

# Switzerland's Foreign Policy Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA



# Content

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<b>Preface</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
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<b>2 Objectives</b>	<b>8</b>
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<b>3 Spheres of action</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sphere of action 1:</b> contribution to PVE policymaking and capacity building	9
<b>Sphere of action 2:</b> developing and promoting contextual knowledge	10
<b>Sphere of action 3:</b> dialogue and conflict prevention	11
<b>Sphere of action 4:</b> strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law	12
<b>Sphere of action 5:</b> engaging communities, empowering youth and women	15
<b>Sphere of action 6:</b> education, training, skills development and promoting employment	17
<b>Sphere of action 7:</b> strategic communication, internet and social media	18

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<b>4 Strategic priorities: youth, women and International Geneva</b>	<b>20</b>
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# Preface

## United against terrorism

Ouagadougou, Tunis, Istanbul, Brussels, Lahore and a host of other cities. Since the beginning of the year the world has seen a marked rise in terrorist activity that has placed national and international authorities before a daunting challenge: to improve protection of their citizens by stepping up the fight against violent extremism while at the same time avoiding the trap of security paranoia that the bombers would like to see us fall into. It is this specific challenge that is the focus of the Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism.

In Switzerland itself, the measures in place for combatting violent extremism have already been reinforced. This past September the Federal Council adopted a new counter-terrorism strategy. The government has also taken note of a second report on countering jihadist terrorism in Switzerland, reaffirming the importance of local and cantonal structures in the fight against radicalisation. Finally, in mid-December, the Federal Council decided to create 86 new staff positions in the area of counter-terrorism.

At the Geneva conference, the first of its kind to be organised by the United Nations in partnership with Switzerland, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs will present



its plan for combatting violent extremism through prevention. Terrorism cannot be defeated by fighting it only in the places where it occurs. It must be prevented by working also in countries where a lack of perspectives for the future destabilises young people and leaves them open to the seductions of violent extremism.

Switzerland will thus be enhancing its programmes in countries considered as fragile contexts, focusing in particular on its assistance for woman and young people. Switzerland is already active in these areas with projects such as one being carried out in various neighbourhoods of Tunis to encourage dialogue with young people. A fifty percent increase in funding has also been foreseen for projects like those that have made it

possible in recent years to provide vocational training for over 300,000 young people around the world.

Geneva must serve as a strong signal sent by the international community in the fight against terrorism in all its forms. There is no magic recipe, but if the nations of the world further strengthen their resolve to stand together, developing strategies for combatting terrorism – not just in the immediate future, but also over the long term – a major step will have been taken.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Burkhalter', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Didier Burkhalter  
Federal Councillor

# 1 Introduction

Instability and armed violence have increased in various regions. The reasons for this include conflicts, the growing strength of terror groups, geopolitical and religious tension, poor governance and weak institutions. This situation is reflected in sustained violence, in particular against civilians, great humanitarian need and hopelessness but is also currently manifesting itself as a refugee and migration crisis. In this context, *preventing violent extremism* (PVE) as a contribution to counter-terrorism through preventative measures is becoming significantly more important. This involves depriving violent extremism of its breeding ground by enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to resist it. States and the communities affected require support with structuring contexts so that people are not attracted to politically or ideologically motivated violence and are not recruited by violent extremists in the first place.

Preventing violent extremism is a priority of Swiss foreign policy. Switzerland stands for dialogue and a culture of compromise, all-embracing solutions, democracy, human rights, humanitarian principles, the rule of law and the force of justice. Preventing violent extremism lies at the point where peace, security, sustainable development, the rule of law and human rights converge. Swiss foreign policy makes a contribution towards addressing the causes of and conditions for

violent extremism through its foreign policy engagement in the aforementioned areas. Tackling its direct and structural causes requires long-term, sustainable commitment in transitional and fragile contexts as well as in current conflict zones. Switzerland wishes to participate

» in policy-making and the drawing-up and development of standards and practices aimed at preventing violent extremism

» and to contribute operationally through both PVE-*specific* and PVE-*relevant* long-term programmes and projects of Swiss international cooperation focusing on fragile contexts. The principle of 'do no harm' will be systematically applied adopting a conflict-sensitive approach.

This action plan is part of the international PVE efforts. It is conceptually in line with the understanding of preventing violent extremism of the UN, whose Secretary-General presented an action plan on this topic in December 2015.<sup>1</sup> This also aims to reinforce, in particular, the first (tackling the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism) and fourth (ensuring respect for human rights for all and the rule of law while countering terrorism) pillars of the UN's global counter-terrorism strategy (2006). Switzerland is intensifying its efforts aimed at preventing violent extremism at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels, where it cooperates with governments, international organisations and forums, non-governmental actors, including civil society, the private sector and armed groups.

After setting out its objectives, this action plan defines the various spheres of action comprising Switzerland's PVE efforts. Interdisciplinary strategic priorities will then be identified on this basis to which Switzerland will pay particular attention as part of its PVE-specific priorities. Through such activities Switzerland intends to support and strengthen in particular the position of youth and women as key players in PVE prevention. 'International Geneva', which already plays an important role today, is also to be further bolstered and promoted. Geneva is home to many platforms and organisations whose mandates and activities make major contributions to preventing conflicts and violent extremism.

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1 The UN differentiates between two drivers of violent extremism – push factors (conditions conducive to violent extremism and the context in which it arises) and pull factors (individual motives and processes that play a key role in transforming ideas and grievances into violent extremist action). The United Nation's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism explicitly identifies the following factors – a lack of social and economic prospects, marginalisation and discrimination, poor governance, violations of human rights and the rule of law, prolonged and unresolved conflicts, radicalisation in prisons, personal lives and motives, collective victimisation and dissatisfaction, falsification and misuse of religious teachings and political ideologies and the exaggeration of ethnic and cultural differences as well as the role of leadership figures and networks, including new communications channels.

# 2 Objectives

Switzerland advocates combating the direct and structural causes that drive individuals or groups to violent extremism. Here it deploys its tried-and-tested instruments in the fields of human security, peacebuilding, the promotion of human rights, development cooperation and international security. Switzerland seeks to promote inclusive societies whose citizens live free from fear and poverty and whose core values are human rights, peace, tolerance, respect for diversity and the principles of the rule of law. Switzerland is building trust in institutions, creating prospects and thus helping to eliminate the factors that result in violent extremism by means of dialogue, conflict management and transformation, promoting good governance, human rights and the rule of law, by including marginalised groups, youth and women, by promoting education and employment and by combating socio-economic injustices.

Switzerland is concentrating on fragile contexts, is focusing its efforts on improving human security to achieve 'freedom from fear' and is centring its activities in particular on vulnerable sections of the population at risk of being intimidated by or attracted to violent extremism. They are to be won over as players in prevention.



# 3 Spheres of action

This foreign policy action plan's activities are grouped into seven spheres of action. They are based on those of the UN Action Plan for Preventing Violent Extremism. The spheres of action are broken down into objectives and operational aspects using lines of action or into several sub-objectives with operational aspects.

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## Sphere of action 1: contribution to PVE policymaking and capacity building

### Objective

In light of the UN's universal character, the PVE standards developed by this organisation reflect the engagement of the entire international community. Within the UN and through its participation in multilateral and (sub) regional forums and organisations, Switzerland is contributing towards developing policies, standards and good practices to prevent violent extremism – also as part of countering terrorism through preventative measures. Furthermore, Switzerland is strengthening the capabilities of national and local actors in combating violent extremism. It is helping to develop targeted political prevention strategies and a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, in par-

ticular through the exchange of approaches and experience. This involves adapting policies, standards and good practices to the respective specific challenges to ensure they are firmly established and are also actually implemented at regional, national and, in particular, local level.

### Operational aspects

- » Within the framework of the UN, Switzerland is supporting the implementation of the UN's Action Plan on Preventing Violent Extremism, e.g. by organising conferences and events.
- » Switzerland is also contributing towards developing policies, standards and good practices at the *Global Counterterrorism Forum* (GCTF), which has already developed several fundamental instruments relating to this matter.
- » Switzerland is also involved in policymaking at the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe, the '*Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*' (OIF) as well as other regional and sub-regional organisations.
- » Switzerland supports informal, regional stakeholders (civil society, researchers,

practitioners and traditional players etc.) in developing advantageous political framework conditions, standards and good practices. This allows better alignment with the reality of local situations and enables the persons concerned to assume responsibility.

- » Switzerland helps reinforce the capabilities of local partners based on its approach to preventing violent extremism – safeguarding human rights, including gender equality, and taking into account the political dimension of violent extremism.
- » Switzerland supports activities fostering the inclusion of civil society at national and local level.

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## **Sphere of action 2:** developing and promoting contextual knowledge

### **Objective**

the activities and initiatives set out are based on current knowledge and experience. This has to be continually updated in line with new findings. Knowledge about the direct and structural causes of violent extremism in specific contexts is to be promoted, in particular, in order to identify points of departure for preventative measures and to structure these in the most targeted way possible (the objective is evidence-based policies and programmes).

### **Operational aspects**

- » Switzerland will conduct and support analyses of contexts and causes of violent extremism at local, regional and international level. In this respect, institutions conducting applied research, in particular in Geneva or locally, are to be provided with support. Norway and Switzerland are backing, for example, an ongoing study on the background to the radicalisation of children and youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2015 the federal government funded a study on the background to jihadist radicalisation in Switzerland.
- » Switzerland is helping to develop and implement training. It is backing or participating in activities enabling the exchange

of practical experience and lessons learned about preventing violent extremism, especially via relevant organisations and institutes in Geneva (such as the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)) and locally.

- » Switzerland promotes global exchange between experts in the fields of research, politics and development practice about vocational education and training as a means of reducing the causes of radicalisation. It organised a seminar on this topic in Geneva in March 2016.
- » Switzerland is endeavouring to raise awareness with the aim of analysing the political causes of violent extremism, including the gender aspect.

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### Sphere of action 3: dialogue and conflict prevention

Political and social marginalisation which can lead to armed violence and violent extremism is to be counteracted by means of dialogue, conflict management and conflict transformation. Switzerland is contributing to better social and political integration through this approach.

Resolving and transforming  
armed conflicts

#### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

The resolution and transformation of armed conflicts, which are a breeding ground for violent extremism, are to be fostered through appropriate instruments of Swiss peace policy.

- » Rendering support for inclusive political peace processes or mediation to resolve political conflicts can help to reduce the risk of violent extremism.
- » Switzerland strengthens society's resistance to crisis in fragile contexts and backs measures and initiatives aimed at peaceful conflict resolution as part of long-term development programmes. It assists governments in identifying further tension at an early stage and plays a role in reinforcing regional and local institutions in conflict-threatened contexts to re-establish the trust of citizens in such institutions

(e.g. in the security sector). Support is also provided for initiatives undertaken by government and civil society to promote democracy and social cohesion.

» Switzerland wishes to contribute to both containing extremist incitement of violence and preventing the misuse of antiterrorist rhetoric by state actors. The former is to be achieved through cooperation with religious figures deemed credible by militants. They are to counteract extremism and promote constructive political solutions. The sweeping anti-terrorist rhetoric often deployed by many governments against political opponents means that actors are forced from the political stage and are only left with the choice between resignation or violence.

Inclusive political dialogue

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Switzerland advocates inclusive political dialogue. It thus plays a part in creating a culture of diversity and tolerance. Issues relating to radical ideologies should be tackled, thus reducing the danger of a shift towards violent extremism.

» Switzerland aims to work towards involving governmental and non-governmental players (including armed groups, civil society organisations, women's networks, political actors with religious links in inclusive dialogue processes.

» Switzerland is striving to expand the political field by promoting the political participation of actors who are often excluded. In particular, these include women and youth belonging to social and political movements with religious affiliations.

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### **Sphere of action 4:** strengthening good governance, human rights and the rule of law

Effective and transparent state institutions, which uphold and implement the fundamental and human rights of the entire population as well as the core constitutional principles, protect against injustice, marginalisation and ultimately radicalisation.

Promoting good governance

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Good governance is to be promoted by reforming state institutions, strengthening human rights, including freedom of religion, combating corruption, decentralising administration and involving civil society and the population in decision-making that concerns general interests.

» A more inclusive and more citizen-oriented environment, in which the organisations of civil society, citizens and the media can engage in exchange with state authorities,

enhances transparency and the accountability of the public administration. Democratic development is dependent upon actively involved citizens who demand transparent, accountable and inclusive governance. They initiate structural changes in accordance with local requirements, thus strengthening democracy. Switzerland supports such initiatives.

- » Switzerland supports initiatives aimed at ensuring equal access to the services of local authorities and establishing clear legal framework conditions. This helps to re-establish the trust of citizens in their representatives and the state institutions and contributes towards a process aiming to create a state structure based on the principle of subsidiarity.
- » Switzerland endorses the role of (local) elections (peaceful political participation as an alternative to violence), encourages voter participation, with the emphasis on women and youth, and strengthens electoral commissions, independent media coverage and electoral monitoring.

Improving the governance of the security sector

**Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Social trust is to be enhanced by promoting the governance and democratic control of the armed forces, police and intelligence services. *Security sector reform* (SSR) – combined with the affirmation of human rights

and bolstering anti-discrimination and anti-abuse measures (e.g. corruption, violence in prisons and by the police) – represents a contribution towards preventing violent extremism.

- » Switzerland endorses parliamentary supervision of the security sector, more transparent communications vis-à-vis citizens, improving forensic capabilities for the criminal prosecution of torture cases and better exchange between citizens and the security system at local level. Switzerland supports the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) as an internationally recognised centre of excellence in the field of SSR.
- » Post-conflict rehabilitation seeks to (re) establish the population's trust in state armed and security forces and their various agencies. Switzerland is participating in the debate on the political strengthening of security sector reform as a core element of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions within the framework of the UN, the OSCE and the Partnership for Peace (PfP).
- » Switzerland is cooperating with political and educational institutions to identify current challenges, provide possible political and operational solutions and to advise our partners (including those in the field) on policymaking.

Promoting human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Constitutional framework conditions requiring compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law are to be promoted. Respect for the rule of law as a general means of preventing violent extremism and contributing towards peace and security is vitally important. Ensuring the freedom of expression, assembly and association and the free exercising of political and civil rights are fundamental requirements for open, participative and integrative societies and therefore play a part in reducing and preventing politically or ideologically justified violent crimes. Great importance is therefore attached to freedom of religion and conscience, protecting minorities and countering discrimination of all kinds, including racially motivated discrimination. For the same reasons, Switzerland is also combating impunity and corruption, torture and other brutal, inhumane or demeaning treatment by law enforcement agencies, arbitrary arrests and the enforced disappearance of persons as well as protecting the defenders of human rights and enhancing the status of civil society. It is also doing its utmost to ensure humanitarian activities (aid and protection) are not undermined by counter-terrorism measures.

» Switzerland is working towards developing and adopting standards and recommendations on juvenile justice in the fight against terrorism as part of the GCTF.

These should take account of the special requirements and rights of children and youth as perpetrators, witnesses and victims in criminal justice proceedings as part of counterterrorism and should focus on prevention, alternatives to deprivation of liberty, rehabilitation and reintegration.

» Switzerland supports the development of guidelines on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2178 (counter-terrorism measures) which are in line with human rights and thus prevent radicalisation through the arbitrary violation of rights.

» Switzerland is engaged in the fight against impunity, in particular through its commitment to the International Criminal Court. It also advocates strengthening international obligations with regard to dealing with the past, including responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

» Switzerland promotes establishing and expanding structures for preventing atrocities by involving the various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and promoting early-warning systems. Switzerland is a driving force behind the 'Global Action Against Mass Atrocity Crimes' initiative which seeks to achieve this goal.

» As part of multilateral discussions, political consultations and human rights dialogues, Switzerland stresses that states must meet their human rights obligations when preventing violent extremism. Where appropriate, it admonishes violations of human

rights committed as part of measures to counter violent extremism bilaterally or multilaterally.

- » Switzerland assists its partners in establishing the rule of law with good governance in the judicial and security sectors. In specific terms, this involves access to the judiciary and respect for human rights, non-discrimination and the prevention of abuses when combating violent extremism, especially where children are concerned.
- » Switzerland is stepping up its political support for the activities of civil society and the enhancement of its role. It is focusing in particular on ensuring that measures against violent extremism are not used as a pretext for restricting the room for manoeuvre of civil society and the defenders of human rights.
- » Switzerland is actively promoting private-sector practices that take account of the human rights situation in conflict environments or complex and fragile contexts. It supports measures, business activities and investments that take into consideration risks to human rights. In particular, it advocates initiatives involving cooperation between the state, private sector and civil society.

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## Sphere of action 5: engaging communities, empowering youth and women

An inclusive society where everyone feels well represented and participates in economic, social and political processes is a requirement for peace. Including the disadvantaged to a greater extent lays the foundation for more peaceful communities. In many contexts, the disadvantaged are women of all ages, youth and social groups who are discriminated against owing to their religion, background or other factors.

### Strengthening the communities affected **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

The resilience of religious and social groups in the country concerned or amongst the diaspora is to be reinforced to prevent violent extremism by alleviating tension between or within groups.

- » Promoting resilience is achieved through long-term development programmes focusing on fragile countries and contexts.
- » The *Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF)*, which is supported by Switzerland and based in Geneva, works on projects, using public-private funding instruments, which seek to prevent radicalisation tendencies at local level. It focuses on issues such as youth employment, education, vocational ed-

education and training and improving the position of women. Projects in Bangladesh, Mali and Nigeria are currently being funded while others in Kenya, Kosovo and Myanmar will get under way from 2017. A special fund for financing PVE projects in the field of migration (in refugee camps, recipient countries and on transit routes) is to be created. Switzerland has contributed around CHF 4 million to the GCERF over the first four years.

Strengthening the participation of women in all areas of PVE measures

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

The involvement of women in implementing measures aimed at preventing violent extremism, respecting their role in society and their rights, constitutes an effective means of developing alternatives to extremist violence.

» Switzerland espouses the participation of women as stakeholders and target groups in all of its PVE activities. As part of the current National Action Plan (NAP), it has also committed itself to the UN Security Council's (UNSCR) resolution 1325 ('women, peace and security') which calls for greater participation by women and their assumption of leadership roles.

Preventing gender-specific violence

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Gender inequality is reflected in a society's propensity to violence. This is a reason for reinforcing the prevention of gender-specific violence.

» Switzerland has stepped up its efforts to prevent gender-specific violence in fragile contexts. One priority here is involving young and adult men in the prevention of violence. This is achieved through educational work at municipal level on gender and women's rights as well as through reflection on the 'male identity', images of masculinity shaped by violence and alternative role models for young men. The establishment of services for men as the victims and perpetrators of violence is also supported. Such work also helps prevent violent extremism, especially in view of the fact that images of masculinity that are stereotypical and shaped by violence are extremely effective as means of mobilisation and recruitment.



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## **Sphere of action 6:** education, training, skills development and promoting employment

Social and economic integration is to be improved through basic education and vocational education and training accessible to all and by establishing framework conditions conducive to an entrepreneurial outlook. Trust in personal performance and individual initiative and gender equality are to be enhanced and future prospects opened up.

### Education

#### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Human rights, political education, sustainable development and cultural diversity will be incorporated into the education systems to promote critical thinking, respect for and mutual understanding of others and tolerance.

» Switzerland supports the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its activities in the field of preventing violent extremism. UNESCO is involved in drawing up standards, policies and action plans aimed at preventing violent extremism in the field of education. For example, it is currently drafting guidelines for teachers on preventing violent extremism. This aims to provide teachers with practical instruments for addressing such issues with pupils, underlin-

ing the importance of education and critical thinking and dealing with the expression of intolerance and racism.

» As part of other UNESCO projects, Switzerland is also involved in programmes promoting human rights, political education, sustainable development and cultural diversity in education systems.

### Social and economic inclusion

#### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Switzerland aims to systematically tackle the risk factors for violent extremism and to combine them with other activities concerning socio-economic integration.

» Switzerland is seeking to bring vocational education and training into line with private sector requirements. 'Round tables' for local economic development have therefore been set up to promote entrepreneurship and the associated creation of employment. They bring public, private and civil society players together for the first time to understand their situation and to discuss measures. Such trust-building initiatives are particularly important in fragile contexts, including in supposedly 'technical' areas, such as promoting economic development.

» Switzerland wishes to provide marginalised groups with flexible access to relevant education. A growing number of youth find themselves excluded from formal educa-

tion, especially in fragile states – nomads, displaced persons and people in remote, structurally weak regions. Switzerland supports vocational education and training programmes that combine learning and remuneration as well as fast-track basic education for youth who have missed out on mainstream education. In this regard, it also works with schools run by religious groups (e.g. with state registered Muslim madrasas).

- » Switzerland is working to facilitate access to gainful employment for youth. Those who have obtained qualifications should have the opportunity to gain initial experience in the world of work.

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## **Sphere of action 7:** strategic communication, internet and social media

Developing alternatives to the rhetoric of violent extremism

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Switzerland is backing efforts seeking to develop and convey alternatives to the rhetoric of violent extremism. It plays a role in challenging such rhetoric and promoting other forms of political discourse in line with respect for human rights, the rule of law and the renunciation of violence. Civil society is to be provided with the capabilities to delegitimise the propaganda of violent extremism.

- » Switzerland fosters cooperation with religious authorities deemed credible and independent by moderate believers or activists to encourage the influence of non-violent discourse amongst young militants.
- » Switzerland makes a contribution in particular to counteracting the narrative of hate, exclusion and destruction, on which extremist violence and terror is based, through its activities aimed at preventing atrocities.
- » Switzerland strengthens organisations and civil society in specific target regions (especially in the Balkans) to counter the propaganda and rhetoric of violent extremism. It also helps to develop capabilities in the use of social media and communications.

Removal of violent extremist content on the internet and social media

### **Sub-objective and operational aspects**

Violent extremists, above all the 'Islamic State', abuse the internet and social media in a targeted way for their own ends. The rampant spread of violent extremist content for propaganda and recruitment purposes presents a major challenge. Switzerland, together with the international community and private sector, counteracts this by focusing on the effective removal of content that is illegal or which violates providers' codes of conduct. This will be achieved by respecting human rights (in particular the freedom of expression and protection of privacy) and adhering to the principle of proportionality.

» Switzerland is calling for greater cooperation between states and the private sector in removing content that is illegal or which violates providers' codes of conduct. It advocates the creation of common criteria and channels of cooperation in the relevant regional and international political processes (CVE working group of the GCTF, EU). These should be established with the involvement of the internet companies concerned and civil society and enable effective collaboration.

» The FDFA assists the national security authorities (fedpol in particular) in cooperating with actors in Switzerland and abroad at operational level, obtaining information

on suspected criminal activities concerning Switzerland and contributing towards the removal of violent extremist content (including via Europol's *European Union Internet Referral Unit*).

# 4 Strategic priorities: youth, women and International Geneva

The spheres of action outlined contain recurrent, overlapping themes to which Switzerland attaches particular importance in preventing violent extremism and on which it is focusing as priorities. Switzerland therefore believes it is vital that its PVE efforts support and strengthen the position of youth and women. Juveniles and young men as well as women and girls can play a number of roles in violent extremism. They can be sympathisers, mobilisers but also perpetrators. They are nevertheless usually victims. However, they can above all also act as key players in preventing violent extremism. The protection but also the participation of juveniles and young men as well as women and girls has to be ensured as part of preventing violent extremism.

Switzerland aims to make an effective contribution towards developing alternatives to extremist violence and thus creating prospects through its strategic priority of **'youth'**. This is to be achieved by involving them in local governance and political dialogue. Switzerland is, for example, supporting one such project in districts of Tunis from which a high number of *foreign ter-*

*rorist fighters* come. A further line of action concerning youth is developing international standards and recommendations on juvenile justice in the fight against terrorism. Critical thinking, respect, understanding and tolerance of others should be promoted in education. The social and economic integration of youth will be improved by promoting basic education and vocational education and training in fragile contexts and by creating jobs. Over 300,000 persons – predominantly youth – have received vocational education and training since 2012 in 20 of Switzerland's priority countries. The Federal Council's Dispatch on International Cooperation 2017–20 indicated that the financial resources deployed for this purpose are to be increased by 50% compared to the current level. The private sector will play a key role in developing skills and creating employment opportunities. Switzerland is therefore seeking to increasingly develop joint activities in tandem with companies and is focusing on augmenting the role played by the private sector as part of the activities of the *Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund*.

Switzerland is seeking to promote the involvement of women as actors, stakeholders and target groups as part of its PVE activities through its strategic priority of **'women'**. Switzerland advocates the participation of women in decision-making processes concerning policy-making and will thus meet its obligations under the current National Action Plan on the UN Security Council's resolution 1325 ('women, peace and security'). Women are to be involved in political processes, including political dialogue and local governance. Switzerland is also helping to make certain that gender aspects are systematically incorporated into strategies and action plans to prevent violent extremism and in the governance of the security sector.

When implementing the action plan, Swiss representations on site should, on the one hand, directly support local PVE projects while **International Geneva plays a key role** on the other. **It should be utilised and promoted to a greater extent.** The UN bodies in Geneva and other international organisations and institutions based there operating in the fields of human rights, international humanitarian law and the rule of law – in particular the Human Rights Council – can act as catalysts for PVE. The Geneva Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism organised together with the UN in April 2016 can also be seen in this context. Switzerland also provides backing to the *Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund* based in Geneva and thus supports projects which should contribute to achieving the strategic priorities set out at local level. Organisations and academic institutions domiciled in Geneva should be

used for applied research and further education in the field of PVE. The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP), in particular, possess extensive knowledge and international recognition in this field.

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