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The Federal Council

Switzerland's priorities for the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

Federal Council report to the Foreign Affairs Committees

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Switzerland has set itself the following four priorities for the 77th session of the UN General Assembly.

I. Dealing with the consequences of the armed conflict in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has far-reaching global implications. These are not yet fully foreseeable, but are likely to have an impact on the following areas, among others: energy prices, food security, poverty, migration, humanitarian aid, global trade, military build-up, stability in the digital space and funding of multilateral organisations, as well as an increased risk of mutual blockades and a crisis of confidence. In view of these major unknowns, Switzerland is committed to addressing the wide-ranging consequences of the armed conflict in Ukraine as well as in other states within the framework of the UNGA. In doing so, it advocates for a rules-based international order, and in particular for the respect of human rights, in all areas of activity and works to ensure that the UN can continue to play its role as a universal platform for dialogue on global problems. To do this, Switzerland relies on cooperation with like-minded states and tries to involve other states where possible and appropriate. It also seeks to strengthen UN agencies working in the field, which are likely to face various additional challenges in carrying out their operations in many countries.

II. Promoting international law

For Switzerland, as a country that is closely integrated into the global economy, international law forms the basis of international relations, as it promotes legal certainty and predictability. The events in Ukraine highlight the central importance of a rights-based international order. Switzerland is thus also working within the UN framework for the full recognition, respect and enforcement of international law. This is especially true with regard to new issues such as the application of international law in cyberspace, including international humanitarian law and human rights law (e.g. in the context of negotiations on a UN convention on cybercrime).

In keeping with its Guidelines on Human Rights 2021–24, Switzerland is committed to promoting human rights throughout the UN system, in particular women's rights, gender equality and minority rights. In September 2022, for example, Switzerland will participate in the UNGA high-level meeting on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. It is also committed to further strengthening the link between peace, security and human rights.

Based on its long-standing humanitarian tradition, Switzerland also advocates respect for international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

III. Promoting an effective UN

Many current challenges show how interconnected today's world is. Global challenges require global answers. This means more, not less, international cooperation. Switzerland is therefore committed to effective and efficient multilateralism – also in view of the loss of trust that has occurred as a result of the armed conflict in Ukraine. Switzerland is committed to ensuring the UN's capacity to act and to improving its working methods, among other things through its role as coordinator of the cross-regional Accountability, Coherence and Transparency (ACT) group, which is mainly concerned with improving the working methods of the Security Council. In this context, Switzerland also actively participates in discussions on reforming the veto in the Security Council. Furthermore, Switzerland advocates improved cooperation and coordination among the various UN bodies. In order to promote a more flexible and effective UN, Switzerland supports the work of the Secretary-General for a 'UN 2.0', with which the UN seeks to expand its capabilities in the areas of data use and innovation, among others. With a view to achieving effective multilateralism, Switzerland continues to advocate that the UN should be given sufficient resources to implement mandates that have been adopted. This is especially true since, against the backdrop of the Ukraine conflict, financing the UN through assessed contributions is likely to become a challenge if some states no longer contribute. In this context, Switzerland supports the

promotion of innovative models for development financing and increasing partnerships between the UN and the private sector. Switzerland is also committed to the further implementation of the UN Secretary-General's reforms.

With the 'Our Common Agenda' presented in September 2021, the UN Secretary-General proposes ambitious measures to strengthen multilateralism: among others, a new agenda for peace, a global digital compact, a declaration on future generations and strengthening the governance of global public goods. The aim is for a large number of these proposals to be adopted at the opening of the 78th GA session in September 2023. Switzerland is actively involved in the relevant preparatory processes in line with its priorities.

In addition, Switzerland continues its commitment to zero tolerance of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in UN field operations and in the workplace, and to the systematic investigation of such cases. These acts lead to great personal suffering for the victims and at the same time to an erosion of trust in the UN, thereby weakening multilateral cooperation.

IV. Promoting sustainable development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the global reference framework for sustainability policy. Its implementation remains key. In addition to Switzerland's commitment to achieving the 17 goals of the 2030 Agenda, it is also preparing for its high-level participation in the SDG Summit in September 2023.

The preservation and sustainable use of a healthy environment – including biodiversity – and the protection of the climate remain important concerns for Switzerland. Switzerland is therefore also actively involved within the UN in ensuring the implementation of previous decisions and the adoption of further necessary measures for environmental protection, including through active participation in the relevant international conferences, for example the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 27) in November 2022. 2023 will be the first follow-up to the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. Switzerland will be actively involved in the preparatory work.

Water is not only of crucial importance for sustainable development, but is also closely linked to other issues such as energy, agriculture and food security. Water is indispensable for health and well-being. This is a key highlight of the United Nations International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development, 2018–28. Switzerland is playing an active role in the preparatory work and will take part in the mid-term comprehensive review conference in March 2023.

Lastly, within the framework of the 2030 Agenda, Switzerland is playing an active role in harmonising the indicators used to measure the implementation of the 17 SDGs.

Other work to safeguard Switzerland's interests within UN processes

In addition, in keeping with its aspiration to play an active role in shaping multilateralism, Switzerland will be involved in current and future UN processes at the various UN sites. This is also important because, despite the consequences of the Ukraine conflict, the other pressing problems facing humanity should not be neglected. In this regard, Switzerland is actively involved in a broad range of areas (e.g. peace and security, human rights, disarmament, sustainability, environment, humanitarian aid, digitalisation, cybercrime and reforms) and safeguards the interests of International Geneva. The Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23, the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24, the Foreign Economic Policy Strategy, the Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–24, the Arms Control and Disarmament Strategy 2022–25 and the Guidelines on Human Rights 2021–24 serve as the basis for this work.