Switzerland further considers it important for the Rio+20 Conference to confirm that a periodic follow-up and the measurement of progress in achieving the SDGs through appropriate indicators are vital to the success of SDGs.