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Ten years of Swiss UN membership

Switzerland became the 190th member of the UN when it joined 10 years ago. It was the first and only nation to decide its accession by referendum.

Switzerland and the UN share the same values and objectives – promoting peace, improving human rights, encouraging sustainable development and providing humanitarian aid for the victims of wars and natural disasters. This direct-democratic basis and the shared values give Switzerland's commitment to the UN a high degree of legitimacy. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visited Berne last September to mark the anniversary and to thank Switzerland for its commitment in a speech to the United Federal Assembly.

SWITZERLAND'S UN MEMBERSHIP IN FIGURES

Providing 1.13 % of the UN's budget (mandatory contributions), Switzerland is the 16th biggest contributor to the UN. Switzerland's regular mandatory contributions to the UN's main bodies stood at 147.4 million Swiss francs in 2010 (2011: 130.4 million), which, for example, include contributions to the peace missions and war crimes tribunals. There are further mandatory contributions to multilateral funds and special organisations, such as the WHO, FAO and ILO, as well as voluntary contributions (e.g. for food aid). Even prior to its UN accession, Switzerland had made contributions of around 500 million Swiss francs to the UN system.

Switzerland provides 25 military personnel and police officers for UN peace-keeping missions (Lebanon, DRC, Burundi, South Sudan), putting it in 99th place among donor countries. Over 230 additional Swiss military personnel are deployed in further peace-keeping missions (Kosovo, Bosnia, Korea). More than 1,500 Swiss citizens work for the United Nations, around 70 of whom hold directorial positions.

Geneva is the most important seat of the United Nations after New York and is home to 242 missions, representations and permanent delegations, 33 international organisations, including 7 UN special organisations, and no fewer than 250 international non-governmental organisations. In terms of the number of international conferences and meetings, Geneva is ahead of New York, hosting 2,700 meetings a year on average.

"ABC SWITZERLAND UN" BROCHURE

The FDFA has published an "ABC Switzerland UN" brochure to mark the UN anniversary. This new publication explains how Switzerland is implementing its commitment to the global organisation, the objectives it is pursuing and the specific spheres in which it is active.

Further information and documents can be found in the online dossier "Ten Years of Swiss Membership in the UN" at www.eda.admin.ch

To order the "ABC Switzerland UN" brochure, please contact: FDFA Information, Tel. +41 (0)31 322 31 53
E-mail: publikationen@eda.admin.ch

With 193 member states, the UN is the most important international organisation in the world. The wheels of the United Nations often turn slowly as the search for consensus among the various states presents major challenges, but the international community cannot survive in an increasingly interconnected world without exchange, coordination and decision-making mechanisms. In other words, if the UN did not exist, it would have to be created. Or, as former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld put it, "the United Nations was created not to lead mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell".

Switzerland, which is recognised as a proactive, assertive and conscientious team player in the international community, has made its mark over the past ten years with innovative ideas and clear convictions. It often builds bridges between the major regional blocs in negotiations. Particularly

worthy note are the establishment of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and an ombudsman's office for sanctions policy, which were largely the result of Swiss endeavour. The masterful presidency of the UN General Assembly in 2011 by former Federal Councillor Joseph Deiss is still fresh in the memory. Switzerland has received recognition for its efforts in making the structure of the Security Council more democratic and restricting the right of veto for the most serious infringements of human rights. Switzerland is seeking a seat on the UN's most powerful body – the Security Council – for 2023/24.

New: Itineris

When travelling abroad, Swiss citizens can now register on an online platform, whether they live in Switzerland or abroad. This makes it easier for them to be contacted in emergency or crisis situations.

The FDFA activated the new electronic online platform "itineris" in June 2012 as part of the ongoing expansion of consular services. Travellers of Swiss nationality as well as their family members can enter personal details and information about forthcoming journeys – holidays, business trips or short breaks abroad, etc. – online at www.eda.admin.ch/itineris. In the event of crisis situations arising, this tool provides the FDFA with an overview of Swiss citizens staying in a region affected and enables it to contact them directly.

Registration with "itineris" is voluntary and the data entered, which the FDFA only accesses in the event of a crisis, is treated confidentially. By entering their data under password protection, travellers agree to allow the FDFA to access it within the scope of its crisis management duties. All data on the journey is automatically deleted 30 days after returning to Switzerland or to the country of residence. Basic personal information – surname, first name and e-mail address – is stored in "itineris" for two years in order to facilitate entries for other journeys within this period.

Even if travel details are entered online with "itineris", you still need to make proper preparations for your trip, which include consulting the FDFA's travel advice (www.



itineris

Online-Registrierung für Schweizerinnen und Schweizer auf Auslandsreisen
Inscription en ligne pour les Suisses voyageant à l'étranger
Registrazioni online per Svizzeri in viaggio all'estero
Online registration for Swiss citizens travelling abroad

eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise). This provides valuable information on the situation at your destination and corresponding recommendations for your journey and stay abroad. It is also worth checking your insurance status – an insurance policy should ideally contain details of insurance coverage in the event of travel cancellation, route changes, theft and accident, etc.

If you intend to remain abroad for a relatively long period or for over a year or you plan to settle abroad, please contact the Swiss representation responsible for your destination country in order to register there as a Swiss abroad.

Important information

The FDFA's Consular Directorate wishes to make all Swiss citizens abroad aware that Swiss passports issued in 2003 will expire next year (2013). Renew your Swiss passport as early as possible at the Swiss representation (embassy or consulate general) responsible for you. The biometric data required can be recorded at any appropriately equipped representation or at any passport office in Switzerland within six months of your passport application.

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Important notice

Please do not forget to notify the embassy or consulate general responsible for you of your valid e-mail address and your mobile phone number.

Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your representation, etc.) The latest "Swiss Review" and recent issues can be read and/or printed out at any time via the Review link on the websites of the Swiss representations abroad or directly at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" is sent to all Swiss citizens abroad registered with an embassy or consulate general free of charge either in printed format or electronically (via e-mail and as an iPad app).



Helpline number from Switzerland:

0800 24-7-365

Helpline number from abroad:

+41 800 24-7-365

E-mail: helpline@eda.admin.ch

Skype: helpline-eda

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The Federal Council has decided to put the following proposals to the vote on 3 March 2013:

- Federal resolution of 15 June 2012 on family policy;
- Popular initiative of 26 February 2008 "against fat-cat bonuses";
- Amendment of 15 June 2012 to the federal law on spatial planning.

Forthcoming referendum dates: 9 June 2013, 22 September 2013 and 24 November 2013

POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press, the following federal popular initiatives had been launched since the publication of the last edition of "Swiss Review" (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- "Für eine vernünftige Finanzierung der Gesundheitskosten" (For reasonable financing of healthcare costs) (28.02.2014)
- "Für eine sichere und wirtschaftliche Stromversorgung" (Stromeffizienz-Initiative) (For safe and cost-effective energy supply – (energy efficiency initiative)) (28.02.2014)
- "Keine Spekulation mit Nahrungsmitteln" (No food speculation) (25.03.2014)

The complete list can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website at www.bk.admin.ch under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

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