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Official Communications

Memorandum on the political rights of the Swiss abroad

What to do if you wish to take part in Switzerland in a federal election or other federal ballot.

1. If you wish to vote on a federal matter, apply either in writing or in person to the Swiss diplomatic or consular mission with which you are registered.

2. When applying, give your surname, Christian names, date of birth, marital status and address and indicate the commune in which you wish to be registered as a Swiss citizen with voting rights («voting commune»); your vote will be counted there. You can only choose as your «voting commune» one of your communes of origin or of former domicile in Switzerland. If you choose one of your former domiciles, state from when until when you lived there. The Swiss mission will also need to know whether you wish to fetch your voting material from your «voting commune» or from some other Swiss commune («commune of presence»); you can nominate any «commune of presence» you like.

3. You will receive: a copy of the Swiss mission's notification to your «voting commune» and, if applicable, your «commune of presence», and confirmation from your «voting commune» or «commune of presence» that you are entered in the voting register, with such other details as the address and opening hours of the voting register office. You will thus know where and when you can obtain your voting material.

4. You will only be able to exercise your right to vote during a visit to Switzerland, either:

a) in your «voting commune», at the voting register office as soon as you receive your voting material or at the ballot box during normal polling hours; you will be informed of other possibilities, if any, by your «voting commune»;

b) outside your «voting commune» by means of a postal vote, in which case you should proceed as follows. Put your ballot paper in your ballot paper envelope. Then put the sealed ballot paper envelope and, where applicable, your polling card in the covering envelope, on which you must complete the printed particulars. Seal and stamp it and mail it through the Swiss post. Ballot papers which, in the case of a postal vote, have not been mailed through the Swiss post will be invalid.

Ensuring the continuance of Switzerland's cooperation with the developing countries

At the end of October the Federal Council laid before the Swiss Parliament a «Message» concerning the continuation of technical cooperation with – and financial aid to – the developing countries*. The proposals contained in that «Message» will probably have already been discussed by both Houses of Parliament by the time this article appears. As the latter was written in mid-December, Parliament's decision could not be included. But this reservation in no way affects its purpose, which is to explain briefly the substance of the «Message», namely the Confederation's objectives and activities in the realm of cooperation for development.

In this «Message» the Federal Council asks Parliament to approve a block credit of 240 million francs for technical cooperation (180 millions) and financial aid (60 mil-

lions), plus a total sum of 58 million francs to the African and Asian Development Funds.

This proposal is in line with a continuous policy. Since 1961, when the Service of the Delegate for Technical Cooperation was set up, Parliament has regularly approved block credits for the continuation of technical cooperation with developing countries. The most recent of these credits – 150 million francs for a minimum period of 18

Passport

Do not wait until the eve of your holiday before applying for your Swiss passport to be renewed... it may not be possible to return it to you in time.

months beginning on 1st November 1975 – will have been used up by April 1977, as will the block credit of 400 million francs for financial aid approved by Parliament on 20th September 1971, of which only about 10 million francs were left in October 1976. This credit, which was intended to cover a minimum period of three years, has, in fact, been spread over more than five years.

Having regard to the international context...

The continuation of cooperation for development is now more vital than ever, especially for the following three reasons:

– In spite of the efforts and notable successes of cooperation for development, the situation in many third-world countries has worsened. This deterioration is greatest in the poorest countries, whose monetary reserves have dwindled and whose external debt has increased as a result of the economic events of recent years. These countries are practically helpless in the face of problems of a size and severity unknown in the industrialized countries, particularly in the field of nutrition and under-employment.

– Far from declining, as might have been expected in view of several years of economic difficulties, the industrialized countries' efforts have been intensified. In 1975 the total amount of money – *public and private* – flowing from countries with a market economy to the developing countries was 38.8 milliards of dollars, exceeding for the first time the target set in 1970 by the United Nations, namely the transfer of at least 1 per cent of the gross national product (GNP) to the countries of the third world. The proportion in 1975 was, in fact, 1.02 per cent. As for *public* aid from those same countries, it increased from 0.33 per cent in 1974 to 0.36 per cent in 1975 (Switzerland: 0.18%).

– As has been shown by the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC – the «North-South dialogue») – after numerous other international negotiations – the importance of cooperation for development in the relations between industrialized and third-world countries never ceases to grow. An additional effort is expected of the industrialized countries, which brings problems for a Switzerland divided between its concern to avoid isolation and its need to husband the federal finances.

Conscious of this situation, the Federal Council, in its report on the broad outlines of government policy during the legislative term 1975–1979 and in the accompanying financial plan, had in fact provided for an appreciable increase in Swiss efforts within the framework of international cooperation for development.

... and to the Confederation's financial position

Since then various factors have affected the situation:

– Without calling into question the fundamental principles of our cooperation for development, the negative result of the vote of 13th June concerning a loan of 200 million francs to the International Development Association (IDA) nevertheless entails an «au-

tomatic» reduction in our public aid: the payments envisaged for IDA have been removed from the development cooperation programme.

– The present state of the federal finances and uncertainty about an early improvement in the situation have caused the Federal Council to make repeated cuts in the credits envisaged for cooperation for development and to propose a short-term block credit.

Accordingly, the block credit requested takes account both of the situation in Switzerland and of the international context. On the one hand, it covers only 14 months – a Swiss brevity record in the sphere of cooperation for development. So it is a temporary solution. On the other hand, it should enable us to increase Swiss public aid slightly in the medium term. Thus our total contributions, in relation to the Swiss GNP, should represent 0.17% in 1976 (as against 0.18% in 1975), 0.18% in 1977, 0.19% in 1978 and 0.21% in 1979.

Cooperation with the poorest

The Act concerning International Cooperation for Development and Humanitarian Aid, approved recently by the Swiss Parliament, stipulates that Switzerland's contributions must go, first and foremost, to the poorest developing countries, regions and population groups.

OAI/DI –

Delays in fixing pensions by OAI/DI

There have recently been several delays in fixing the amount to be received by new OAI and DI pensioners. This is due to various causes which cannot be overcome in a few days. We should be most grateful to insured persons if they would only apply to Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad if they feel obliged to ask for an advance. We can assure you that the competent authorities are doing everything in their power to settle outstanding cases as quickly as possible.

Service of the Swiss abroad

The federal authorities in 1977

President of the National Council:	Hans WYER
President of the Council of States:	Hans MUNZ
President of the Confederation:	Kurt FURLER
Vice-President of the Federal Council:	Willi RITSCHARD
Chancellor of the Confederation:	Karl HUBER
President of the Federal Court:	André GRISEL
President of the Federal Insurance Court:	Hans KORNER

Composition of the Federal Council and allocation of departments

Political Department:	Pierre GRABER
Department of the Interior:	Hans HÜRLIMANN
Department of Justice and Police:	Kurt FURLER
Military Department:	Rudolf GNÄGI
Department of Finance and Customs:	Georges-André CHEVALLAZ
Department of Public Economy:	Ernst BRUGGER
Department of Transport, Communications and Energy:	Willi RITSCHARD

Every year since 1966 the poorest countries (GNP less than 200 dollars per inhabitant per year) have received more than half of our contributions. In 1975 the share was more than 75%.

This includes only those measures which directly benefit the poorest countries, regions or populations. Needless to say, projects not specifically relating to them – whether development cooperation activities in the field or measures aimed at achieving a better balance in world economic relations – often favourably affect the poorest by indirectly improving the conditions in which they live.

Priority sectors

These are enumerated in Article 5 of the Act concerning International Cooperation for Development and Humanitarian Aid:

- a) the development of rural areas;
- b) improvement of nutrition, in particular by agricultural production for local consumption;
- c) the promotion of crafts and small local industries;
- d) job creation;
- e) the attainment and maintenance of ecological and demographic balance.

The numerous examples contained in the «Message»* (particularly its annex) illustrate how Switzerland is acting in these priority sectors. They also throw light on the relations between these sectors and show how necessary it is, in every case, to be both flexible and persevering.

Collaboration with international and private organizations

In the period 1977–1978 expenditure on technical cooperation and financial aid, taken together, will be divided at the rate of approximately 62 per cent for bilateral and approximately 38 per cent for multilateral measures.

This affirmation of the priority of bilateral over multilateral action in no way means, however, that the Federal Council intends to discontinue its contribution to multilateral cooperation. In fact, it seems probable that – in the international negotiations on the restructuring of international economic relations – even greater importance will be attached to multilateral aid.

Under the heading of multilateral cooperation the «Message» proposes – parallel to the block credit – the granting of contributions for

the replenishment of the African and Asian Development Funds, which make loans on very favourable terms to the poorest countries for the carrying out of specific projects.

As to the private Swiss organizations, the Federal Council is prepared to increase its collaboration with them still further. During the last few years the Delegate for Technical Cooperation has regularly devoted 12 to 20 per cent of the means at his disposal to projects of private organizations or to projects being carried out by them on his behalf. Of the industrialized countries, Switzerland is the one which devotes the biggest part of its public aid to development to the projects of private aid organizations.

Conclusions

Cooperation «in the field» – the carrying out of projects – can give a decisive impetus to the development process inside the third-world countries themselves. At the level of relations between states, cooperation for development acts as a corrective mechanism aimed at reducing the imbalances of the international economic system. It is thus an essential complement to the third world's own efforts.

All long-term schemes require, if they are to be successful, continuity and flexibility. In the matter of development, that which does not advance regresses, that which does not adapt comes to grief. Built up systematically over about 15 years, and pursued without interruption, the Swiss contribution to international cooperation for development must – to preserve its chances of success – have as its keynote progress with continuity.

* The «Message» concerning the continuation of technical cooperation with – and financial aid to – the developing countries can be obtained from Le Délégué à la Coopération technique, Service de l'information, DPF, CH-3003 Berne.