



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION STRATEGY 2025–2028

FOREIGN POLICY
STRATEGY
2024–2027

FOREIGN
ECONOMIC
POLICY
STRATEGY



INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION
STRATEGY
2025–2028

Foreword

The world seems to have come apart at the seams. Wars, power shifts, economic pressure and the climate crisis impact our everyday lives. Following the euphoria of globalisation, new geopolitical spheres of influence are emerging. Democracy and classic multilateralism seem worn out. The international order has become fragile. Many people are feeling increasingly uncertain.

In such a situation, it is understandable that states attach more importance to security and defence. But security alone is not enough. Those counting on isolationism have a skewed view of the reality of our times. Poverty, violence, ecocide and the disregard for basic rights cannot be permanently curbed militarily or through border protection.

International cooperation could not stop these developments – and yet it remains an investment in our common future. Humanitarian aid and peacebuilding are needed now more than ever. And development cooperation is always looking for new ways to enable sustainable human and economic development. In doing so, it also serves foreign economic policy objectives, particularly in opening new markets and supporting a global trading system,

Switzerland has always worked towards a more peaceful, just and sustainable world – with a sense of proportion, expertise and clear priorities. The strategy for 2025–28 shows how we can stay on course even in a complex environment: with focus, flexibility and responsibility.

This brochure provides insight into our principles, objectives and tools. It shows how Switzerland assumes global responsibility – with conviction, but without self-deception.

The brochure is based on the International Cooperation Strategy 2025–28, adopted by the Federal Council in May 2024. Since then, an additional loan to support Ukraine and parliamentary budget cuts have led to adjustments. These are noted in the text and explained in a supplementary report.

The strategy is shaped by the war in Ukraine. At the same time, engagement in other regions remains key – out of humanitarian responsibility and to maintain Switzerland's credibility.

In view of growing emergencies, the proportion of humanitarian aid was increased. CHF 1.5 billion was earmarked for Ukraine and the surrounding region, CHF 500 million of which were allocated to reconstruction projects involving the Swiss private sector. At the same time, the SDC will finish phasing out its bilateral cooperation with Albania, Bangladesh and Zambia and its contributions to two multilateral organisations by 2028. SECO is also reducing its activities



outside the priority countries, particularly in vocational training and water management.

International cooperation is an expression of global responsibility and serves the values that Switzerland stands for: the rule of law, the market economy, democracy, human rights, solidarity and international humanitarian law. It contributes to stability in the world – and therefore also to the security and independence of our country.

Ignazio Cassis
Federal Councillor,
Head of the Federal
Department of
Foreign Affairs

Guy Parmelin
Federal Councillor,
Head of the Federal
Department of
Economic Affairs,
Education and Research

Table of contents

1	Background	5
1.1	International cooperation in Switzerland's interests	5
1.2	Progress made through international cooperation	6
1.3	Review of the 2021–24 strategy period	10
1.4	International cooperation between states remains relevant	11
2	Consultation procedure	12
2.1	Draft submitted for consultation	12
2.2	Overview of the results of the consultation procedure	12
2.3	Assessment of the consultation procedure results	13
3	Content of the IC Strategy	14
3.1	Federal Council proposal	14
3.2	Policy coherence	14
3.3	Strategic orientation	15
4	Implementation of the IC Strategy	29
4.1	Three responsible administrative units	29
4.2	Instruments	30
4.3	Modes of implementation and cooperation with actors outside the Federal Administration	34
4.4	Follow-up, evaluation and accountability	37
4.5	Finances	38
4.6	Impact on the federal government	40
Annexes		42
	List of abbreviations	57
	Glossary	58

1 Background

1.1 International cooperation in Switzerland's interests

1.1.1 Poverty reduction and sustainable development, a constitutional mandate

Switzerland's international cooperation (IC) is based on the Federal Constitution, which states that Switzerland shall promote the common welfare and sustainable development and that it is committed to the long-term preservation of natural resources and to a just and peaceful international order.¹

In its international relations, the Confederation "shall ensure that the independence of Switzerland and its welfare is safeguarded; it shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources."² International cooperation is also meant to contribute to foreign economic policy.³ In this respect, it is guided by Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and the values of responsibility, equality of opportunity and openness towards the world.

International cooperation aims to reduce poverty and promote the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social. To this end, it acts in line with the UN's 2030 Agenda⁴ and contributes to the implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs)*.

International cooperation is also an expression of "the solidarity that is one of the principles governing Switzerland's relations with the international community and [reflects] the interdependence that exists between the various parts of the world. It [is based] on mutual respect for the rights and interests of partners."⁵

The aims of international cooperation are set out in articles 5 and 7 of the Federal Act of 19 March 1976⁶ on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (the 'IDC-HA Act') and in article 2 of the Federal Act of 19 December 2003⁷ on Measures pertaining to Civil Peace

Support and the Promotion of Human Rights (the 'Peace Support Act').

Art. 5 IDC-HA Act

1 Development cooperation supports the efforts of developing countries to improve the living standards of their populations. It aims to equip these countries with the means to ensure their own development. In the long term, it works towards creating a more balanced international community.

2 It primarily supports the efforts of the poorest developing countries, regions and population groups. In particular, it helps to:

- a) promote rural development;*
- b) improve nutrition, in particular through subsistence crops for local consumption;*
- c) promote craftsmanship and small local industry;*
- d) create jobs;*
- e) create and maintain an ecological and demographic balance.*

Art. 7 IDC-HA Act

The goal of humanitarian aid is to save lives and alleviate suffering through prevention and emergency relief measures; it is intended in particular for populations afflicted by natural disasters or armed conflicts.

Art. 2 Peace Support Act

Through the foreign policy measures provided for in Article 3 the Confederation aims to:

- a) help prevent, alleviate or resolve armed conflicts, in particular by building trust, engaging in mediation and implementing peacebuilding measures at the end of hostilities and by promoting international humanitarian law;*
- b) help strengthen human rights by promoting the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of individuals or groups of individuals;*
- c) promote democratic processes.*

¹ SR 101, Art. 2

² SR 101, Art. 54 para. 2

³ SR 101, Art. 101 para. 1

⁴ The terms marked with an asterisk are explained in a glossary on the FDFA website: www.fdfa.admin.ch > Foreign Policy > Strategies and key aspects > Glossary.

⁵ SR 974.0, Art. 2

⁶ SR 974.0

⁷ SR 193.9

1.1.2 Long-term investments in Switzerland's security, independence and prosperity

The growing number of crises and the calling into question of the international legal regime have a direct impact on Switzerland's security and independence in the medium to long term. Switzerland is committed to respecting and strengthening international law and human rights, and advocates for a strong and effective multilateral system. International cooperation promotes peace and security, and creates opportunities for local populations. In 2023, 76% of the respondents in ETH Zurich's annual study on security were in favour of Switzerland stepping up its conflict mediation activities, while 58% found that it should provide more 'development aid'.⁸ However, no questions were asked about financing.

An open and highly globalised economy is a key factor for Switzerland when it comes to generating prosperity through exports. International cooperation helps develop new markets for Swiss businesses by contributing to income growth and favourable framework conditions in developing countries*.

International cooperation strengthens Switzerland's standing abroad and contributes to its good reputation as a committed, innovative and supportive partner with a long democratic and humanitarian tradition. This heightens Switzerland's influence on the international stage, including in multilateral bodies.

1.1.3 Instrument for tackling current challenges

International cooperation is one of the foreign policy instruments that enable Switzerland to play a part in tackling global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, migration and conflicts. It promotes the values for which Switzerland is known: the rule of law* and democracy, a market economy, human rights, gender equality, dialogue, solidarity, the integration of minorities, international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the frame of reference for promoting sustainability at the international level. With its 17 SDGs, in particular Goal 1: Eradicating extreme poverty* by 2030, and its efforts to ensure that no one will be left behind, the 2030 Agenda is applicable to all countries. It was on this basis that the Federal Council confirmed the 2030 Swiss Sustainable Development Strategy⁹ and action plan in 2021. As well as supporting developing countries in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda, international cooperation also helps them in the adoption of reforms designed to enable them to work alongside Switzerland in tackling global challenges.

1.2 Progress made through international cooperation

1.2.1 An engagement that pays off in the long term ...

Humanity has achieved unprecedented progress in terms of prosperity, health, security and quality of life over the past 50 years. Thirty years ago, 35% of the world's population (1.8 billion people) lived in extreme poverty. By 2019, that figure had fallen to 8.4% (648 million).¹⁰ Between 2012 and 2017, the poorest 40% of the population in 53 developing countries experienced income growth higher than the national average.¹¹ In 2001, 64 countries were classified as low-income countries. By 2023, there were only 28.¹² The infant mortality rate has dropped by more than half since 1990,¹³ while the universal health coverage index has climbed from 45 in 2000 to 67 in 2019.¹⁴ Switzerland's international cooperation has contributed to these successes.

8 www.css.ethz.ch > Sicherheit 2024: Aussen-, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungspolitische Meinungsbildung im Trend (de)

9 www.are.admin.ch > 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy

10 www.worldbank.org > World Data Lab 2019

11 www.worldbank.org > Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022: Correcting Course

12 www.worldbank.org > Global Economic Prospects June 2019 and June 2023

13 www.who.int > Child mortality and causes of death

14 www.eda.admin.ch > Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27

Figure1: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN)



Tanzania: four decades of partnership and substantial progress

The United Republic of Tanzania has been one of Swiss IC's priority countries since 1981. Since then, the country has made substantial progress, even though the population has increased from 26 million to 61.7 million within a span of 30 years. Between 1990 and 2021, the human development index rose from low [0.371] to middle [0.550] while the poverty rate dropped from 69.3% in 1991 to 44.0% in 2018. GDP per capita rose from USD 167 to USD 1,099 over the same period. According to the World Bank, Tanzania belongs to the category of lower middle-income countries since 2020.

Switzerland has helped Tanzania on its path to progress in several ways. Switzerland supported road infrastructure projects until the late 1990s, enhancing economic growth and rural accessibility. From the 2000s, Swiss IC shifted to providing technical and financial assistance for malaria control efforts, which has helped eliminate malaria in certain regions and contributed to reducing under-five child mortality rates by over 50% between 2005 and 2016.

As of 2023, 63% of the Tanzanian population was under 24 years old. This is why Switzerland has prioritised improving youth employment opportunities together with its private and public partners.*

1.2.2 ... but which has suffered setbacks in recent years

The world has experienced numerous crises since the strategy for the 2021–24 period was adopted in 2020, with the war in Ukraine heralding a turning point in geopolitics and security policy. However, Russia's war of aggression is not the only factor contributing to the deteriorating situation in Switzerland's regional context. A whole series of renewed escalations of violence have recently been reported at the margins of Europe, and particularly to its immediate east and south. The picture that emerges is one of an arc of crises stretching from Eurasia to the Middle East, the Sahel and Sudan.¹⁵

These crises have economic, environmental and social impacts, as was the case with the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategic competition between the major powers has become more accentuated, and the influence of autocratic states is growing. In many countries, civil society* is encountering state repression when conducting its activities. Competing visions of the international order accompanied by geopolitical and geoeconomic fragmentation will shape the international framework in the long term. Moreover, the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental pollution is accelerating.

As a result, highly promising progress made in relation to sustainable development has been halted or reversed, especially in the IC Strategy's priority regions. According to the 2023 progress report on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals,¹⁶ in the space of two years, the COVID-19 pandemic succeeded in wiping out the development progress made in the previous five years. Only 12% of the goals are on track, and almost one-third have either seen no movement or regressed below the 2015 baseline.

Due to a multitude of crises, an estimated 363 million people in 69 countries were dependent on humanitarian aid in 2023, compared with 132 million in 2019.¹⁷ The number of displaced people reached 108 million in 2022.¹⁸ According to estimates, around 70% of children in low- and middle-income countries are unable to read and understand a simple text at age 10. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, that figure stood at 57%.¹⁹ Hunger already affects one-tenth of the world's population, and one-third suffer from malnutrition. That includes being overweight or obese, which affects around 40% of adults and 20% of children worldwide.²⁰ By 2030, some 700 million people around the globe could be forcibly displaced due to extreme water shortages.²¹

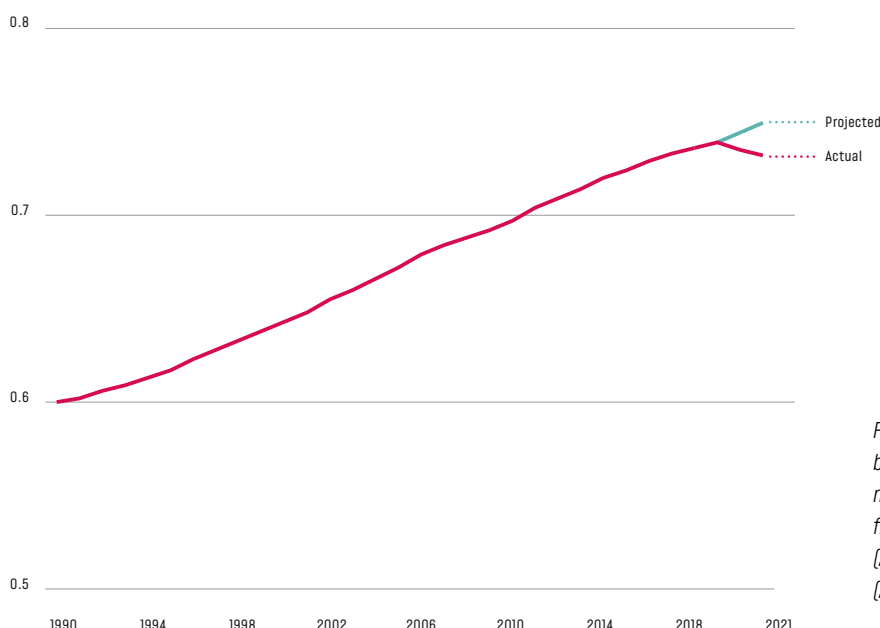


Figure 2: Changes in the Human Development Index between 1990 and 2021. Source: Human Development Report Office calculations, based on data from Barro and Lee (2018), IMF (2021/2022), UNDESA (2022), UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2022), UNSD (2022) and World Bank (2022)

15 www.eda.admin.ch > Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27

16 www.sdg.un.org > Global Sustainable Development Report 2023

17 www.unocha.org > Global Humanitarian Overview 2023

18 www.unhcr.org > Rapport annuel du HCR sur les tendances mondiales 2022 (fr)

19 www.worldbank.org > The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update

20 www.who.int > Obesity and overweight

21 www.sdg6data.org > Sustainable Development Goal 6 on water and sanitation

The risk of deteriorating economic prospects continues to grow.²² Many countries' debt levels have risen sharply. Population growth requires the least developed countries to make significant investments in infrastructure, energy, education and health. The number of countries at risk of debt distress or already unable to service their debt has doubled from 13 to 26 in the space of 7 years.²³

Human-made climate change is already causing many extreme weather and climate-related phenomena around the world with extremely adverse impacts, including damage and losses for both humans and nature.²⁴ Biodiversity is declining at a faster rate than ever before.²⁵ The World Bank estimates that if no specific climate change mitigation and development action is taken, between 32 million and 132 million people could fall into extreme poverty by 2030 and up to 216 million people could become internally displaced by 2050.²⁶

The Democracy Index saw a sharp fall in 2023 compared with 2010.²⁷ Democratic backsliding and authoritarian tendencies are undermining not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural ones. The erosion of these rights mainly affects women and minorities. GDP would rise by 35% on average if all women were able to participate in the labour market.²⁸ Women and girls are hit disproportionately hard by the adverse effects of global challenges. They are 14 times less likely to survive in times of crisis and are at a higher risk of injury through being denied access to information, resources and education.²⁹ In humanitarian contexts, gender-based violence affects up to 70% of women and girls.³⁰ There are 126 million more women than men suffering from hunger, and the gap is growing ever wider.³¹

22 www.imf.org > World Economic Outlook, Update July 2023

23 www.imf.org > IMF Blog: Restructuring Debt of Poorer Nations Requires More Efficient Coordination

24 www.ipcc.ch > AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023

25 www.ipbes.ch > Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

26 www.worldbank.org > Groundswell: Preparing for Internal Climate Migration

27 www.eiu.com > Democracy Index 2022

28 www.imf.org > IMF Blog: Christine Lagarde, Jonathan D. Ostry: Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: Even Greater than You Thought

29 www.undp.org > Blog: Asako Okai: Women are hit hardest in disasters, so why are responses too often gender-blind

30 2021.gho.unocha.org > Gender and gender-based violence

31 www.unwomen.org > Global Gendered Impacts of Ukraine Crisis

1.3 Review of the 2021–24 strategy period

The strategy for 2025–28 builds on the insights from the previous strategy period. A detailed review can be found in the Accountability report on Switzerland's IC Strategy 2021–24.³² This chapter highlights some of the key elements.

Results

The following are examples of outcomes achieved through the respective bilateral and global programmes in the areas of humanitarian aid, development cooperation, economic development cooperation and measures to promote peace.

From 2020 to 2022, 59% of spending (CHF 3.7 billion) was earmarked for projects which included gender equality, and 4% of all projects (CHF 237 million) made promoting gender equality their main objective.

Additional results were achieved thanks to the core contributions granted under Switzerland's international cooperation to multilateral organisations and Swiss NGOs.

Even though the results are impressive, implementing programmes in complex contexts presents challenges and the outcomes are influenced by factors which are beyond the scope and control of international cooperation.

Engagement with the private sector*, digitalisation, multilateral cooperation and coherence between humanitarian aid and development cooperation were further IC priorities over the 2021–24 period. The progress made and challenges faced are presented in greater detail in the accountability report.



Figure 3: Results achieved in the 2020–22 period (FDFA)

³² www.eda.admin.ch > Accountability report on Switzerland's IC Strategy 2021–24

Lessons learnt

Switzerland's international cooperation faced considerable challenges during the 2021–24 period. The context of the strategy for 2021–24 and its implementation yielded the following insights:

Strategic framework is relevant: The guidelines set out in the IC Strategy 2021–24, i.e. the development objectives, thematic priorities and geographic focus areas, have proven fit for purpose in terms of fulfilling the given mandate. Climate change remains a thematic priority. Crises have underlined the importance of economic resilience. Systematic promotion of the private sector and good economic framework conditions in developing countries are becoming increasingly important. Engagement with the private sector and the use of new technologies are to be continued and stepped up. Given the context, greater attention will be paid to some of the challenges in the 2025–28 period. This applies to health, food security and promoting democracy, for example.

Agility is crucial: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, various coups d'état, rising national debt, the food crisis and the increased frequency of natural disasters call for adjustments to engagement and action. In view of the growing number of crises, the strength of Switzerland's international cooperation lies in maintaining its flexibility and adapting its ways of working to a fast-changing context. The strategy sets the strategic direction while at the same time leaving space for the flexibility that is required. To this end, an institutional learning process in 2022 led to an internal reorganisation at the SDC ('Fit for Purpose') in order to align humanitarian aid and development cooperation more closely (nexus* approach)

Growing humanitarian need: The number of people in urgent need of humanitarian aid has risen considerably since 2019 (section 1.2.2). This prompted the Federal Council to request several supplementary credits between 2021 and 2024, especially in connection with the situations in Afghanistan, Ukraine and the Middle East. The gradual increase in the commitment appropriation for humanitarian aid from 20 to 25% of the total budget for the 2025–28 period is justified given the growing medium-term needs.

Think global, act local: Tackling global crises calls for shared, internationally coordinated solutions. However, concrete action must respond as closely as possible to the needs of citizens and be carried out by local actors. Coordination between IC actors and partnerships with governments, the private sector and civil society on the ground are key to local ownership and sustainability in development projects.

1.4 International cooperation between states remains relevant

The long-term aim of official development assistance (ODA)* is to create a world in which it is no longer needed. The approaches adopted by international cooperation and the respective roles played by government, the private sector and civil society in eradicating poverty and in sustainable development are repeatedly the subject of discussions.

In many developing countries, foreign direct investment, the mobilisation of domestic resources and remittances from migrants working abroad far outstrip ODA funds. Nevertheless, public financing remains vital to enabling dialogue with state-run institutions in developing countries, improving the overall conditions and developing international standards. In addition, international cooperation promotes social inclusion, the principle of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, and supports international efforts to respond to crises and natural disasters.

In the context of global crises, international cooperation faces three challenges: first, it is increasingly called upon to finance measures that ensure the sustainability of global public goods (e.g. biodiversity, health and climate), which exceeds both its mandate and capacities. The investment required to achieve the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals is estimated at 4% of global GDP. Second, international cooperation must find answers to acute crises. This comes sometimes at the expense of long-term action to address their structural causes. Third, the increasing number of development actors means a greater need for coordination and leads to rising costs. International cooperation cannot provide for the required social services, which concern all actors in our society.

2 Consultation procedure

2.1 Draft submitted for consultation

To enable public debate on the strategic direction of international cooperation, the FDFA and the EAER conducted a public consultation procedure on the IC Strategy 2025–28.³³ The consultation period ran from 20 June 2023 to 20 September 2023.

The draft put out to consultation³⁴ included four commitment appropriations totalling CHF 11.45 billion. The strategy includes a proposed amount of CHF 1.5 billion for Ukraine and the region. Respondents were asked for their views on three questions relating to the objectives, the geographic focus and the proposed allocation of funds for Ukraine.

2.2 Overview of the results of the consultation procedure

A total of 219 responses were received. 23 from cantons, 6 from political parties represented in the Federal Assembly and 1 from the youth wing of a party, 11 from nationwide business federations, professional associations and organisations, 172 from other interested groups and organisations, and 6 from individuals. The response is comparable with that of four years ago when 249 views were submitted. The draft received broad support. Criticism was directed at the financial framework, in particular the funds allocated for Ukraine.

On the first question regarding the IC objectives, only 2% of respondents took the view that the proposed objectives were not or only slightly relevant. The remainder either welcomed them (67%), or did not give a clear answer (32%). More precise details were requested in relation to development objectives 3 'Climate and environment' and 4 'Peace and governance' in particular. The specific objectives were generally welcomed. One-quarter of participants emphasised the importance of health and 22% the importance of participation rights and gender equality, although there were calls for more detailed explanations and/or for these topics to be given greater weighting. Respondents also found the promotion of local SMEs (18%), combating hunger (16%) and migration (15%) to be important specific objectives.

The second question concerned the geographic focus. It gained broad approval. The geographic focus was considered relevant by 45% of participants, while 10% wished for a more focused approach. The question was not answered clearly by 45%. In the opinion of 41%, international cooperation should concentrate more on the least developed countries (LDCs).

In relation to the proposed allocation of funds for Ukraine, 72% of respondents stated that they considered support for Ukraine to be important, with 35% of them believing that this support would require more than the planned amount. The proposed amount gained the backing of 10%. It was rejected by 45%, while another 45% failed to answer the question clearly. 75% of the participants expressed the view that assistance for Ukraine should not come at the expense of other regions and priorities. And 66% wanted to see funding for aid to Ukraine coming from outside international cooperation. Lastly, 40% of those taking part recommended creating a separate legal basis for this.

Other topics frequently referred to were: the ODA ratio, i.e. official development assistance (ODA) as a share of gross national income (GNI), which 55% wanted to see increased; the financing of the proposed budget increase for humanitarian aid by means of supplementary credits (42%) to ensure it did not detract from development cooperation (46%); and more transparency in the way in which funds are allocated (45%). In the opinion of 25% of participants, the proposed contributions to international climate and biodiversity financing (CHF 400 million a year) should not be changed, although 33% did not think this amount was sufficient to meet Switzerland's international commitments. They argued in favour of funding coming from outside international cooperation (30%).

³³ This was an optional consultation in accordance with Article 3 para. 2 of the Federal Act of 18 March 2005 on the Consultation Procedure (SR 172.061).

³⁴ www.fedlex.admin.ch > Startseite > Vernehmlassungsverfahren > Abgeschlossen > 2023 > EDA > Strategie der internationalen Zusammenarbeit 2025–2028 (de)

2.3 Assessment of the consultation procedure results

The draft dispatch was amended to take account of the results of the consultation procedure and clarify certain aspects (e.g. the use of supplementary credits).

Health was set out more precisely as a specific goal in the chapter on IC **objectives** (section 3.3.2). The importance of education was emphasised. Compliance with social and environmental standards was also added in relation to economic development, along with the stance on fossil fuels and the protection of human rights defenders. The relationship to the 2030 Agenda and the role of civil society were strengthened.

As far as the **geographical focus** (section 3.3.3) is concerned, details were fleshed out regarding the latest developments in increasingly fragile contexts in which Switzerland's international cooperation is present. The way in which the countries are presented was reworked to create a clearer overview. The particular importance of the least developed countries and the engagement in Morocco are explained in the annex.

Many respondents called for the ODA ratio to be increased and for the **financing of assistance to Ukraine** to be sourced from outside international cooperation. However, the funds available to international cooperation must be viewed in the context of the federal budget as a whole. In view of the financial situation, the Federal Council therefore decided not to raise the amounts of the commitment appropriations in order to keep within the current financial plan.

With regard to the implementation arrangements (section 3.5), the chapter on new technologies was revised to give more weight to aspects of digitalisation. Engagement with the private sector was set out in more detail. The subsection on 'Monitoring, evaluation and accountability' (section 3.6.3) was fleshed out and an annex added to provide a better explanation of development-related impact measurement. Lastly, more information was given as to how policy coherence for sustainable development can be ensured (section 3.2). In response to demands for greater transparency with regard to the allocation of funds, detailed **financial notes were added** to the draft (annex 3).

3 Content of the IC Strategy

3.1 Federal Council proposal and decision of the Parliament

The Federal Council requested five commitment appropriations³⁵ totalling CHF 11.27 billion for the continuation of international cooperation during the 2025–28 period.

This amount is slightly lower than that proposed during the consultation procedure (CHF 11.45 billion): the appropriation intended as a contribution to the ICRC Foundation's capital was cancelled on the organisation's own recommendation. The Foundation informed its public and private donors in 2023 that, in the wake of the financial crisis, it was shelving its project to raise additional capital and concentrating instead on stabilising its finances. On top of this, adjustments were made for inflation and an amount of CHF 30 million was transferred from the DDPS to the commitment appropriation for humanitarian aid and to peace promotion and human rights for the 2025–27 period, in line with the Federal Council decree of 29 September 2023.

During Parliament's deliberations on the IC Strategy 2025–28, both chambers decided to cut the commitment appropriation for development cooperation by CHF 151 million, thus reducing the overall total of the five commitment appropriations to CHF 11.12 billion. They also approved savings of CHF 110 million on international cooperation in the 2025 budget. And the financial plan for 2026–28 includes further reductions to international cooperation funding of CHF 321 million. Moreover, the cutbacks being proposed to federal policy research in the area of development cooperation will also affect international cooperation.³⁶

3.2 Policy coherence

The IC Strategy 2025–28 is aligned with the guidelines and objectives set out in the legislative programme for the 2023–27 period. In particular, it ensures that Switzerland advocates for peace, acts coherently at the international level (objectives 14–20), protects the climate and carefully manages natural resources (objectives 21 and 25). It helps Switzerland to secure its long-term prosperity and to seize the opportunities presented by digitalisation (objectives 1, 3, 5 and 8). In the interests of coherence, the IC Strategy is embedded within the Federal Council's cascading foreign policy strategy. The objectives (section 3.3.2) and instruments (section 4.2) of international cooperation are based on the priorities set in the foreign policy strategy³⁷, the foreign economic policy strategy³⁸ and the 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy (2030 SDS)³⁹.

It is important for Switzerland to act coherently in its international relations. Some of the Confederation's sectoral policies have a significant impact on developing countries. The Federal Council ensures that policies are coordinated with the aim of minimising negative interference and enhancing the impact of its action. In doing so, it focuses on the following areas: financial and tax systems, trade, investment and corporate responsibility, and migration, the environment, climate and health. The Federal Council thus takes care to ensure that its decisions are as coherent as possible. The departments in charge of implementing the IC Strategy (the FDFA through the SDC and STS, and the EAER through SECO) liaise to ensure full cooperation with each other and with the offices in charge of sectoral policy.

³⁵ After the adoption of the Dispatch on the International Cooperation Strategy 2025–28 the Federal Council asked Parliament to approve a separate commitment appropriation of CHF 1.5 billion for support to Ukraine and the region; these funds were to be offset against the remaining commitment appropriations [see Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28 ; www.sdc.fdca.admin.ch > The SDC > What does the SDC do? > Switzerland's international cooperation strategy 2025–2028.]

³⁶ The figure of CHF 321 million represents the cuts proposed in the financial plan for the 2026–28 period as they stood at the time the IC Strategy 2025–28 was adopted in December 2024 [see Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28] (de). The financial plan may change during the strategy period. The budget, which is updated annually, and the financial plan can be consulted [here](#).

³⁷ www.eda.admin.ch > Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27

³⁸ www.seco.admin.ch > Switzerland's Foreign Economic Policy

³⁹ www.are.admin.ch > 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy

3.3 Strategic orientation

In a volatile world, a consistent strategic direction is crucial. It is the compass that guides international cooperation activities. The strength of Switzerland's international cooperation lies in maintaining its flexibility and adapting its ways of working to a fast-changing context. Given the current geopolitical and financial uncertainties, adjustments may be made to the strategic direction and financial allocations (section 4.5.1).

3.3.1 Analysis criteria

The three criteria for the strategic direction laid down in the IC Strategy 2021–24 have proven their worth and continue to be applied in the 2025–28 period. The weighting of the criteria depends on the context and the nature of the instruments used.

Needs on the ground

The analysis of people's needs in developing countries takes account of the humanitarian situation, the level of poverty, countries' capacity to mobilise their own resources and the challenges in terms of sustainable development. It also takes into consideration the creation of decent jobs, the sustainable use and management of natural resources, access to high-quality basic services, good governance and respect for human rights.

Added value of Swiss IC

The added value of Switzerland's international cooperation compared with that of other actors is based on its specific expertise, recognised competence, capacity for innovation and experience in the relevant fields. If a partner country is open to reform and willing to cooperate with Switzerland in a specific area, this will generate better outcomes. These aspects are taken into account in the analysis. Alongside Switzerland's humanitarian tradition, democracy, federalism and lack of colonial territories in the past, its dual-track education system, and its role as host state, including International Geneva, also deliver added value.

Switzerland's long-term interests

Switzerland promotes peace, freedom, human rights, democracy, the protection of natural resources, prosperity, a just and rules-based international order, and sustainable development in all three dimensions: economic, environmental and social. International security and stability, including with regard to climate and migration challenges, are essential to Switzerland's prosperity.

In this demanding environment, Switzerland's international cooperation is guided by **five principles**: agility, efficiency, coherence, cooperation and accountability.

3.3.2 Objectives

Human development, sustainable economic development, climate and the environment, peace and governance: the four objectives defined in the 2021–24 strategy have proved their relevance in the face of current challenges and will continue to apply in the new strategy.

They are mutually reinforcing and interdependent. Thus, economic development serves human development and environmental protection, while safeguarding peace and the rule of law provides a framework for sustainable development.

Switzerland has formulated specific objectives for each of the four development objectives, which serve as a guide for determining its operational priorities. The specific objectives are interlinked: for example, measures to mitigate climate change, to combat hunger, to promote health and to encourage sustainable water management are all mutually dependent.

Both the development objectives and the specific objectives are subject to continuous monitoring, enabling the outcomes to be measured in the respective period (see section 4.4).

Switzerland promotes gender equality, good governance and respect for human rights in all its activities.

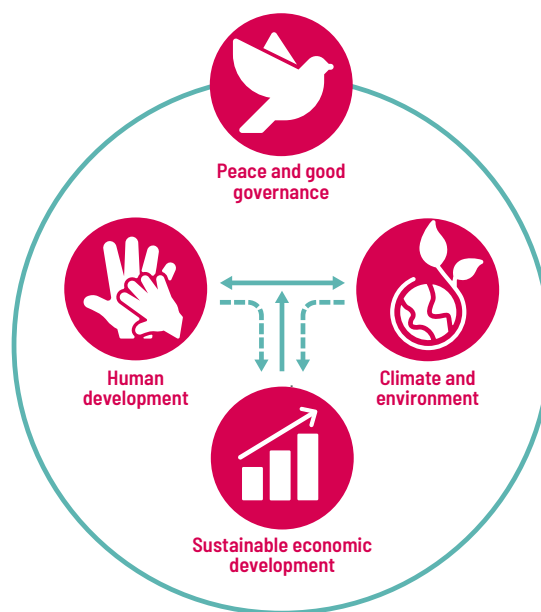


Figure 4:
Four development objectives (FDFA)



**Human development:
Saving lives, alleviating human
suffering and providing access
to high-quality basic services for
the most disadvantaged**

Basic services specifically include sanitation facilities, essential healthcare, access to education, and social security systems.⁴⁰ IC measures seek to improve the accessibility, quality and coverage of these services, regardless of whether they are provided by public or private sector actors. Improving services, such as those related to education and healthcare, creates the right conditions for people to access high-quality education and training, which in turn leads to sustainable jobs and enables them to play a more active role in public life.⁴¹

Education to improve integration into working life

In Benin, 51% of women and 34% of men have no formal education. Population growth and difficulty in accessing school facilities mean there is a need for more literacy programmes. In 2016, Switzerland launched a programme supporting the decentralised management of literacy (PAGEA), which is designed to enable women and young people who never went to school or were unable to complete their schooling to participate in basic vocational education and training. In 2023, 49,800 people, 63% of them women, attended literacy classes, equipping them to enter the world of work and giving them more autonomy in public life.

Often in times of crisis and conflict, these basic services are no longer guaranteed. Through its humanitarian aid efforts, Switzerland's international cooperation helps ensure that the basic needs of vulnerable individuals and population groups are covered. Switzerland's international cooperation also focuses on protecting the integrity of vulnerable persons, refugees and internally displaced persons; on providing support to victims of sexual or gender-based violence; and on enabling access to education in emergency situations.

International cooperation undertakes bilateral and multilateral initiatives to promote respect for and implementation of the principles of international humanitarian law in conflict zones, and to help protect civilian populations. For example, police officers and legal professionals are made available for peace missions. Switzerland also uses its international cooperation activities to call on the actors involved to respect humanitarian principles. The commitment appropriation for humanitarian aid will gradually increase from 20% of the total Swiss IC budget to 25% by 2028.

In light of the current context, the 2025–28 strategy focuses on two specific objectives in terms of human development:

Migration: International cooperation takes account of the opportunities and challenges presented by migration. On the positive side, money sent home to low- and middle-income countries by the migrant diaspora helps reach the SDGs: in 2022, these remittances totalled USD 626 billion.⁴² Conversely, irregular and forced migration have dramatic consequences for those affected. Since the 2021–24 period, the Federal Council has included migration in the IC Strategy as a transversal topic, thus responding to Parliament's calls to establish strategic links between policy areas. Especially in the current context, where the Swiss asylum system is impacted by significant challenges and high spending, it is important for part of international cooperation to directly address the migration challenges facing our country (reducing the causes of flight and irregular migration, and improving the protection of migrants and refugees).⁴³

In the short-term, international cooperation can improve the living conditions of displaced persons and the protection afforded to refugees in their initial host country. Its medium-term aim is to create prospects for migrants and refugees and to find solutions capable of integrating them in the partner countries. In the long-term, international cooperation tackles the root causes of irregular and forced migration. These include poverty, a lack of economic opportunities and insufficient access to basic services, poor governance, weak rule of law, armed conflict, systematic human rights violations and environmental disasters.

Health: In the short term, International cooperation invests in emergency relief during health crisis situations. In the medium term, it supports campaigns to promote public health and hygiene. It also helps to strengthen health systems so that they are able to prevent and respond to health crises and ensure access to high-quality healthcare and the right to health for

40 In its deliberations on the Dispatch on the IC Strategy 2025–28, Parliament asked the Federal Council to also take account of education and health in its use of the available funds and extended the health foreign policy 2019–24 for another period (see Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28).

41 As a result of the budget cuts made by Parliament, the FDFA decided to gradually withdraw from the field of basic education and to focus on education in emergencies and vocational education and training.

42 www.worldbank.org > Press release of 30 November 2022: Remittances Grow 5% in 2022, Despite Global Headwinds

43 The two chambers added the following paragraph to the federal decrees on economic cooperation and development cooperation: "The Federal Council will scale back the programmes in the priority countries for bilateral development cooperation if they are not sufficiently willing to accept the link between development cooperation and migration issues" (see Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28).

all. In the long term, it promotes the creation of living environments that enable people to remain in good health and prevent diseases such as zoonoses (One Health approach*). To this end, it focuses on health-relevant factors including education, air quality, nutrition, water and sanitary facilities. At the bilateral level, health is one of the IC priorities in 20 of the SDC's priority countries* and, depending on the context, covers issues related to prevention and access, public health, mental health and sexual and reproductive health. At the multilateral level, Switzerland supports the World Health Organization and specific funds such as the Global Fund for the Fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.⁴⁴ Together with the private sector, international cooperation is committed to the development of and access to innovative medical products and technologies, both at the global level and in the priority countries.

COVID-19 measures

Switzerland's international cooperation made CHF 400 million in funding available for COVID-19 measures worldwide through multilateral initiatives like ACT-A, the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (equitable access and availability in fragile contexts), and COVAX AMC, which secured the distribution of 1.8 billion vaccine doses to 87 low- and medium-income countries. Switzerland was involved in 14 shipments of urgently needed supplies to hospitals (mainly in Asia). In addition, it provided support to distance-learning projects for children and to measures benefiting workers in the informal sector. Fiscal, financial and monetary stabilisation programmes carried out by SECO helped strengthen local economies in the countries hit hardest by the health crisis (Peru, Tunisia and Albania). SIFEM made additional liquidity available to SMEs and invested in an African manufacturer of COVID-19 vaccines. The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) review of the COVID-19 measures in developing countries showed that the SDC's contributions to the management of the crisis caused by the pandemic were based on clear criteria and a thorough analysis of needs, Switzerland's comparative advantage and considerations of effectiveness and the cost-benefit ratio.



Sustainable economic development: Creating decent jobs through appropriate framework conditions, a dynamic local economy and the private sector

Switzerland supports developing countries in transitioning to a formal economy, developing the private sector, implementing structural changes at national, regional, and local level, and integrating into the global economy. International cooperation activities seek to help create decent jobs, make it easier for individuals and businesses to access markets, and open up economic opportunities. In this way, international cooperation promotes prosperity and inclusive economic growth in developing countries and helps their economies to diversify and build resilience, while contributing to the preservation of natural resources. These measures also benefit disadvantaged population groups.

In light of the current context, the 2025–28 strategy focuses on two specific objectives in terms of sustainable economic development:

Local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): International cooperation supports the private sector, especially SMEs in developing countries, and thus the creation of decent jobs. Employment and the formalisation of the economy are key factors in economic development and poverty reduction. International cooperation advocates for the systemic development of capital markets and SMEs' ability to access sustainable finance as a means of encouraging their financial inclusion and growth. This involves promoting financial instruments to mobilise private investment in promising companies and, in particular, investments that drive social and environmental progress (impact investing*). Local economies are enhanced by strengthening SMEs' value chains and facilitating their access to global markets. Awareness is also raised among SMEs of how they can generate revenue from and protect their intellectual property rights. Inspired by the Swiss system of vocational education and training, with its focus on developing skills, international cooperation promotes a form of vocational education and training that builds on high-quality basic education and meets the needs of the labour market by encouraging private sector-public education partnerships.⁴⁵ In its engagement with the private

⁴⁴ As a result of the budget cuts, the FDFA decided to discontinue the contributions to UNAIDS as of 2025 and to concentrate its support in this area on the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which is based in Geneva (see Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28).

⁴⁵ As a result of the reduced funding, SECO will discontinue its support for vocational education and training (see press release of 29 January 2025 "Development cooperation: FDFA and EAER implement Parliament's decisions"). The SDC will remain involved in this thematic area.

sector, international cooperation advocates for the adoption and implementation of international standards, and promotes good governance practices. These ensure environmental, economic and social sustainability as well as gender equality and respect for human rights.

Public institutions: International cooperation strengthens the public institutions that provide the framework for the economy. Responsible use of state resources, the fight against corruption, reliable economic and trade policies, and a favourable environment for high-quality investment are the means of achieving improvements in framework conditions. International cooperation contributes to responsible economic governance and to stable fiscal, financial and monetary policies. It makes it easier for its partner countries to do business by establishing modern, sustainable trading systems. It will also continue its long-standing debt management activities. Creating an efficient infrastructure that enables sustainable natural resource management with regard to water supply, wastewater, energy and public transport, alongside efficient and inclusive urban management, helps to establish good framework conditions.



***Climate and environment:
Guaranteeing environmentally friendly
development, resilient to climate
change and natural disasters, for the
benefit of the most disadvantaged***

Climate change and environmental degradation affect every part of the world. Within developing countries there are low-income economies and population groups that emit low amounts of carbon but rely on locally available natural resources for their livelihoods. These population groups are hit harder than most by the impacts of climate change⁴⁶, natural disasters and loss of biodiversity.⁴⁷ But there are also other middle-income economies and population groups in the process of industrialisation whose greenhouse gas emissions are soaring, with harmful effects on the climate.

In response to these challenges, Switzerland is adopting two approaches to action on climate change: adaptation and mitigation. First, it is strengthening developing countries' resilience through efficient adaptation mechanisms, such as the production of nutritious, drought-resistant plant species. Second, it is contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through climate protection measures, including low-carbon urban development and the transition to renewables. As a general rule, development cooperation does not provide financing for activities that promote fossil fuels.

International cooperation supports climate and environmental protection, and the sustainable use of natural resources. It is committed to risk reduction measures (e.g. crisis management structures and early warning systems) that protect populations and limit financial losses. It promotes the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystems (e.g. mountains, forests) and of the related functions and services (food, clean drinking water, clean air). These provide the basis for human well-being and the economy.

Through its work with governments and financial institutions and its support for international negotiations, international cooperation helps reduce the risks associated with disasters, desertification and biodiversity loss. This approach applies to all IC partners. Switzerland is also committed to ensuring that multilateral organisations integrate the objectives of the Paris Agreement⁴⁸ and the Convention on Biological Diversity⁴⁹ into all their activities.

In light of the current context, the 2025–28 strategy focuses on three specific objectives in relation to climate and the environment:

Combating hunger: Food aid and food programmes for children and people at risk are among the short-term objectives of Switzerland's humanitarian aid. In the medium-term, international cooperation aims to strengthen the resilience of farming families and the general population – along the food supply chain, from production to consumption – in line with agroecological principles, and to ensure they enjoy a healthy, nutritious, affordable and adequate diet. International cooperation also seeks to eradicate the structural reasons for malnutrition and supports the long-term transformation of food systems to make them fairer, more sustainable, inclusive and resilient, and more compatible with human health and the environment. This is put into practice in the context of bilateral and multilateral political dialogue, for example by promoting the right to food, creating incentives for SMEs and supporting agricultural research at public institutions. In the 2025–28 period, the SDC will step up its support for food systems at the multilateral level and in the relevant countries.

46 www.ipcc.ch > AR6 Synthesis Report: Climate Change 2023

47 www.ipbes.net > Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

48 www.unfccc.int > The Paris Agreement

49 www.cbd.int > Biodiversity convention

Food crisis

Since 2014, climate change and conflicts have been contributing to the increasingly precarious food situation in numerous regions. The COVID-19 pandemic and the explosion in the price of foodstuffs and fertilisers as a result of the war in Ukraine have further aggravated the situation. At the end of 2022, 49 million people in 49 countries faced acute hunger. In line with Switzerland's IC priorities, the SDC had increased its financial contributions in this area by 7% by 2022. In 2021 and 2022, CHF 715 million went towards food security, sustainable food systems and combating hunger. The World Food Programme received CHF 204.5 million, the rest was earmarked for humanitarian food aid provided through bilateral projects in the regions and countries hit hardest by the food crisis (Horn of Africa, Burkina Faso, Afghanistan and Laos).

Water: In the short to medium term, Switzerland wants to improve access to water and sanitation for particularly vulnerable groups. In the medium to long term, its aim is to promote the sustainable use and management of water resources across the entire water cycle. It champions the protection of water catchment areas and nature-based approaches to sustainable water use. Switzerland supports initiatives for improved water quality and a more efficient use of water resources, in particular through training, more suitable framework conditions and the strengthening of water supply and wastewater services by means of long-term regulation and financing involving the private sector.⁵⁰ International cooperation is committed to the right of access to clean drinking water. Water is also a cornerstone of peace promotion, especially through initiatives (e.g. the Blue Peace* initiative) based on the idea that better management of water resources across borders helps reduce the risk of conflict.

Energy transition: Switzerland focuses on access to affordable renewable energy and on energy efficiency, efficient resource use – including via the circular economy – green mobility and integrated urbanisation. In doing so, it adopts solutions designed to optimise industrial production, reduce the use of primary resources and encourage the sustainable use of natural resources. In addition, it promotes framework conditions and financing instruments (e.g. green bonds) to mobilise public and private sector investment in climate-relevant sectors. It also works to achieve the energy transition through the removal of fossil fuel subsidies, the levying of a carbon tax and electricity capacity building.



Peace and governance:
*Resolving conflicts, promoting
peace, democracy and the rule of law,
and upholding human rights*

To resolve conflicts and promote peace, Switzerland puts in place dialogue processes that aim to prevent armed conflict breaking out and to create the conditions for peace. To do so, it employs mediation, facilitation, expertise, and peace policy programmes. International cooperation works to achieve lasting peace, paying particular attention to inclusivity. It has specific expertise in dealing with the past and fighting impunity. It supports democratic institutions and processes, fosters the creation of framework conditions for free and peaceful elections, and promotes the rule of law and equal participation of women and men, minorities, and marginalised groups in political processes, so that no one is left behind.

⁵⁰ As a result of the reduced funding, SECO will discontinue its support in the thematic area of water management (see press release of 29 January 2025 "Development cooperation: FDFA and EAER implement Parliament's decisions").

Promoting peace in Colombia

As part of its long-standing engagement in Colombia, Switzerland contributes to an inclusive and lasting peace. It supports and promotes dialogue initiatives that work to mitigate the violence, especially against the civilian population, and to establish functioning conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms. Since the end of 2022, Switzerland has been a formal member of the group of states accompanying the peace process between the Colombian government and the guerilla group ELN. In relation to implementation of the peace agreement with the former FARC guerilla group, Switzerland is calling for citizens to be involved in the political processes and encouraging dialogue between local authorities and civil society. Switzerland is also contributing its expertise to the system established by the peace agreement for dealing with the past. This helps to address past crimes and hold the perpetrators accountable as well as contributing to reconciliation and the prevention of future violence.

At the same time, international cooperation seeks to address the structural causes of conflicts. It promotes equitable access to high-quality basic services for all and works to open up opportunities for everyone. Education plays a key role in this regard. International cooperation contributes to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, particularly through dialogue and by promoting art and culture. It favours a conflict-sensitive approach in its programmes and initiatives, under the 'do no harm'* principle.

In light of the current context, the 2025–28 strategy focuses on three specific objectives in relation to peace and governance:

Strengthening democratic institutions: Switzerland is committed to respect for human rights and good governance as a means of conflict prevention. It focuses on the promotion of democratic institutions at all levels, including the local level, and on decentralisation, in particular with regard to tax, as well as on inclusive participation (women, people with disabilities, minorities) in decision-making processes. It supports civil society actors who play a key role in promoting democracy and controlling state activities. It assists with accountability mechanisms, especially via justice, data, culture and the media. It promotes appropriate framework conditions for a free and diverse media and efforts to combat disinformation. It is committed to retaining the space required for democratic debate and to supporting and protecting human rights defenders.

Participation rights and gender equality: Switzerland's international cooperation advocates for the political, economic and social participation of all people and especially the weakest. It promotes the participation of young people. Special attention is paid to the equal participation of women in all areas of political, economic and social life. International cooperation promotes the inclusion of women in peace talks. It places a particular focus on combating gender-based violence, principally by adopting a psychosocial approach. International cooperation combats discrimination and the causes of exclusion and works to achieve gender equality, especially when it comes to accessing resources, public services and decision-making processes. It aims to increase the number of its programmes designed to achieve structural changes in this area.⁵¹

Rule of law and separation of powers: Switzerland advocates at both the bilateral and multilateral level to strengthen the rule of law. International cooperation supports national and local parliaments, governments and administrations, helping them to perform their key legislative, executive, representative and controlling functions. It works to ensure that public duties are defined on the basis of reliable data and that they are exercised in compliance with established rules, efficiently and in the interests of the population. Along with accountability and transparency, the fight against corruption is a key factor in strengthening public trust in government and in increasing prosperity.

From informal to formal: the right to own land and legal personality

The right to access land and to use and own land is key in the fight against poverty and hunger. Ownership rights are also relevant in areas such as entrepreneurship, access to finance and tax reforms. Switzerland assists governments in developing, implementing and monitoring transparent and fair land use strategies (e.g. land registers). The SDC works closely with the African Land Policy Centre, which is responsible for implementing the African Union's land policy. At the international level, this support is provided through multilateral organisations and regional networks. Thanks to this engagement, 115,000 smallholder farmers (29% women) were able to secure land rights in 2021 and 2022. The SDC is also committed to ensuring that large-scale private land investments involve mechanisms negotiated between governments, businesses, the affected population and NGOs. Access to land and many other services, e.g. when starting a business, is only possible with a legal identity. This requires individuals to be recorded in the civil register. Legal identity is also essential for enforcing human rights. The SDC works to establish ease of access to civil registry offices and their services, and encourages the registration of children in the civil register, mainly through the support it provides to communal services.

51 www.oecd.org > Mid-term Review of Switzerland, 2022

3.3.3 Geographical focus

The four priority regions of the IC Strategy 2021–24 (Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Middle East and North Africa, and Eastern Europe) remain relevant in terms of the three analysis criteria: needs on the ground, added value and long-term interests (see section 3.3.1). They are being retained for the 2025–28 period. The three analysis criteria are weighted differently in each region.

Sub-Saharan Africa

During the last legislative period, there were eight constitutional changes of government in six countries. Civil war broke out in Sudan in 2023, triggering large-scale forced displacement.⁵² This political and security instability, coupled with the impact of climate change, threatens the socio-economic progress achieved over the past decades and puts sub-Saharan Africa's potential at risk. Developments in the Horn of Africa and in the Sahel region are of particular concern. With around 60% of its population under 25⁵³ and the world's highest rate of population growth, sub-Saharan Africa has a huge potential workforce and the region is experiencing dynamic development, especially in the business sector. Sub-Saharan Africa has a wealth of natural resources, which are highly sought-after. Nevertheless, it still has considerable needs. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to more than half of all people worldwide who live in extreme poverty.⁵⁴ The need for humanitarian aid has doubled in the last four years.⁵⁵ The main challenges lie in weak governmental and judicial institutions, corruption and mismanagement, the regulation of natural resource exploitation and mining, and access to high-quality education and finance. The continent is suffering from a deteriorating human rights situation and increased forced displacements. Against this backdrop, the progress made in human and economic development must be preserved.

The **added value** delivered by Switzerland's international cooperation is based, first and foremost, on its long-standing presence on the ground and on the fact that Switzerland never had any colonies. Switzerland is valued as a partner. Swiss know-how is prized in a number of areas that vary depending on the context: its expertise in conflict mediation; its innovation in relation to health, education, vocational education and training, and agricultural production; and its experience in local governance, democracy, private sector development and job creation. Switzerland's international cooperation is mainly present in fragile states or in countries with a low development index, but it also supports certain social and economic poles of stability, which are important

for the continent's development.⁵⁶ In West Africa for example, coastal and stable countries are to be included more in the regional approaches there. Peace and stability on the African continent and the creation of economic prospects for the people living there are in Switzerland's interests, especially when it comes to security and migration. Stronger African markets will facilitate more diversified economic relations and promote better utilisation of the potential of the EFTA free trade agreement, for example with the Southern African Customs Union. With a view to strengthening multilateralism, Switzerland will continue to maintain contact and cooperate with regional organisations, specifically the African Union and the African Development Bank.

Asia

Asia, the world's most populous continent, is driving global economic growth. Despite this huge potential, economic and social progress has recently begun to slow down. The effects of COVID-19, geopolitical upheavals, climate change impacts and other environmental problems have all combined to curb momentum. Democracy is under increasing pressure. Tensions in several countries could have global consequences were they to escalate. Authoritarian tendencies are on the rise, as is control of citizens. Human rights and international humanitarian law are increasingly being disregarded, as happened following the seizure of power by the military in Myanmar and by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, for example. Against this backdrop, **needs** are growing and civil society is coming under increasing pressure. Priority is being given to strengthening economic resilience and continuing structural reforms. Switzerland is involved in sustainable economic development throughout the entire region and helps to reduce social inequality. It delivers added value in vocational education and training, private sector development and job creation, for example, but also in reducing the impacts of climate change and in climate change adaptation as well as in matters of good governance and the rule of law in countries such as Nepal, Bangladesh and Vietnam. Switzerland will continue to maintain a presence in highly fragile states and in conflict-affected countries such as Myanmar and Afghanistan. It aspires to live up to its tradition by protecting civilians, ensuring people's livelihoods and maintaining access to basic services. Economic development in the Asian countries plays a role in the global economy and in trade with Switzerland. It is therefore in Switzerland's interests for international cooperation to provide these countries with support in matters of sustainability and when negotiating new free trade agreements or the continuation of existing agreements, as in the case of Indonesia. In Central Asia, where the war in Ukraine and the crisis in Afghanistan have created a tense security situation, international cooperation helps to promote the stability of the countries that are members of Switzerland's voting constituency in multilateral

⁵² See www.eda.admin.ch > Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27 for a more detailed analysis of the regions

⁵³ desapublications.un.org > World Population Prospects: the 2017 Revision

⁵⁴ www.worldbank.org > Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2022

⁵⁵ www.unocha.org > Global humanitarian Overview 2023

⁵⁶ See Annex 1 for the list of priority countries.

organisations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Eastern Europe

As mentioned in the Foreign Policy Strategy 2024–27, the new security situation in Europe is making it more essential to reinforce peace, stability and prosperity in this region. A European perspective for the Western Balkans therefore remains the best approach. Significant progress has been made in **Eastern Europe** with regard to democracy, the rule of law and a market economy (see section 1.2.1). Most of the IC priority countries have been recognised as candidates for EU membership (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine) or have submitted an application for membership (Kosovo). The region's **needs** mainly stem from economic and other inequalities, in addition to migration away from the area, climate- and energy-related challenges, governance issues, unresolved conflicts and organised crime. Challenges include a renewed rise in tensions and violent incidents, as well as the difficult economic and demographic situation, especially in the Western Balkans and South Caucasus. The consequences of the war in Ukraine and Russia's efforts to extend its influence have destabilised and weakened the region. It is important to continue with the structural reforms and to uphold economic and political stability. Switzerland will promote the region's economic and political stability and European integration. The added value delivered by Switzerland's international cooperation is based on its many years of engagement in the region and its good reputation among all the actors involved. At the request of its partner countries, Switzerland supports programmes and reforms related to health, energy, good governance at local level, decentralisation and migration. It contributes its expertise in vocational education and training and promotes the development of a competitive, sustainable economy capable of creating decent jobs. Switzerland also intends to remain a reliable partner in the South Caucasus, where it pursues a regional programme approach.

Stability and security in Eastern Europe, along with social cohesion and improved living conditions, are both in **Switzerland's interests** and essential to sustainable development in this region. There is a large diaspora in Switzerland, and the potential for investment and trade in this geographically close region is huge. Serbia and Azerbaijan are members of the Swiss voting constituency at the Bretton Woods institutions.

Middle East and North Africa

This region bordering Europe is shaped by its complex history and heterogeneity. The Israel–Palestine conflict and its potential to destabilise the whole region is one example. The development of the situation in this context and its impact on the region will be reflected in IC activities over the next four years. The Middle East and North Africa region faces numerous challenges, although it has considerable economic potential and a young, relatively well-trained workforce striving for change. The **needs** are determined by a wide range of overlapping challenges: long-term armed conflicts, limited democratic space and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, government crises and a lack of political, social and economic reforms, economic imbalances and pension models that create few employment opportunities, plus persistent economic and social inequalities, especially between the sexes. Migration flows also affect the region. The **added value** of Switzerland's international cooperation is derived from the fact that it deploys all its instruments in the region as part of its whole-of-government approach*. In North Africa, Switzerland focuses on creating employment and economic opportunities in addition to vocational education and training. It strengthens good governance and support for civil society. In more fragile contexts in the Middle East, international cooperation provides assistance and expertise with the aim of empowering those affected to improve their situation. It also promotes social cohesion and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Humanitarian aid is a particular concern. Programmes to promote peace and create jobs for young people take priority. Switzerland's interests are many and varied. Specifically, they are: peace and stability, economic cooperation and sustainable natural resource management. Issues connected to migration and the Israel–Palestine conflict are particularly relevant for Switzerland.

Selecting the IC countries of intervention

International cooperation is primarily active in a small number of countries in the above-named regions.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In accordance with the Foreign Economic Policy Strategy, selective activities outside the priority regions are also possible.

Bilateral development cooperation (FDFA and EAER)

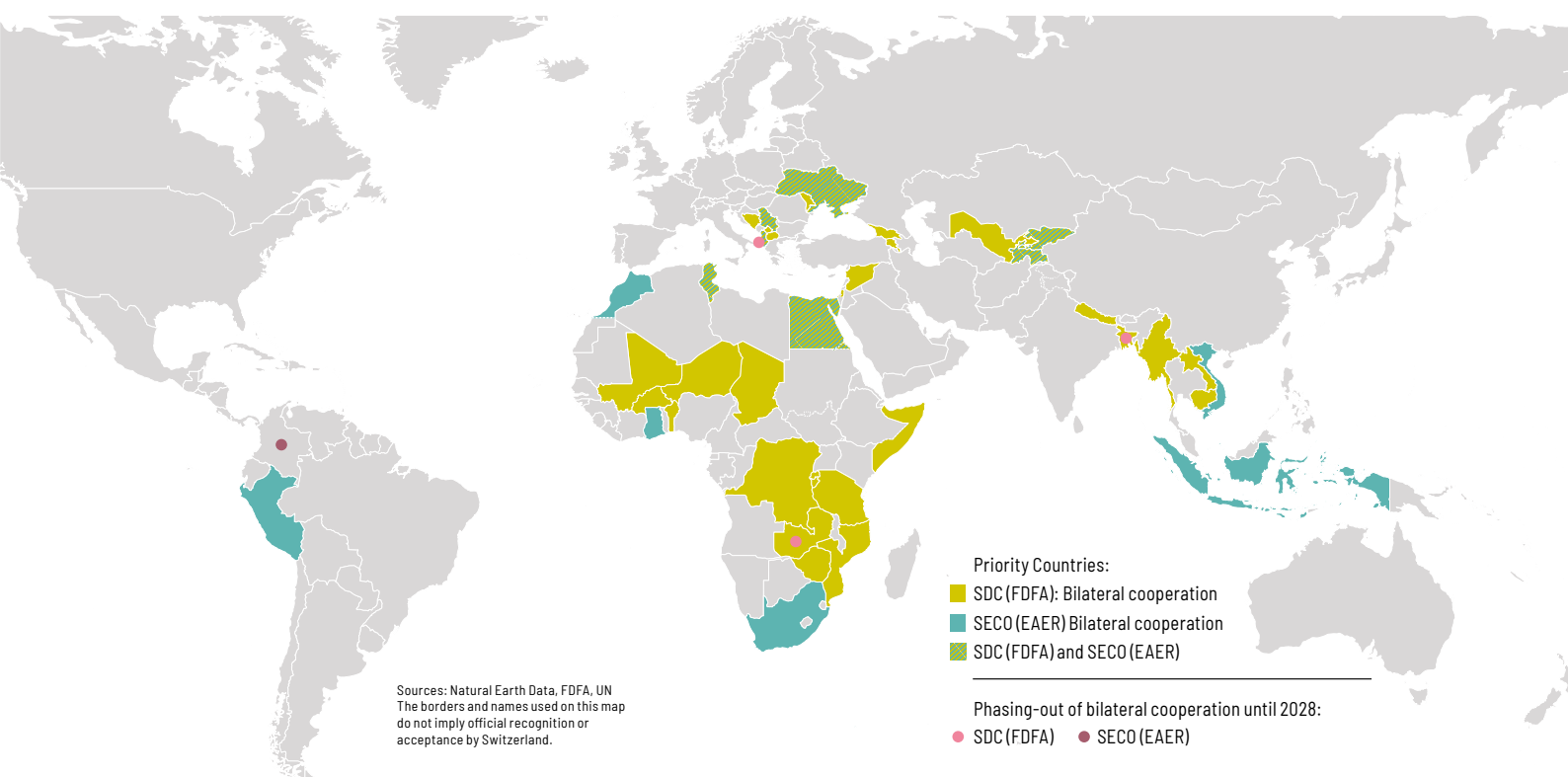
Within the scope of its bilateral development cooperation (section 4.2), Switzerland enters into long-term engagements in the **priority countries** selected on the basis of the three analysis criteria.

The SDC (FDFA) has reduced the number of priority countries from 35 to 34. Its activities in Afghanistan have mainly been confined to providing humanitarian aid since the Taliban seized power there. That is why Afghanistan is no longer a priority country for bilateral development cooperation. In the priority countries affected by political crises (Sahel states, Myanmar etc.) and those with increasing humanitarian needs, international cooperation is adapting its instruments (section 4.2) and ways of working to the respective context (Annex 1, figure 11). The fragility* of the priority countries calls for a short-, medium- and long-term approach, both to respond to emergency situations and to reduce the structural factors responsible for fragility and low resilience (nexus or triple nexus*). However, the goal remains to concentrate on development cooperation efforts

in the priority countries until 2028. As a result of the cuts, the FDFA decided to phase out its bilateral development programmes in Albania, Bangladesh and Zambia by the end of 2028.⁵⁸

Seven SDC countries are also SECO (EAER) priority countries.⁵⁹ SECO is retaining the priority countries of the IC Strategy 2021–24, with the exception of Colombia, from which it plans to withdraw by the end of 2028. This is in keeping with the more concentrated geographical focus while also enabling a transition to other foreign economic policy instruments. Morocco, an important partner of Switzerland in North Africa, will now become a SECO priority country. Morocco is important in terms of peace and stability in the region as well as sustainable development. Switzerland's partnership with Morocco will focus on shared challenges such as economic development, climate change, migration and good governance.

Figure 5: Map of SDC and SECO priority countries for bilateral development cooperation (FDFA)



⁵⁸ See press release of 29 January 2025 "Development cooperation: FDFA and EAER implement Parliament's decisions"; Supplementary Report on the Dispatch on Switzerland's Strategy for International Cooperation 2025–28

⁵⁹ See Annex 1 for the list of priority countries of bilateral development cooperation.

Flexible funds* (SDC) and complementary measures* (SECO)

At least 90% of the geographical commitments of the SDC's bilateral development cooperation are to be allocated in the priority countries. The remaining funds (up to 10%, known as 'flexible funds') may be used for short- or medium-term ad hoc measures outside the priority countries. This gives the SDC flexibility of action, thus presenting it with opportunities to do the following:

- Complement Switzerland's humanitarian aid activities with longer-term programmes and approaches aimed at reducing the structural factors of fragility and contributing to medium-term stabilisation (nexus).
- Provide support for migration policy: in the 2025–28 period, CHF 40 million⁶⁰ has been set aside for in-country development projects that will be selected and carried out by the SDC following consultation with the ICM structure and the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM). Although international cooperation strengthens migration policy instruments, strict conditionality rarely has the intended effects.
- Contribute to solutions to regional and cross-border challenges, for example, with the aim of influencing the framework conditions in the countries concerned or international policies.
- Support Swiss representations around the world in order to respond to locally identified opportunities that match the IC Strategy 2025–28.

SECO carries out complementary measures. This means applying its thematic expertise to international cooperation as required and complementing SECO's foreign economic policy and the priorities of other areas of the Federal Administration, in particular the SDC and the SEM. This is the case, for example, in Azerbaijan and the Western Balkans, where SECO implements measures that complement the projects financed by the SDC in the South Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia) and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and North Macedonia. These complementary measures combine the EAER's economic and trade policy expertise with that of other actors in the Federal Administration.

Humanitarian aid (FDFA)

Humanitarian aid (section 4.2) delivers on a universal mandate. When countries are hit by crises or disasters, it sends experts to provide emergency relief and acts as a source of ad hoc support to the humanitarian actors present on the ground (see, for example, the ad hoc actions in 2024 marked with a triangle in Figure 6 below). The level of response required for disasters (earthquake, flood, famine, cholera, etc.) during the 2025–28 period cannot be predicted.

However, it is clear that a sustained humanitarian commitment over several years is required in many protracted crises. For example, humanitarian aid efforts have been ongoing in South Sudan for 16 years, where there is currently a team on the ground and an annual budget of CHF 15 million. Some long-term crises affect priority countries of bilateral cooperation. In these cases, humanitarian aid complements development efforts (nexus).

Promoting peace and human rights (FDFA)

The PHRD's peace policy (section 4.2) focuses on a maximum of 20 regions or countries in which Switzerland has a peace policy programme. This engagement will be stepped up in the OSCE area due to the war in Ukraine and the resulting foreign and peace policy challenges in the region. Programmes to promote peace, which include deploying a human security adviser on the ground, remain vitally important. At the same time, the PHRD will continue to pursue its peace policy in a flexible and agile manner that gives it room to adapt and take advantage of any opportunities that may arise. Mediation, facilitation and dialogue support may also be used outside of these 20 contexts, provided there is a demand for them and resources are available.

Multi-year cooperation programmes are drawn up for the IC countries of intervention. Where a number of different IC instruments are represented in a country, the cooperation programme is developed jointly and includes a context analysis and shared goals.

⁶⁰ Due to the cuts decided on by Parliament, IC funding for support for migration policy will be reduced from CHF 60 million to CHF 40 million over four years (see press release of 29 January 2025 "Development cooperation: FDFA and EAER implement Parliament's decisions").

Figure 6: Map of the countries of humanitarian aid operations (without priority countries) and countries with emergency relief interventions (2024) (FDFA)

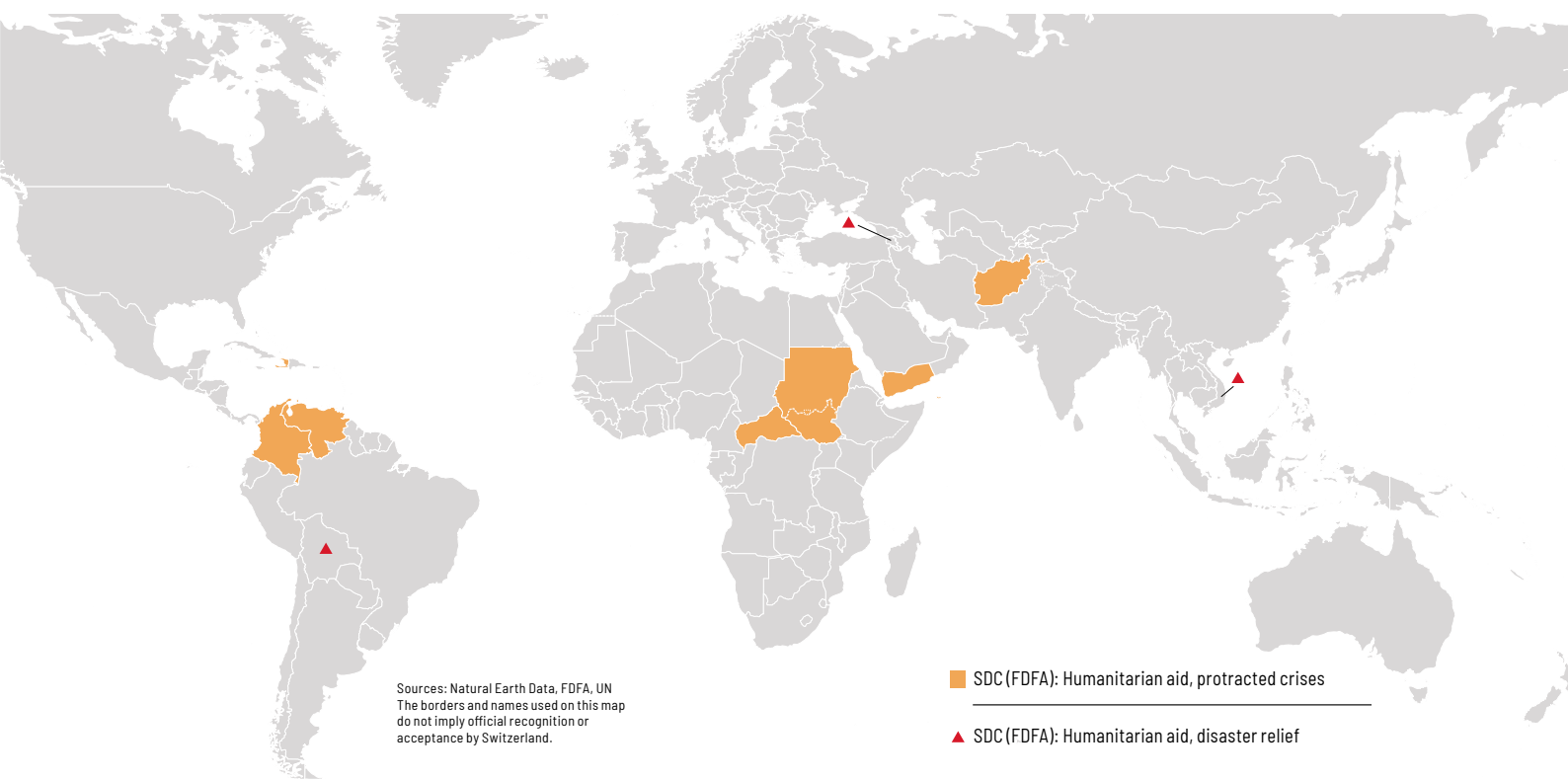
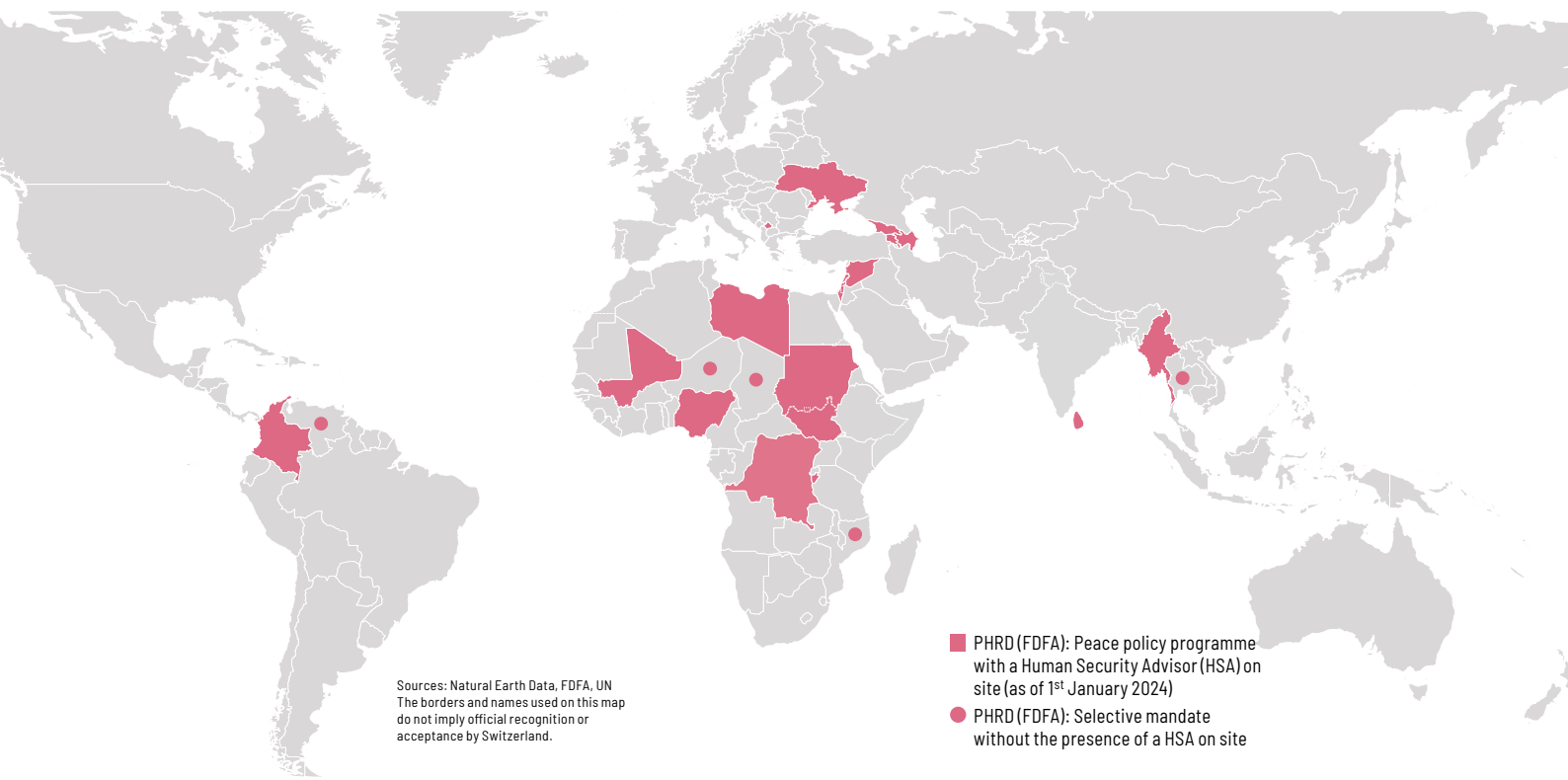


Figure 7: Map of countries in which the PHRD is active in relation to peace policy (as at 01.01.2024) (FDFA)



3.3.4 Ukraine

The level of destruction and the number of casualties in Ukraine are on a scale not seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Around one-third of the population has been displaced. According to estimates, 29% of the population was living in poverty in 2023 (2021: 5.5%), and large parts of the country are contaminated with mines and other explosive ordnance. In December 2024, the recovery and reconstruction needs were estimated at USD 524 billion.⁶¹

Uncertainty as to how the conflict will develop and what economic, social and environmental impacts this will have calls for a flexible approach. As Ukraine has been an IC priority country since 1999, Switzerland can leverage its long-standing partnerships and activities when working on the ground. Switzerland attaches strategic importance to support the country and its reconstruction. International cooperation and other instruments provide it with a means to express its solidarity by helping to rebuild Ukraine and advocating for a just and lasting peace. Consequently, Switzerland is active in two areas: 1) humanitarian aid and development cooperation and 2) reconstruction. Each has its own timeframe and is subject to different policy and financial considerations. In addition, Switzerland has stepped up its bilateral cooperation with Ukraine's neighbour Moldova in order to cushion the impacts of the war and help establish stability in the region. Under the present strategy, an amount of CHF 1.5 billion has been made available for this support.⁶² The country programme also envisions greater private sector engagement in Ukraine's reconstruction (see 3.3.4.2).⁶³

The war in Ukraine

By 31 December 2024, Switzerland had provided CHF 4.37 billion in support to those affected by the war; CHF 630.17 million of this (i.e. 13%) was allocated to the three administrative units (SDC, SECO and PHRD) responsible, a much higher amount of funding than was granted before the war. It was used for humanitarian interventions and for development and economic cooperation measures. CHF 43 million (1%) went on delivering material aid provided by the DDPS. Other federal agencies have also provided support to the affected Ukrainian population (e.g. via the Ukraine Recovery Conference, the protection of cultural property and support for Ukrainian researchers in Switzerland). The SEM made CHF 3.7 billion (85%) available for providing support to people with protection status S.

Where IC is concerned, the long-standing nature of IC enabled the rapid provision of emergency relief, e.g. the distribution of almost 1,000 tonnes of relief supplies and 4,765 tonnes of food. The bilateral programmes were quickly adapted to the new situation, specifically in the areas of health (trauma care for displaced persons), agriculture (grain production to address the imminent food shortage) and energy (supplying heaters and generators). Alongside these bilateral measures, Switzerland also supports Ukraine through multilateral vehicles, including a programme run by the World Bank and another by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The aim was to sustain critical government services in Ukraine, bring the economic reform programme into line with the reconstruction programme and safeguard the competitiveness of Ukraine's SMEs. This cooperation with the multilateral development banks and the IMF enables the Ukrainian government to continue to exercise its core functions. Switzerland works together with the International Criminal Court to support the processes of accountability and documentation.

It is also involved through the UN Refugee Agency in providing support to Ukraine's neighbours, including Poland, which has taken in the second-highest number of Ukrainian refugees (1 million) since the start of the conflict. Members of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit were posted to neighbouring Moldova, where they helped with the coordination of medical care for hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Financial support from humanitarian and multilateral partner organisations means that the most vulnerable population groups can be better protected.⁶⁴

61 www.worldbank.org > Ukraine – Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment: February 2022 – December 2024

62 See Annex 3 for an indicative breakdown between the two departments FDFA and EAER

63 The Federal Council approved the Ukraine country programme after publishing the Dispatch on the IC Strategy 2025–28. The information here has therefore been updated and supplemented.

64 The figures on the support provided to Ukraine by the Confederation have been updated from those in the dispatch adopted by the Federal Council on 22 May 2024 to reflect the status quo at the end of December 2024.

3.3.4.1 Humanitarian aid, development cooperation and peace promotion

To some extent, humanitarian aid, development cooperation and efforts to promote peace, democracy and human rights also encompass reconstruction work (see box). The contribution made through the multilateral banks (especially the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) is fundamental. Mine action is another way in which Switzerland makes an important contribution to peace, security and development in the country.

3.3.4.2 Reconstruction

Tackling reconstruction requires major investments in infrastructure. It is not merely a case of restoring that infrastructure, but of 'building back better' by modernising it to enable sustainable economic activity. Switzerland was involved in this area at an early stage, in particular when it organised the Ukraine Recovery Conference held in Lugano in the summer of 2022. The principles adopted in the Lugano Declaration serve as the basis for political action at the international level.

With its expertise and know-how, and its innovative, high-quality products, the Swiss private sector is well-placed to make an important contribution to the reconstruction process in Ukraine. For that reason, the Federal Council decided in June 2024 to earmark CHF 500 million of the total CHF 1.5 billion in funding available for the 2025–28 period to boosting the Swiss private sector's engagement in the reconstruction process. In this way, Switzerland is also helping to build a resilient and sustainable economy in Ukraine.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Parliament has asked the Federal Council to draw up the legal basis for the Swiss private sector's involvement for presentation to the foreign policy committees of both chambers by the end of 2025.

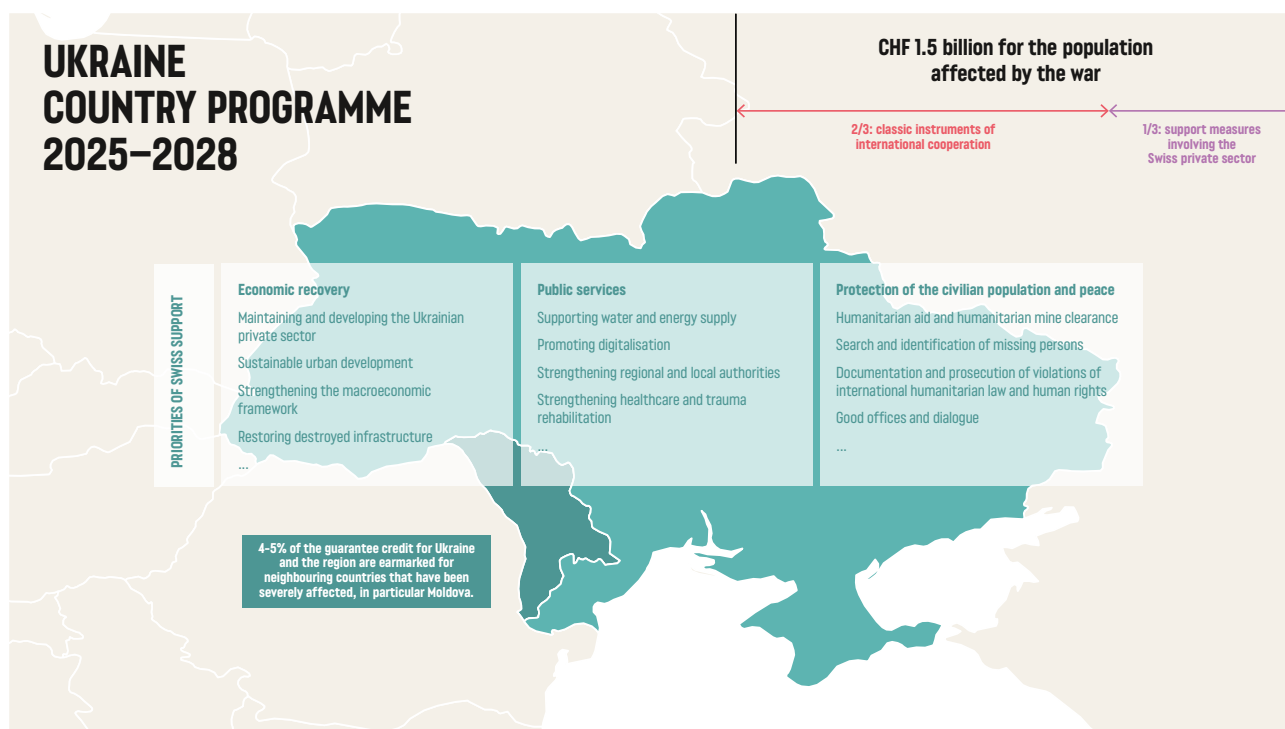


Figure 8: Priorities of the Ukraine country programme 2025-28

The Federal Council approved the country programme for Ukraine in February 2025. It is overseen by the Federal Council's delegate for Ukraine. As well as dealing with financing and implementation, the programme sets out the priority areas for support to Ukraine: economic recovery, public services, and protection of the civilian population and peace.

The Ukraine country programme draws on the seven Lugano Principles:

1. Partnership
2. Reform focus
3. Transparency, accountability and rule of law
4. Democratic participation
5. Multi-stakeholder engagement
6. Gender equality and inclusion
7. Sustainability

The programme also operates within the following parameters:

- Balanced bilateral and multilateral approach: use of appropriate bilateral and multilateral vehicles for implementation, taking into account Switzerland's visibility;
- Private sector engagement for economic recovery: both Swiss and Ukrainian businesses should be involved in the work;
- Use of different instruments: non-repayable contributions, loans, participations and guarantees will be used to implement the programme;
- Clarity and accessibility: the benefits of all activities must be transparent and easy to understand both domestically and internationally. They should reflect Switzerland's expertise and be internationally recognisable;
- Exit strategy: depending on how the war evolves, Switzerland must be able to withdraw in an orderly fashion. The situation will be reviewed regularly.

4 Implementation of the IC Strategy

4.1 Three responsible administrative units

The three federal decrees on IC 2025–28 pertain to the activities of three administrative units: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) (both part of the FDFA) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Their activities are financed through five commitment appropriations approved by Parliament. Several other federal offices pursue their own international activities, funded through separate budgets, which are sometimes recorded as ODA according to OECD criteria but are not covered by the strategy.

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC (FDFA)

The SDC is the federal centre of expertise and coordination for development cooperation and humanitarian aid. It carries out its own measures and contributes funding to measures that support development goals in a select number of countries. The SDC will manage around 80% of the financial commitments of the IC commitment appropriations for the 2025–28 period.

Peace and Human Rights Division, PHRD (FDFA)

The PHRD, part of the FDFA State Secretariat, is the centre of expertise for promoting peace, human rights and democracy. The division is committed to the prevention of armed conflicts, the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the strengthening of the international normative framework, particularly concerning human rights, and the protection of people affected by armed conflicts, other violent situations and disasters. The PHRD will manage approximately 2% of the financial commitments of the IC commitment appropriations for the 2025–28 period.

Economic Cooperation and Development Division of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO (EAER)

SECO is the centre of expertise for economic cooperation and development. Its activities focus on all core economic and trade policy issues, particularly on creating conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic development, in addition to private sector development and urbanisation. Implementing the overarching goal of sustainable economic development is primarily the responsibility of the EAER (Section 3.3.2). SECO will manage approximately 18% of the financial commitments of the IC commitment appropriations for the 2025–28 period.

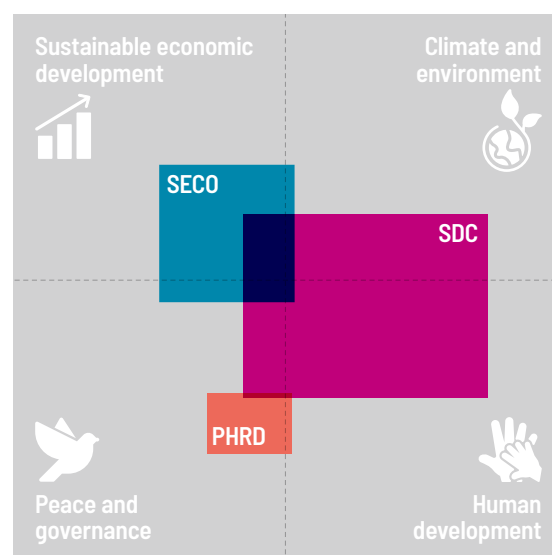
Complementary perspectives and synergies between SDC, PHRD and SECO

These three administrative units are attached to two departments, which offers the advantage of complementary perspectives and expertise. The three units work in a complementary fashion at the operational level within their respective remits. The fact that the IC Strategy is a joint document by the two departments that sets out four objectives and four priority regions ensures that Switzerland is represented consistently abroad.

According to the DC-HA Act, multilateral financial assistance for IC-related development is the joint responsibility of the SDC and SECO. Together they decide on the beneficiary institutions, the amounts given to each and the implementation conditions for all multilateral financial aid measures. They also jointly decide on the stance that Switzerland takes in the governing bodies of international and regional development finance organisations. For development banks, the EAER names the governor and the FDFA provides the deputy.

Swiss representations abroad include diplomatic and consular staff as well as staff from IC units. They are supported by other federal representatives (migration attachés, defence attachés, police attachés, etc.).

Figure 9: Synergies between the SDC, PHRD and SECO



4.2 Instruments

A variety of instruments are used to implement the strategic direction defined in Section 3.3.

Humanitarian aid (FDFA)

Humanitarian aid focuses on protecting the lives and dignity of people impacted by crises, violent situations, armed conflicts and natural disasters. Humanitarian aid is inextricably linked to the observance of international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles. The role of humanitarian aid is three-pronged:

1. As a flexible entity, it can directly, effectively and pragmatically address the consequences of armed conflicts and natural disasters through the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA) [see box].
2. It is a reliable donor for multilateral organisations and NGOs that actively work in crisis situations.
3. It conducts advocacy for humanitarian causes by participating in negotiations that promote adherence to international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles and for securing access to and protecting civilians.

Humanitarian aid focuses on four areas: the first concerns protecting the most vulnerable populations, including people affected by gender-based violence, and providing education in emergency situations; the second area involves access to water, sanitation and hygiene. The third area concerns improving food security and meeting basic needs (cash approach), and the fourth involves reducing the risks associated with natural disasters, including resilient rebuilding efforts.

Humanitarian aid follows a consistent approach of being guided by local needs and the added value the aid can provide. Here Switzerland has an inherent interest in upholding its humanitarian tradition.

To prevent and respond to crises and disasters, Switzerland contributes to emergency aid as well as to the prevention and reduction of disaster risks and to reconstruction and rehabilitation activities.

2023



276

experts in action



343

interventions



60

countries

Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA)

The SHA is the face of Swiss humanitarian aid during crises and disasters abroad. During natural disasters, it provides immediate assistance, sets up shelters, builds earthquake-resistant buildings, repairs drinking water systems, and conducts emergency operations. As a corps of 550 volunteer specialists from eleven professions, many of whom come from the private sector, the SHA is a characteristically Swiss solution. In addition to providing urgently needed first aid during crises and disasters, SHA members also make their expertise available to multilateral organisations and Swiss representations, thereby helping to alleviate the suffering of the populations most affected by crises and armed conflicts. The last 50 years have seen the SHA become an indispensable pillar of Swiss emergency aid.

Promotion of peace and human rights (FDFA)

The commitment to peace and human rights is a priority of the FDFA. Every person should be able to live in peace and security.

Peacebuilding and mediation: The PHRD operates at both the political and diplomatic level, placing special emphasis on government-to-government dialogue (Track 1*) and targeted projects in carefully chosen contexts. Its activities aim to prevent conflicts and contribute to their resolution and the achievement of sustainable peace. It pays particular attention to the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in these processes. Geopolitical change, new conflict dynamics and new public and private actors all have an impact on peace policy. While there is demand for Swiss expertise abroad, it cannot be taken for granted. Switzerland works strategically, regularly adapts what it offers, creates added value in a targeted manner and seizes any opportunities that may arise. It is in this context that the PHRD is strengthening its mediation and dialogue activities. Thanks to its experience, unique profile (offering discretion, neutrality and credibility as strengths), and concrete, results-oriented activities, Switzerland is well-positioned internationally when it comes to peacebuilding, mediation and facilitation and conflict prevention in the context of good offices*.

Human rights: Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is intrinsically tied to safeguarding citizens and plays a vital role in maintaining peace and security. To promote an international normative framework for human rights, the PHRD advocates for freedom of expression, the defence of marginalised groups, the protection of human rights defenders and access to an independent, impartial and fair justice system for everyone. It supports respect for human rights in economic activities, particularly by promoting the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁶⁶ Regarding migration, its activities focus on missing persons in a forced migration context, on human rights at borders and on combating human trafficking.

Democracy: The PHRD places emphasis on promoting democracy, democratic resilience and the rule of law. It promotes the conditions for democratic processes and institutions and fosters political dialogue on democracy issues. It also supports the organisation of free and peaceful elections, equal participation of the sexes and the integration of minorities and disadvantaged groups into political processes.

Humanitarian diplomacy: The PHRD's work focuses on three main areas: The first concerns the protection of the civilian population, particularly missing persons. The second focus is on humanitarian disarmament, especially regarding mines, ammunition, small arms and light weapons. The third priority involves strengthening an effective multilateral peace framework that can tackle emerging challenges like climate change and new technologies.

2023



181
experts in action



203
interventions



39
countries

Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding (SEP)

One of the instruments that Swiss IC has at its disposal is the deployment of specialists to multilateral and regional organisations to support work on topics of interest to Switzerland. The SEP provides international organisations such as the UN, the OSCE and the EU with around 160 civilian experts and police officers every year. Swiss experts observe elections and adherence to ceasefire agreements. Police and legal system staff sent by the SEP help national police forces to protect people in conflict situations and support them in strengthening the rule of law. Human rights experts and legal specialists investigate violations of international humanitarian law and support peace and reconciliation processes. The SEP trains specialists from Switzerland and from regions in crisis for deployment and supports their continuing education.

Bilateral development cooperation (FDFA and EAER)

Bilateral development cooperation refers to activities carried out by Switzerland in a given partner country, usually based on a framework agreement governing cooperation between the two states. It is long term in orientation and aims to effect structural, sustainable changes by strengthening institutions. Bilateral development cooperation is organised according to geographical criteria with regard to budget planning, implementation and country-level reporting. It is carried out by the SDC and by SECO (economic cooperation and development) and complements global approaches and multilateral cooperation efforts. Bilateral development cooperation allows the SDC and SECO to select and monitor development projects with a particular emphasis on the added value that Swiss IC provides. Moreover, this framework can facilitate political dialogue with partner countries on specific topics. Bilateral development cooperation is an important instrument of Swiss foreign policy and the Swiss network of representations.

⁶⁶ www.ohchr.org > UN-Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights Principles

Bilateral cooperation activities of the SDC

The SDC's bilateral cooperation activities are aligned with the four development objectives (see Section 3.3.2). Its action areas are determined in close cooperation with national and local entities.

The results that can be expected from these activities depend on the level of development and fragility of the partner country in question. In cases where the political context is stable and open to reforms, where adequate capacity exists and where fiduciary risks are manageable, bilateral cooperation prefers to directly partner with state institutions. In these contexts, Switzerland engages in a dialogue on the modalities and effectiveness of aid, which serves as a guide for IC activities: shared responsibility between governments, co-financing, ownership/personal responsibility and use of national systems. Switzerland enters into partnerships with the respective line ministries to guide strategies and reforms that promote development. Here special emphasis is placed on the most disadvantaged population groups.

If the political environment is more volatile, bilateral cooperation shifts its focus to the local level. The objective is to improve the daily lives of the most disadvantaged people by supporting access to high-quality basic services, the local economy, conflict prevention, social cohesion and the introduction of participatory decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms.

For countries experiencing conflicts or severe crises, bilateral cooperation aims to create solutions using peace policy tools and humanitarian aid that are as sustainable as possible under the specific circumstances. Familiarity with local conditions constitutes an advantage for Switzerland in discussions with authorities.

Bilateral cooperation is reliant on cooperation with civil society and the private sector in all contexts (see Section 4.3.5). Bilateral cooperation also involves working together with Swiss NGOs and research institutions in order to leverage Switzerland's innovative strengths and expertise. Wherever possible, partnerships with national organisations are established to ensure long-term effectiveness and self-reliance. In fragile contexts or conflict situations, where cooperation with the government is difficult or impossible, bilateral cooperation is carried out with multilateral organisations as well as with local and international NGOs.

The dynamics of regional cooperation are increasing given the fragmented nature of global politics. In some contexts, Swiss IC prefers regional and thematic approaches to its programme activities. This is the case in crisis-afflicted priority countries (e.g., Syria, Somalia) when the crisis affects neighbouring countries, or when cooperation programmes target regional or cross-border challenges, such as in the Mekong region, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. For challenges of this kind, IC is expanding its cooperation with regional organisations such as ASEAN and managing programmes

from regional hubs to make efficient use of its resources and ensure fast reaction times.

SECO's economic cooperation and development activities

Switzerland's economic cooperation and development programmes create prosperity and economic growth in developing countries under the motto of sustainability and resilience, thereby contributing to the reduction of poverty. This means that ecological and social factors are also seen as central alongside economic considerations. To achieve its goals, economic cooperation and development prioritises three areas: the private sector, public institutions, and urban development and infrastructure. Its activities systematically take good economic governance, gender equality and climate protection into account.



Figure 10: Strategic direction of economic development cooperation (EAER)

Private sector: Companies often have difficulties surviving the start-up phase and achieving growth. They lack access to innovative and sustainable concepts, well-trained workers, capital and ways to protect their intangible assets. With this in mind, SECO advocates for progressive corporate governance that is committed not only to making profit but also to social and environmental responsibility. At the same time, it supports the development and implementation of sustainability standards and sustainable value chains in its projects and programmes and fosters dialogue between all stakeholders. SECO works together with private actors to develop innovative financing solutions to mobilise private capital for businesses and the public sector, with a focus on impactful investments. SIFEM, the federal government's development finance fund, is part of these efforts (see box).

SIFEM, a Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets

The federal government's development finance institution, SIFEM, is a key instrument for economic development cooperation. In developing countries, SIFEM invests in private companies that not only generate financial returns but also create positive, measurable impacts on society and the environment while leveraging additional private sector resources. During the 2020–22 period, SIFEM mobilised over five US dollars for every dollar it invested. SIFEM aligns its activities with the countries and regions prioritised by Swiss IC. Economic development cooperation is investigating ways to strengthen synergies between SIFEM and selected country programmes to create decent jobs and mitigate climate change.

Public institutions: An efficient public sector, robust financial and capital markets and a stable economic and trade policy strengthen trust in the state and reduce uncertainty. This makes it easier for people and businesses to seize economic opportunities, take risks, develop and grow. This is why SECO promotes the stability of tax, financial and monetary policy in its partner countries by advising central banks, regulatory bodies and state authorities. It assists them in their efforts to pursue sustainable fiscal and tax policy and to finance themselves from their own tax revenues as much as possible. Additionally, SECO continues its long-standing work on the issue of debt management, which is becoming increasingly important given rising national debt levels. SECO also advocates for a business environment with minimal bureaucracy – for example, to make it easier to found companies. To promote international trade in developing countries, SECO advocates for market access, free trade agreements in line with sustainable development, and intellectual property protection. As part of this process, agencies receive training on handling e-commerce and other issues.

Urban development and infrastructure: If cities are to fulfil their role as growth and innovation hubs, they need to provide a level of basic public services that keeps pace with population growth. SECO assists governments and cities with sustainable urban planning and with planning, financing and operating urban infrastructure such as the energy grid and water supply. Renewable energies and energy efficiency,

in addition to cooperation with the private sector, play an important role here. Cities also have great potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, for example, by improving public transportation. SECO's goal is to create more competitive and liveable urban areas that make more efficient use of resources. SECO also works to improve the adaptability of cities to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

Global approach (FDFA and EAER)

Current crises involve systemic risks that can only be mitigated with cross-theme and cross-sector actions that have global reach and that are coupled with national, regional and local initiatives. This is why Swiss IC is also active outside of its priority countries. While the global approaches of the SDC and SECO have regional priorities, they also continue to engage in global partnerships and programmes with global challenges in mind. The SDC runs four global programmes⁶⁷ as part of its thematic cooperation approach and provides support for actions and thematic expertise in other areas.⁶⁸ The SDC works across sectors and complements the work of other actors, both externally and from the Federal Administration.

67 1) Migration and Forced Displacement, 2) Health and Food, 3) Water and 4) Climate, Disaster Risk Reduction and Environment

68 Economy, Education, Peace, Governance and Equality

For maximum impact, thematic cooperation focuses on four complementary approaches:

1. Developing/funding programmes and partnerships to find sustainable solutions for global and regional challenges
2. Political dialogue and establishing universal standards: Switzerland contributes to the international agenda and influences international norms and the direction taken by multilateral organisations. Thematic cooperation anticipates developments and promotes the establishment of coherent sector-specific policies.
3. Assistance and consulting within the Federal Administration and the network of Swiss representations abroad: Thematic cooperation helps to develop and guide programme activities in priority countries (co-creation).
4. Knowledge management and learning to maintain the learning capacity of Swiss IC, improve its effectiveness and ensure its multiplier effect.

SECO uses thematic cooperation to implement global initiatives that complement its bilateral approach to tackling global challenges in the areas of finance and trade, migration, climate change and environmental and water issues. Global measures* allow SECO to be part of the international dialogue, set thematic priorities with the SDGs in mind and achieve greater leverage with its contributions. These measures typically receive support from several donor countries and are implemented by multilateral organisations such as development banks.

4.3 Modalities of implementation and cooperation with actors outside the Federal Administration

Given the current context (Section 1.2.2), the International Cooperation (IC) Strategy 2025–28 emphasises the following modalities of implementation:

4.3.1 Multilateral cooperation

Effective and targeted multilateralism and a functioning UN are essential for both Switzerland and the world. Switzerland is committed to goal-oriented multilateralism, which serves as a guarantor of an international order based not on power relations, but on international law. Multilateral organisations are strong when they act in a purposeful and structured way, in a subsidiary manner to states, and in anticipation of future developments.

The increasingly global nature of challenges requires a global response (Section 1.1.3). Switzerland exerts influence in inter-governmental negotiations and through its work as a mediator, which involves close cooperation with the entire Federal Administration. The legitimacy of multilateral organisations is anchored in their intergovernmental mandate. Their operational capacities ensure the impact of the resources they receive. Switzerland expressly advocates that the actions of multilateral organisations should strengthen national capabilities and improve coordination between the organisations and local actors.

Swiss IC works with multilateral organisations in three main ways. First, it provides core contributions via its multilateral budget to support the specific remit of the respective organisation. Second, it deploys various budgets (bilateral, thematic and humanitarian budget, or budget for peacebuilding) to (co-) finance specific programmes that are implemented in certain countries or sectors. Third, it provides Swiss specialists who are deployed by the SHA or the PHRD.

As a member state of multilateral institutions and a participant in governing bodies, Swiss IC influences the direction of these organisations and assists them with specialised knowledge and expertise. In this way, Switzerland advocates for its own priorities, giving global reach to our country's interests. Swiss IC pushes for greater effectiveness and efficiency within multilateral organisations by supporting transparency, accountability and oversight mechanisms to ensure that the organisations receive trust – and thus continued financial support – from their member states.

Swiss IC has selected 22 priority organisations⁶⁹: five of the 16 multilateral development banks, 13 of the 78 UN organisations, and four other organisations that are important for Switzerland's strategy. The amount of financial support provided by Swiss IC is determined based on the organisation's mandate and performance, as well as Switzerland's opportunities to provide added value, achieve objectives (see Section 3.3.2) and exert influence.

Switzerland's reputation and its ability to influence the multilateral system are strengthened by its status as a host state and Geneva's role as a hub of multilateralism. Furthermore, Switzerland maintains an institutional partnership with the three Geneva centres – the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance – for executing the strategic direction of IC.

⁶⁹ See Annex 2 for the list and description of priority multilateral organisations.

Due to the withdrawal from UNAIDS and the Global Partnership for Education starting in 2025, the number of priority organisations has decreased to 22 from the originally proposed 24 (see Supplementary Report to the Dispatch on IC Strategy 2025–28).

4.3.2 Locally-driven activities

IC activities must be supported by and integrated into partner countries' national and local governments, civil society or private sector so that they can continue running the projects without IC support. To achieve this, IC harmonises the support it provides with national, regional and local development plans.

Over the 2025–28 period, Swiss IC and its implementation partners will systematically work with local governments, organisations and populations. This ensures that national actors are involved in project steering mechanisms and uses national mechanisms for financing systemic programs wherever possible. This is in line with the recommendations of the OECD DAC.⁷⁰

4.3.3 New digital technologies

New technologies have the potential to fundamentally alter societies. They are a key factor in economic and human development – particularly when it comes to education, health, innovation and trade – and help reduce poverty in this way. Their future impacts are sometimes difficult to grasp, for example regarding artificial intelligence. Novel technologies can help identify more effective and efficient responses to the complex challenges of humanitarian aid, development cooperation and economic cooperation. They also have a key role to play in achieving the SDGs. Swiss IC seeks to strengthen the digital skillset of its partner countries, thereby promoting the resilience of public services and civil society. However, the use of new technologies also carries risks such as the 'digital divide', which exacerbates inequality. Switzerland is pushing for the creation of a solid framework of digital governance in compliance with international law. Fair digitalisation requires a data governance framework that ensures people's dignity, integrity and security while also promoting the use of data for public goods. Reliable data systems can help minimise risks. Switzerland has recognised expertise and added value potential in the fields of data and statistics. To name one example, the SDC works together with the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) to support the Statistical Office of Albania in producing accurate and up-to-date local statistics that contribute to the design and implementation of sound and inclusive public policy. Swiss expertise in this area is increasingly in demand. SECO is paying greater attention to cybersecurity issues, for example in projects related to water and energy supply and central bank systems. Finally, Switzerland is also calling for better protection of multilateral organisations and NGOs against cyberattacks.

4.3.4 Use of Swiss expertise

Switzerland has recognised expertise and can provide added value in several key development areas such as federalism, direct democracy, dual vocational education with solid basic education, data and statistics, and technological innovations. Partner countries are very interested in making use of Switzerland's competencies, especially those found in private research institutions, the private sector, cantons and federal offices. IC uses and promotes these skills by facilitating the provision of expertise from the public administration – for instance, from the FSO, SEM, the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI), the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH), MeteoSwiss and Parliamentary Services – when running its programmes. This is a promising approach that Swiss IC would like to explore and develop further.

4.3.5 Cooperation and partnerships with other actors

Swiss IC works closely with other actors to carry out its strategy. In the process, it ensures that its partners provide added value for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Its partners must demonstrate awareness of existing power asymmetries, prevent exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment, observe the principles of non-discrimination and have a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption.

Governments in priority countries

The main responsibility for a country's development lies with its government. Switzerland opts for direct cooperation with government partners and works at the national, regional or municipal level depending on the type of support, willingness to reform and development goal in question. Risk analyses can identify the best ways to help strengthen national systems and to avoid lending support to ruling class elements that hinder reforms. Regular dialogue as part of cooperation with the government allows for an assessment – and, if necessary, an adjustment – of the relationship.

70 www.oecd.org > DAC Mid-term Review of Switzerland, 2022

Private sector

Cooperation between Swiss IC and the private sector is always aimed at reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development – something that local SMEs and populations benefit from. The private sector, including social enterprises* and impact-oriented companies, is crucial for mobilising sufficient resources, expertise and innovation for implementing the 2030 Agenda. Working with the private sector can help achieve various development goals such as food security, sustainable infrastructure and lending to local SMEs. Favourable general conditions are needed if the private sector is to invest in developing countries over the long term. Partnerships with the private sector are implemented in two ways: first, through financial or investment instruments that enable the private sector to be mobilised for development purposes or mitigating financial risks in the event of market failure (e.g., SDG Impact Finance Initiative, SIFEM, Private Infrastructure Investment Group (PIDG) or investments in structured funds). These instruments create an incentive for the private sector to invest in countries or sectors that would be too unattractive or too insecure in the absence of a partnership with IC. The second way is via joint projects and multi-stakeholder initiatives in areas where Switzerland has extensive experience and significant market presence, with participation from relevant private sector entities. Thanks to initiatives of this kind, these companies can connect with other actors, particularly from civil society and academia, and promote more sustainable production practices (e.g., Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa, Swiss Better Gold). To ensure effectiveness in the development space, there are strict principles – such as additionality of financing, avoidance of market distortions and adherence to social and/or environmental standards – in place for cooperation with the private sector.

Humanitarian aid activities also benefit from the competencies of the Swiss private sector by recruiting specialists for the Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA) unit, using private sector logistics services and materials, and harnessing other innovations developed in partnership with the private sector.

‘Private sector engagement’ vs. ‘private sector development’

The terms private sector engagement (PSE) and private sector development (PSD) are sometimes used interchangeably, but they describe two different areas of activity. PSE refers to the cooperation of IC with the private sector to implement various development goals, as described above. PSD means specifically promoting the private sector in developing countries with measures targeted at improving general conditions for local SMEs (e.g., simplified business registration).

Civil society organisations

Depending on the context, Swiss IC works with charitable foundations, clubs, citizen groups, professional associations and local NGOs from Switzerland or other countries. They make significant contributions to reducing poverty, facilitating access to social and economic institutions, promoting social justice, strengthening the democratic space, preserving global public goods and supporting cultural diversity. These partnerships are based on the skills and track record of the group in question. Cooperation with NGOs is carried out in three ways: first, through mandates* awarded in accordance with public procurement transparency and competition rules to implement this strategy; second, through targeted thematic or geographic contributions in support of IC objectives (only from the SDC); and third, through core contributions (only from the SDC) to Swiss NGOs, Swiss NGO alliances, cantonal associations and umbrella organisations to support executing their own strategy.⁷¹

Cooperation with Swiss NGOs will continue to be based on their capabilities, their proven track record, their long-standing presence in various contexts and their compatibility with the present strategy.

Research institutions

Working with scientific research organisations allows us to understand the challenges of development as a whole and in terms of their interconnections; it also allows for the development of innovative technological, social and political solutions to address them. Cooperation of this kind is indispensable for effective and sustainable international cooperation. Partnerships are in place not only with colleges, technical universities, full-scope universities and basic and applied research agencies in Switzerland (SNF, Innosuisse) and developing countries, but also with international research institutions and private foundations. Numerous developing countries are interested in cooperation with Switzerland in the area of research and innovation. This type of cooperation promotes innovation, diplomatic relations and enhances Switzerland’s reputation.

Other donors

Swiss IC works with other donors, mainly high-income countries like EU member states and philanthropic organisations. Good coordination is essential for boosting the effectiveness of IC while avoiding duplicating resources or spreading them too thin. For this reason, Switzerland actively advocates for mechanisms to coordinate aid in its priority countries. Switzerland is open to cooperation with donors of all kinds,

⁷¹ The list of NGOs supported by the SDC is available at www.deza.admin.ch > The SDC > Partnerships > Non-governmental organisations.

particularly those from emerging countries (China, India, Gulf states) or with grant-making foundations, provided there is a common understanding regarding the principles of aid effectiveness. Switzerland seeks dialogue with these donors to guarantee respect for international values and principles.

4.3.6 Other actors

Interdepartmental Committee for International Development and Cooperation (ICDC)

The ICDC is a platform that allows all federal departments to provide input on the deliberations and strategic direction of international cooperation when matters concerning their remit are being dealt with. Members of the committee include the FDJP (SEM, IPI) for migration and intellectual property issues, DETEC (FOEN) for environmental issues, the FDHA (MeteoSwiss, FSO, FOPH, FOC) for weather and climate risk issues as well as health, culture, data and statistical topics, and the EAER (FOAG) for the transformation of food systems and food security. This cooperation has proven successful and will be strengthened within the framework of this strategy.

In addition to the ICDC, there are coordination and steering bodies on specific topics such as health, climate, culture, migration, raw materials and foreign economic policy.

Advisory Committee on International Cooperation (AC-IC)

The AC-IC is an extra-parliamentary commission that advises the Federal Council on IC issues. It examines goals, priorities and the overall IC concept and submits its own proposals and recommendations. Consisting of twelve members from civil society, the private sector and academia, the group meets four times per year and conducts an annual work visit to a partner country.

International Cooperation Forum Switzerland (IC Forum)

The IC Forum is an annual meeting of experts aimed at policymakers, researchers, the private and financial sectors and representatives from civil society. The congress focuses on finding and deploying innovative solutions in response to global challenges. The event is open to the public.

4.4 Follow-up, evaluation and accountability

The IC Strategy 2021–24 confirmed the need for engaging in evidence-based international cooperation. Swiss IC continues to be guided by international frameworks on effectiveness, including the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) and the OECD/DAC's Managing for Sustainable Development Results (MfSDR) principles.

Switzerland must be able to check which IC results have been achieved in relation to the objectives it has set so that it can facilitate institutional learning processes and adapt its approaches where needed. This information is also required for reporting purposes. The Federal Council regularly informs Parliament about the effectiveness of past IC activities, particularly at the end of a given strategy's timeframe.

For measuring results, IC relies on a variety of complementary instruments tailored to the mandate of each unit. Results are mainly measured via monitoring and evaluation. The IC units use monitoring systems with standardised indicators that allow results to be aggregated from various projects and programmes and then connected to the objectives of the IC Strategy and the SDGs.⁷² Evaluations provide an opportunity to review results using OECD/DAC criteria.⁷³ Over one hundred projects and programmes are evaluated by independent experts according to this criteria each year. In the 2021–24 period, independent evaluations were conducted in the following thematic areas: climate, private sector engagement, governance and rule of law, and the effectiveness of dialogue with partner countries.⁷⁴ In addition, the geographical impact of IC in the Mekong region as well as in Chad, South Sudan and Nepal was evaluated.

At the request of the Control Committees of the Federal Assembly, the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (PCA) investigated the effectiveness of these evaluations as part of the overall effectiveness measurement toolkit for international cooperation. Based on this investigation, the Control Committee of the Council of States (CC-CS) concluded in its report⁷⁵ that there is a need for action despite the good quality of some evaluations. The Federal Council sees the six recommendations from the CC-CS report as useful and feasible and has tasked the IC units with improving the methodology for measuring effectiveness.⁷⁶ The IC units will ensure the implementation of these measures by the end of 2026. They have also defined three action areas – quality, digitalisation and communication – for improving effectiveness measurement over the medium to long term.

⁷² See Annex 4.

⁷³ www.oecd.org > DAC criteria for evaluating development aid; relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability

⁷⁴ The SDC evaluations can be downloaded at www.deza.admin.ch > The SDC > What does the SDC do? > Measuring aid effectiveness > Evaluations, and those of SECO at www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch > Publications > Reports > Independent evaluations.

⁷⁵ BBI 2023 2893

⁷⁶ BBI 2024 556

4.5 Finances

Every four years, Parliament decides on the IC budget in the form of commitment appropriations. The Federal Council requested five commitment appropriations for the 2025–28 period totalling CHF 11.27 billion via three federal decrees:

1. The commitment appropriation “humanitarian aid” (SDC) covers contributions to international organisations operating in crisis and conflict situations as well as the implementation of humanitarian operations agreed on by the Federal Council. Given the situation, this appropriation will be gradually increased from 20 to 25% of the total budget by 2028.⁷⁷
2. The commitment appropriation “development cooperation” (SDC) includes technical cooperation and financial aid for developing countries as well as core contributions to multilateral organisations, with the latter making up 39%⁷⁸ of the appropriation (see Table 7). Regarding core contributions to multilateral organisations, the estimated distribution of funds will continue to be two-thirds (66%) for international financial institutions and one-third (34%) for UN organisations, global funds and networks.
3. The commitment appropriation “economic development cooperation” (SECO) includes bilateral economic and trade policy measures that fall within a development cooperation framework.
4. The commitment appropriation “peacebuilding and human rights” (PHRD) includes measures to promote peace and strengthen human rights.
5. The commitment appropriation “Ukraine and Region” (SDC/SECO/AFM) includes the measures from the Ukraine and Region Country Programme (including reconstruction) as well as Swiss contributions to NGOs and international organisations that also benefit Ukraine. CHF 1.5 billion has been allocated for Ukraine and the surrounding region. Depending on how the situation on the ground develops, these funds will be used for the Ukraine Country Programme activities defined by the three IC units.

Starting in 2025, contributions intended for Eastern European countries will be merged into the commitment appropriations for development cooperation, economic development cooperation and Ukraine and the region.

During the 2024 winter session, Parliament reduced the commitment appropriations for development cooperation by CHF 151 million, bringing the total amount of the five commitment appropriations to CHF 11.12 billion. Additionally, they decided on savings of CHF 110 million in the 2025 budget and a further CHF 321 million in the 2026–28 financial plan.⁷⁹

With these five commitment appropriations, Parliament authorises the Federal Council to make financial commitments for its IC activities. These appropriations represent the upper limit of the commitments that Switzerland can enter into during the 2025–28 period. Disbursements from these appropriations can extend beyond the commitment period. On average, commitment appropriations amount to 111% of the expenditures planned for this period.⁸⁰

The funds listed in Table 1 correspond to approximately 3% of federal expenditures. Commitment appropriations can only be fully utilised if the federal budget develops positively. Budget cuts or changes to the financial plan remain possible and can occur during the annual approval process for the federal budget by Parliament.

IC makes an important contribution to the implementation of international financial goals with respect to the climate. It does this within the scope of its mandate to support the most disadvantaged developing countries, regions and populations. In the IC Strategy 2025–28, a minimum of CHF 1.6 billion has been earmarked for climate finance goals. Furthermore, IC finances projects that contribute to the international goals of conserving biodiversity. International commitments on climate financing were adopted by the international community in November 2024 at COP 29. Increasing the private sector’s mobilisation of financial resources for climate and environmental protection, including biodiversity, remains a central goal of this strategy. IC’s financial commitments complement other funds, such as the commitment appropriations for global environmental issues, which was approved by Parliament on 8 March 2023, and other future instruments. The FDFA and the EAER work closely with DETEC to define options for international environmental financing both inside and outside the scope of international cooperation.

The activities financed via commitment appropriations are described in Sections 3.3.2 and 4.2.

Continued on page 40

⁷⁷ Annex 3 explains why it is not possible to finance an increase in humanitarian aid in protracted crises through supplementary credits.

⁷⁸ This figure dropped from 40% to 39% due to cuts.

⁷⁹ See table 1 and Supplementary Report to the Dispatch on IC Strategy 2025–2028. The CHF 321 million figure reflects the status of cuts to the 2026–28 financial plan, which was decided when the IC Strategy 2025–28 was adopted in December 2024.

⁸⁰ See Annex 3. The original ratio has changed as a result of the Parliament’s decision to make cuts (see Table 1).

Financial plan and commitments for the implementation of the IC Strategy 2025–28⁸¹

Figures according to the Parliament's decision on IC Strategy 2025–28 and on budget 2025 with integrated task and financial plan 2026–2028. (without adjustments based on later decisions to be reflected in the 2026 budget and beyond; e.g., cuts to departmental research, adjustments for inflation, etc.)

(in CHF million, rounded)	Unit	Credit	Commitments ¹⁾	%	Budget	Financial plan				Total
		number	2025–2028		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2025–2028
Humanitarian Aid commitment appropriation in all lines	SDC		2 207,6	19.8%	518,0	479,7	504,5	526,9	545,4	2 056,6
Humanitarian actions		A231.0332			438,0	399,7	424,5	446,9	465,4	1 736,6
Contribution to ICRC headquarters		A231.0333			80,0	80,0	80,0	80,0	80,0	320,0
Development Cooperation commitment appropriation	SDC		5 804,7	52.2%	1 564,1	1 334,6	1 381,3	1 340,1	1 302,9	5 358,9
Development cooperation (bilateral) ²⁾		A231.0329			988,7	810,1	825,7	784,5	747,3	3 167,6
Contributions to multilateral organisations		A231.0330			328,3	277,4	306,6	310,2	317,0	1 211,3
Replenishment of IDA funds (World Bank)		A231.0331			242,2	242,3	244,2	240,6	233,8	960,9
IC loans and shares		A235.0112			0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
IC investments ³⁾		A236.0141			4,9	4,8	4,8	4,8	4,8	19,1
Economic Development Cooperation commitment appropriation	SECO		1 376,9	12.4%	343,9	282,3	276,3	241,0	208,1	1 007,7
Economic cooperation ⁴⁾		A231.0202			301,3	244,7	236,3	201,0	168,1	850,1
Loans and shares, developing countries		A235.0101			25,0	25,0	30,0	30,0	30,0	115,0
Investments, developing countries ²⁾		A236.0142			17,6	12,6	10,0	10,0	10,0	42,6
Peacebuilding and human rights commitment appropriation⁵⁾			232,6	2.1%	59,4	53,8	55,5	55,3	55,4	220,0
Civil conflict resolution and human rights	PHRD	A231.0338			58,4	52,7	54,4	54,2	54,3	215,5
Actions in favour of international law ⁶⁾	DIL	A231.0340			1,1	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,2	4,6
Ukraine and Region commitment appropriation			1 500,0	13.5%		258,3	304,8	358,4	410,6	1 332,0
Support for Ukraine and Region (FDFA)	SDC, PHRD	A231.0457				130,3	145,4	182,7	233,7	692,0
Support for Ukraine and Region (SECO)	SECO	A231.0202				128,0	159,4	175,7	176,9	640,0
<i>Additional contributions from other appropriations that benefit Ukraine⁷⁾</i>	<i>SDC</i>	<i>div.</i>				<i>42,7</i>	<i>41,6</i>	<i>41,3</i>	<i>42,3</i>	<i>168,0</i>
TOTAL			11 121,8		2 485,4	2 408,8	2 522,3	2 521,8	2 522,4	9 975,2

Table 1

1) Due to IC organisational processes, certain commitments exceed payment capacity (see Annex 3). Disbursements for commitments made before 31 December 2028 can also be made in phases in 2029 and beyond.

2) The funds from budget credit A231.0336 'Development Cooperation, Eastern Countries' were listed separately in the IC Dispatch 2021–24. They are now consolidated under the budget credit A231.0329 'Development Cooperation (bilateral)' (see also section 6.5.4 of IC Dispatch 2021–24 [Federal Gazette 2020]).

3) Investment contributions include interest-free, conditionally repayable loans and first loss participations that are granted by the SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) and SECO (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs) according to their remit and authority.

4) The funds from budget credit A231.0210 'Economic Development Cooperation, Eastern Countries' were listed separately in the IC Dispatch 2021–24. They are now consolidated under the budget credit A231.0202 'Economic Cooperation (bilateral)'.

5) Starting in 2024, CHF 1 million will be transferred from budget credit A231.0338 'Civilian Conflict Management and Human Rights' to budget credit A231.0441 'National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)'. These funds are therefore not included in this table and were requested with a separate payment framework for the 2023–26 period.

6) The existing credit A231.0340 'Actions in favour of international law' has been integrated into the IC Strategy.

7) Part of the contributions to the ICRC, international organisations, NGOs and other organisations, as well as deliveries of relief supplies, will also benefit Ukraine. The financing takes place via various other IC credits and is shown here (italics) for informational purposes.

81 The financial plan and commitment funds have been adjusted following parliamentary decisions on budget reductions. Presented here is the financial planning status for 2026–28 as determined in December 2024, when the IC Strategy 2025–28 was approved (please refer to the Supplementary Report to the Dispatch on IC Strategy 2025–28). Financial planning remains subject to change throughout the strategy period.

Switzerland's participation in the capital increases of multilateral development banks is not included in this IC document, as this concerns investments made via share purchases or guarantee commitments. In line with established IC practice, one-off investments of this kind are not financed by or compensated through existing budgets. In order to allow for flexible responses to extraordinary situations, options for transferring funds between certain commitment appropriations and payment credits are possible under specific conditions.⁸²

The financial plan and committed funds reflect when the IC Strategy 2025–28 was adopted in December 2024. Financial planning may change during the strategy period. The annually updated budget and financial plan can be viewed [here](#):



4.6 Impact on the federal government

4.6.1 Implications for internal expenditure and personnel

A total internal expenditure of CHF 1,123.6 million will likely be required for implementing IC activities; of this, CHF 926.4 million is allocated to personnel expenses in Switzerland and in representations abroad, including local IC staff. This corresponds to around 10% of the commitment appropriations.⁸³ Since the geographical focus will not change, material and operating expenses as well as the real estate situation should also remain stable. However, situations can quickly change. Flexibility is therefore required when it comes to implementation, which could have an impact on expenses. This undergoes regular evaluation as part of the budget process.

Based on the 2024 budget, IC staff will correspond to roughly 1,800 full-time equivalents.⁸⁴ IC needs employees with a high level of specialist competencies who are capable of planning, monitoring and evaluating programmes and who can work embedded in a network, represent Switzerland in negotiations and influence international policy regarding poverty reduction and sustainable development. IC activities require highly qualified professionals who are willing to work and live in sometimes very difficult environments. To ensure the mental and physical wellbeing of staff, Swiss IC needs flexible and innovative personnel management, which can generate higher costs than more stable employment contexts. Switzerland's presence can be risky in certain situations. The employer's duty of care in an IC context is carried out via a risk analysis and targeted risk mitigation measures.

Personnel and internal expenditures remain stable and are only estimates; they are not covered by the commitment appropriations.

4.6.2 Official development assistance (ODA)

The commitment appropriations can essentially be recorded as ODA in line with the OECD definition. The three units involved generally have budgets that cover three quarters of Swiss ODA. Other public entities (other federal offices, cantons and communes) also engage in international cooperation with their own funds, and part of these resources are recorded as ODA. ODA is reported as a percentage of GNI.

⁸² See Chapter 3.7.1 "Flexibility and transfer options" in the Dispatch on IC Strategy 2025–28 and the accompanying supplementary report.

⁸³ The proportion of internal expenditures in relation to transfer credits has been adjusted following parliamentary decisions on cuts. The internal expenditure figure is an estimate.

⁸⁴ The estimate of the full-time equivalents required to implement the strategy has been adjusted in line with the cuts decided by Parliament.

Swiss ODA (official development assistance) 2019–24

(in CHF million, rounded)	2019	in % of GNI	2020	in % of GNI	2021	in % of GNI	2022	in % of GNI	2023	in % of GNI	2024	in % of GNI
IC credit*	2 289	0,33%	2 334	0,34%	2 402	0,34%	2 576	0,34%	2 717	0,35%	2 482	0,31%
Other, federal (excl. asylum costs in Switzerland)**	451	0,06%	648	0,10%	782	0,11%	453	0,06%	548	0,07%	493	0,06%
Asylum costs in Switzerland included in ODA calculation	282	0,04%	303	0,04%	337	0,05%	1 206	0,16%	1 311	0,17%	1 012	0,13%
Cantons and communes***	58	0,01%	60	0,01%	55	0,01%	58	0,01%	113	0,01%	65	0,01%
Swiss ODA	3 080	0,44%	3 346	0,49%	3 576	0,50%	4 293	0,56%	4 689	0,60%	4 053	0,51%
ODA excluding asylum costs in Switzerland	2 798	0,40%	3 042	0,45%	3 239	0,45%	3 088	0,40%	3 379	0,43%	3 041	0,38%
GNI****	701 071		680 929		715 194		765 675		779 075		794 835	

Table 2

* Excluding supplementary COVID credits for 2020–21 with internal expenditures

** Including supplementary COVID credits for 2020–21 and internal expenditures

*** Estimate for 2024

**** GNI 2019–23 according to the Federal Statistical Office at the time ODA data was submitted to the OECD, 2024 GNI according to information from SECO (27.02.2025)

Care costs for asylum seekers, temporarily admitted persons and refugees from developing countries during the first year of their stay in Switzerland make up a significant but highly fluctuating part of Swiss ODA.⁸⁵ These costs are not covered by IC appropriations but are charged to the State Secretariat for Migration.

The unusually high ODA/GNI ratio of 0.60% in 2023 is mainly attributable to the impact of the war in Ukraine and in particular the costs of receiving Ukrainian refugees (protection status S), the conflict in the Middle East and other crises. Excluding asylum costs, the ratio is 0.43%.

In 2024, the ODA/GNI ratio dropped to 0.51%, due to both the reduction in asylum costs included in the ODA calculation and cuts to international cooperation. Excluding asylum costs, it amounted to 0.38%, which represents the lowest level since 2012.⁸⁶

It is difficult to forecast the ODA/GNI ratio for the 2025–28 period, as GNI can only be estimated, and asylum costs fluctuate heavily due to the international context. The ODA ratio would be 0.41% based on current projections; when excluding asylum costs in Switzerland, the ratio would be 0.36%.

This is lower compared to the IC Strategy 2021–24. This is because GNI has grown more strongly than the resources allocated to IC due to debt brake-related financial measures.

⁸⁵ Including vulnerable persons without a residence permit in Switzerland (Status S)

⁸⁶ This document has been updated with the ODA ratio from 2024, which was not yet known at the time the Dispatch was approved by the Federal Council.

Annexes

Annex 1

Intervention countries for Swiss IC (according to Figures 5, 6 and 7)

Priority countries for bilateral development cooperation (SDC and SECO)

Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia	MENA	Eastern Europe	Other
<i>Benin (SDC)</i>	<i>Bangladesh*** (SDC)</i>	Egypt (SDC & SECO)	Albania*** (SDC and SECO)	Peru (SECO)
<i>Burkina Faso (SDC)</i>	Indonesia (SECO)	Occupied Palestinian territory (SDC)	Armenia (SDC)	
<i>Burundi (SDC)</i>	<i>Cambodia (SDC)</i>	Morocco (SECO)	Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDC)	
Ghana (SECO)	Kyrgyzstan (SDC & SECO)	Syria (Lebanon / Jordan / Iraq) (SDC)	Georgial (SDC)	
<i>Congo (Democratic Republic) (SDC)</i>	<i>Laos (SDC)</i>	Tunesia (SDC & SECO)	Kosovo (SDC)	
<i>Mali (SDC)</i>	<i>Myanmar (SDC)</i>		North Macedonia (SDC)	
<i>Mozambique (SDC)</i>	<i>Nepal (SDC)</i>		Moldova (SDC)	
<i>Niger (SDC)</i>	Tajikistan (SDC & SECO)		Serbia (SDC and SECO)	
<i>Rwanda (SDC)</i>	Uzbekistan (SDC)		Ukraine (SDC and SECO)	
<i>Zambia*/*** (SDC)</i>	Vietnam (SECO)			
<i>Zimbabwe (SDC)</i>				
<i>Somalia* (Ethiopia/Kenya) (SDC)</i>				
South Africa (SECO)				
<i>Tanzania (SDC)</i>				
<i>Chad (SDC)</i>				

* Countries where there is currently no local Swiss representation; programmes are often coordinated from neighbouring countries.

** List of countries in which Swiss Humanitarian Aid is engaged over several years due to the protracted nature of certain crises. It may also provide intermittent support in other nations as part of its universal mandate. The list will change based on the global situation from 2025 to 2028.

*** Countries where SDC's bilateral cooperation will end by 2028

87 Complementary measures by SECO in Azerbaijan to the SDC programme in the South Caucasus (Georgia and Armenia).

Humanitarian Aid, multi-year presence in contexts of protracted crises outside of priority countries**

Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia	MENA	Eastern Europe	Other
<i>Central African Republic</i> <i>Sudan</i> <i>South Sudan</i>	<i>Afghanistan</i>	<i>Yemen*</i>		Colombia (Venezuela) Haiti

PHRD, peacebuilding programmes (as of 1.1.2024)

Sub-Saharan Africa	Asia	MENA	Eastern Europe	Other
<i>Burundi</i> <i>Congo (Democratic Republic)</i> <i>Mali</i> <i>Nigeria</i> <i>Sudan</i> <i>South Sudan</i>	<i>Myanmar</i> <i>Sri Lanka</i>	Israel-Palestine Libya Lebanon Syria	Georgia Kosovo (Serbia) Ukraine	Colombia

Table 3

* Countries where there is currently no local Swiss representation; programmes are often coordinated from neighbouring countries.

** List of countries in which Swiss Humanitarian Aid is engaged over several years due to the protracted nature of certain crises. It may also provide intermittent support in other nations as part of its universal mandate. The list will change based on the global situation from 2025 to 2028.

*** Countries where SDC's bilateral cooperation will end by 2028.

IC activities in the least developed countries

Swiss IC is deeply committed to the least developed countries (LDCs): 17 of the 45 LDCs are priority countries for the SDC, as indicated in italics in the tables above. Swiss IC is also involved in multi-year programmes in six other LDCs affected by protracted crises: Afghanistan, Haiti, the Central African Republic, Sudan, South Sudan and Yemen.

The situation in Eastern Europe (where IC must remain present), the efforts to support development and stability hubs in priority regions (SECO) and IC's multilateral approach to addressing global challenges are also important in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development. In today's interconnected world, these efforts also have a positive impact on the LDCs.

Context-dependent adaptation of IC work instruments

Swiss IC does not work in the same way and with the same goals in all countries. In some countries, IC mainly pursues the humanitarian goal of saving lives and alleviating suffering, while in others, it supports the efforts of partner countries for developing sustainably and reducing poverty. IC increasingly works with a short, medium and long-term approach with two goals in mind: to be able to respond to emergency situations and to reduce the structural factors responsible for fragility and low resilience, thereby promoting stability.

The expected outcomes, working methods, management structures, costs and risks vary depending on the context and development level of the country.

Switzerland is able to strengthen its impact and role through the combined use of humanitarian aid, development cooperation and economic cooperation and peacebuilding.

Relation between the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Fragility Index of SDC and SECO priority countries

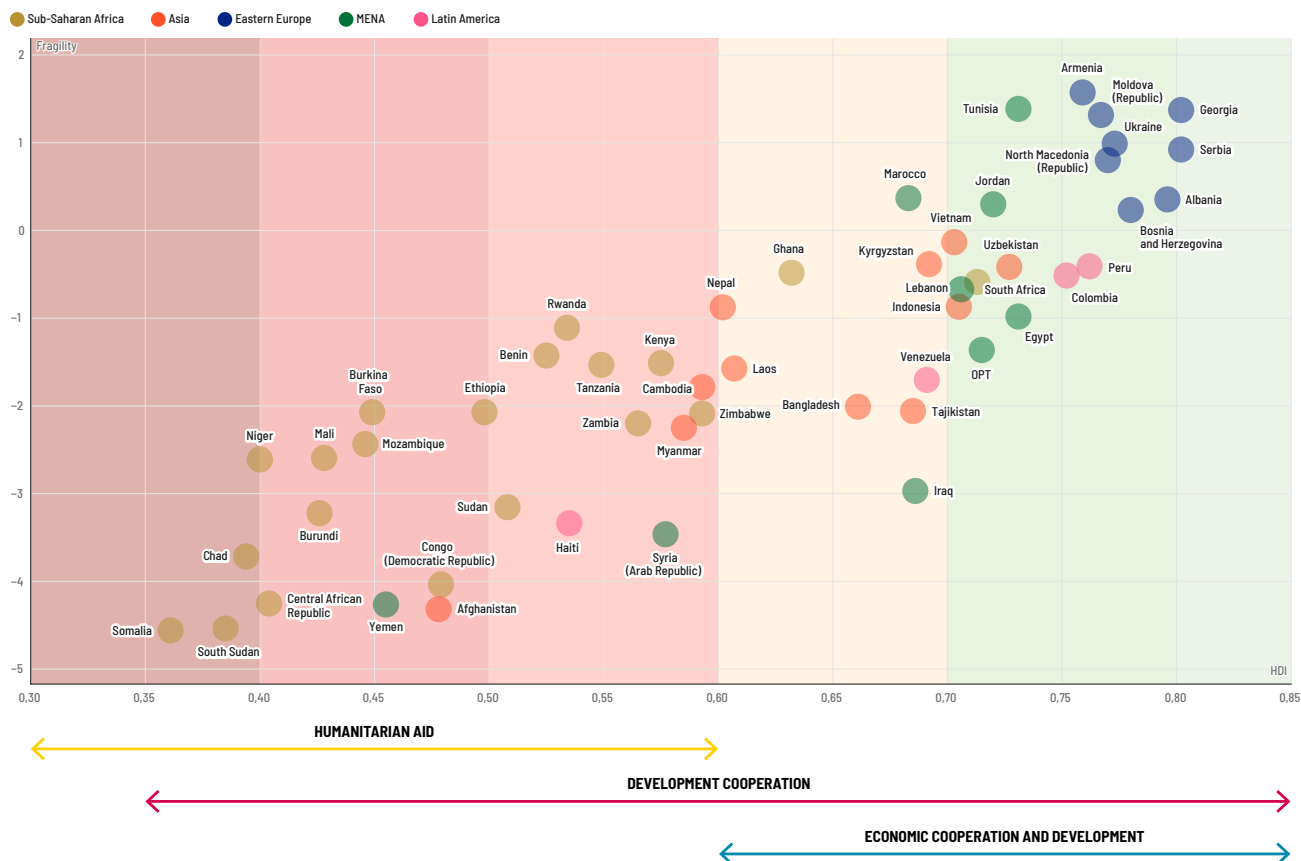


Figure 11: Use of IC instruments by context. The PHRD's peacebuilding activities are needs-based and guided by political realities, regardless of the country's level of fragility or the human development index. [FDFA]

List of priority multilateral organisations

Switzerland supports a total of 22⁸⁸ priority multilateral organisations:

	Organisation	Mandate	Connexion with Switzerland
International financial institutions	World Bank, including International Development Association	Tasked with reducing poverty by providing concessional loans and non-repayable grants to governments of the poorest countries (IDA only), promoting growth beneficial to disadvantaged groups, reducing inequalities and improving living conditions for the population.	Top 10 donor
	African Development Bank, incl. African Development Fund	Promoting sustainable economic development in their respective region (Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean), helping reduce poverty, improving quality of life for populations in member states, modernising infrastructure and connectivity and reducing social inequalities.	Founding member Top 12 donor
	Asian Development Bank, incl. Asian Development Fund		Founding member
	Inter-American Development Bank		Founding member
	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)		Founding member
Coordination	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Coordinates operations between various humanitarian and development cooperation entities, ensuring coordinated and effective interventions in emergency situations. Until 2017, the DCO was embedded within UNDP and received IC support via this channel. It was spun off into a separate unit for governance reasons.	Founding member
	Development Coordination Office, DCO		Founding member

⁸⁸ Due to the withdrawal from UNAIDS and the Global Partnership for Education starting in 2025, the number of priority organisations has decreased to 22 from the originally proposed 24.

	Organisation	Mandate	Connexion with Switzerland
Central development agencies	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Supports developing countries in drafting and implementing national sustainable development policies, thereby helping them reach their own development goals as well as internationally agreed upon objectives, notably the SDGs.	Founding member Top 10 donor
	United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Promotes children's rights, contributes to meeting their basic needs and helps them to fulfil their potential. Also an important humanitarian partner in protecting and caring for children in crisis situations.	Founding member Top 10 donor
	United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	Analyses demographic development challenges and promotes the right to health along with sexual and reproductive rights.	Founding member Top 10 donor
	UN Women	Fights discrimination and violence against women and promotes gender equality.	Founding member Top 10 donor
Humanitarian organisations	World Food Programme (WFP)	Provides food aid to refugees and victims of other emergencies and crisis situations requiring longer-term intervention; supports global food security.	Founding member
	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (OHCR)	Protects and supports refugees and stateless persons worldwide.	Founding member Headquartered in Geneva
	International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC and IFRC)	Protecting and supporting victims of armed conflicts and other violent situations.	Founding member Headquartered in Geneva
	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)	Ensures basic services for five million Palestinian refugees – an important contribution to stability in the region.	Swiss leadership

	Organisation	Mandate	Connexion with Switzerland
Thematic UN agencies and funds	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)	Advocates for and protects universal human rights. Coordinates all international cooperation in this area. Investigates and addresses human rights violations around the world.	Headquartered in Geneva
	Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)	Supports peacebuilding in post-conflict and conflict-prone countries.	Top 10 donor
	World Health Organisation (WHO)	Directs and coordinates global health activities, launches health research programmes, establishes norms and standards and provides countries with specialist support.	Founding member Headquarter in Geneva Important normative function
	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)	Generates and distributes funds to help prevent and treat AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, whilst strengthening health care systems and pandemic management capabilities.	Founding member Top 10 donor Headquarter in Geneva
	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)	Active in four areas: poverty reduction, food security, improving population health and nutrition, and sustainable natural resource management	Founding member
	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	Provides resources to poor rural communities to improve their food security and nutrition, increase their incomes and strengthen their resilience. Both a specialised UN agency and an international financial institution.	Top 10 donor
	Green Climate Fund (GCF)	Supports developing countries' efforts and institutional capacity to deal with climate change, with emphasis on measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and adapting to the effects of climate change.	Founding member

Table 4

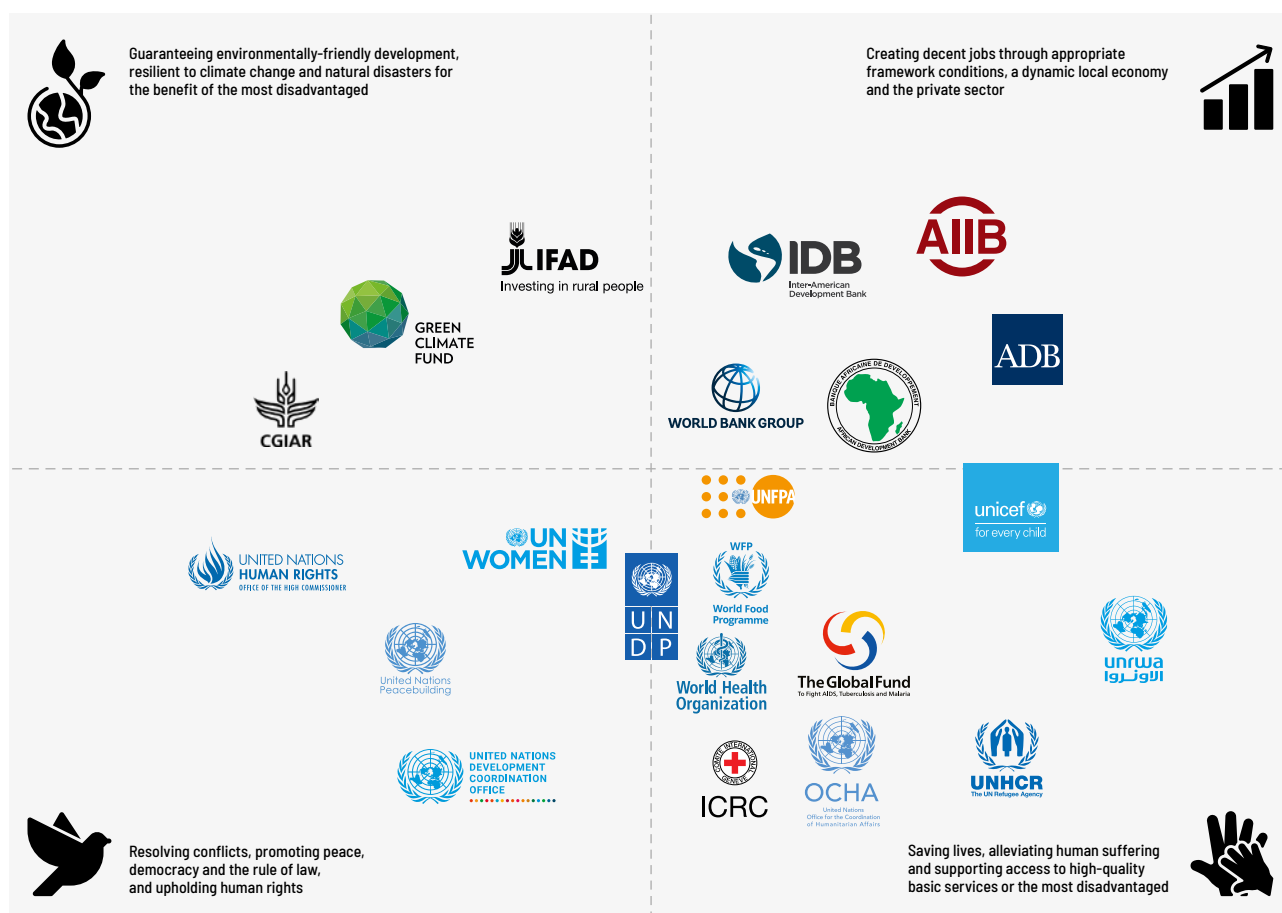


Figure 12: Mandates of multilateral organisations grouped according to development objectives (FDFA)

Note: While multilateral development banks are primarily categorised under economic development (financial institutions, loans/grants to governments, contributions to development projects, etc.), the projects they fund actually address all four development objectives that Swiss IC has established.

Distribution of funds within the commitment appropriations

Commitment appropriation “Humanitarian aid”

The proportion of this appropriation vis-à-vis total IC funds will be gradually increased.

Estimated distribution of humanitarian aid funds

% of total	Commitment (in CHF million)	Activities (with estimated average distribution during the commitment appropriation period)	Category
85.5%	1,887.6	Humanitarian aid in crisis contexts	
		59% humanitarian aid in ongoing crisis contexts (excluding support for Ukraine and the region)	<i>Bilateral</i>
		10% emergency humanitarian aid	<i>Bilateral</i>
		2% core contributions to Swiss NGOs*	<i>Bilateral</i>
		15% contributions to Red Cross and UN organisations*	<i>Multilateral</i>
14.5%	320.0	Contribution to ICRC headquarters*	<i>Multilateral</i>
100%	2,207.6	Humanitarian aid commitments	

Table 5

* A portion of the contributions to the ICRC, international organisations, NGOs and other organisations and to relief supply deliveries will also benefit Ukraine.

Commitment appropriation “Development cooperation”

The development cooperation commitment appropriation also includes the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia starting in 2025. The funds are distributed differently due to the inclusion of these additional countries.

Estimated distribution of development cooperation funds

% of total	Commitment (in CHF million)	Activities (with estimated average distribution during the commitment appropriation period)	Category
61%	3,519.5	Development cooperation, incl. countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia 41% bilateral cooperation (expected bilateral share per region) ° 44% Sub-Saharan Africa 24% Europa, North Africa and Middle East (excluding support for Ukraine and the region) 24% Asia (incl. Central Asia) and 8% other 12% global programmes and initiatives (thematic)* 8% core contributions to Swiss NGOs*	<i>Bilateral</i>
39%	2,285.2	Core contributions to multilateral organisations* 66% international financial institutions* 34% UN organisations and global funds and networks*	<i>Multilateral</i>
100%	5,804.7	Development cooperation commitments	

Table 6

° Up to 10 percent of geographical commitments can be used for specific commitments (Section 3.3.3, Flexible funds)

* Part of the contributions to international organisations, NGOs and other organisations will also benefit Ukraine.

Commitment appropriation “Economic development cooperation”

Estimated distribution of economic cooperation funds

% of total	Commitment (in CHF million)	Activities (with estimated average distribution during the appropriation period)	Category
55%	753.8	Economic cooperation	<i>Bilateral</i>
		Expected bilateral share per region	
		18% Sub-Saharan Africa	
		21% Europe (excluding support for Ukraine and the region)	
		14% Middle East and North Africa	
		36% Asia (incl. Central Asia) and	
		11% other	
45%	623.1	Global programmes and thematic initiatives (incl. SIFEM)	<i>Bilateral</i>
100%	1 376.9	Economic development cooperation commitments	

Table 7

Commitment appropriation “Peacebuilding and human rights”

Estimated distribution of peacebuilding and human rights funds

% of total	Commitment (in CHF million)	Activities (with estimated average distribution during the commitment appropriation period)	Category
98%	228.1	Civilian conflict management and human rights	<i>Bilateral</i>
		Estimated fund distribution by topic	
		60% peacebuilding	
		25% human rights diplomacy	
		10% humanitarian diplomacy	
		5% democracy promotion	
		Estimated fund distribution by region	
		35% Sub-Saharan Africa	
		25% OSCE region/Europe (excl. support for Ukraine and the region)	
		25% Middle East & North Africa	
		15% other countries	
2%	4.5	Actions in favour of international law	<i>Bilateral</i>
100%	232.6	Peacebuilding and human rights commitments	

Table 8

The commitment appropriation “peacebuilding and human rights” does not cover the cost of deploying specialists with an FDFA mandate. Taking these deployments into consideration, which also contribute to achieving the objectives of this commitment appropriation, the actual percentage distribution may differ from the stated percentages.

Commitment appropriation “Ukraine and the region”

Starting in 2025, the FDFA's support for Ukraine and the region, including support for reconstruction, will be managed through a separate credit; the funds have been transferred from the FDFA's existing credits

% of total	Commitment (in CHF million)	Activities (with estimated average distribution during the commitment appropriation period)	Category
89%	1,332.0	Ukraine country programme and the region (incl. reconstruction) 52% humanitarian aid, development cooperation and civilian conflict management and human rights (SDC/PHRD) 48% economic development cooperation (SECO) and cooperation with the Swiss private sector	<i>Bilateral</i>
11%	168.0	Contributions that benefit Ukraine*	<i>Bilat./mult</i>
100%	1,500.0	Commitments for Ukraine and the region	

Table 9

* Part of the contributions to the ICRC, NGOs and other organisations, international organisations, the International Development Association (IDA), etc. will also benefit Ukraine.

What is the difference between a commitment appropriation and a budgetary credit/payment credit?

A programme commitment generally leads to disbursements that span multiple years. Some payments from commitments made during a strategy period will therefore only be disbursed after the 2025–28 period concludes. During the 2025–28 timeframe, payments will also be made from commitments entered into prior to 2025.

The commitments made (commitment appropriations) exceed the amount of the payments planned for the 2025–28 period, in part because the contexts in which IC operates – particularly fragile contexts (unforeseen crises, political events, etc.) – can cause delays, changes or even the termination of certain projects or programmes. In these cases, the relevant commitments will not be disbursed.

Commitments also include contributions from third-party partners (such as when a donor country delegates the management of its funds to Switzerland within a joint programme), which are not included in the budgetary/payment credits.

There is no need for concern about exceeding the amounts provided for in the legislature's financial plan. The commitment appropriation approach has proven effective and has also been used for many years in other areas of the federal government (by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, in the real estate portfolios of armasuisse and by the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics).

Why has the Humanitarian Aid credit been increased instead of making use of supplementary credits?

During the 2021–24 period, supplementary credits were approved in line with the Financial Budget Act of 7 October 2005⁸⁹ in connection with events in Afghanistan, Ukraine and the Middle East. These events were unforeseen and therefore not considered in the IC Strategy 2021–24.

Currently, crises are multiplying and becoming more protracted and structural in nature, increasing the need for long-term humanitarian aid. The operating environment for Swiss IC is growing increasingly fragile (for instance, in priority countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Myanmar, etc.). It is difficult to justify supplementary credits (as defined by the aforementioned Financial Budget Act), as they are intended for unforeseen events not accounted for in the strategy's funding allocation.

However, Switzerland's activities in recurring crisis situations can be planned. These situations require a 5% increase in the Humanitarian Aid credit. This allows Swiss IC to continue being a reliable partner for local populations while maintaining its long-term vision. It is still possible to use supplementary credits in exceptional situations, provided that debt brake guidelines and requirements are respected.

⁸⁹ AS 2023 29

Development goals and specific objectives of the IC Strategy 2025–28

	Human development: Save lives, alleviate human suffering and provide access to high-quality basic services for the most disadvantaged						
Specific objective 1	Create conditions and prospects for safe and regular migration, improve integration and protection and strengthen migration's contribution to sustainable development						
Specific objective 2	Reshape health systems to make them more resilient and facilitate equal access to high-quality health services for vulnerable populations						
	Sustainable economic development: Create decent jobs by fostering appropriate general conditions, a dynamic local economy and the private sector.						
Specific objective 3	Strengthen local SMEs so that they can access appropriate financing solutions and global markets and also provide high-quality training opportunities						
Specific objective 4	Make public institutions more efficient and improve the economic framework						
	Climate and environment: Guarantee environmentally friendly development, resilient to climate change and natural hazards, for the benefit of the most disadvantaged						
Specific objective 5	Make food systems more sustainable, resilient and equitable, thereby combating hunger and malnutrition in all forms						
Specific objective 6	Strengthen access to and sustainable management of water resources						
Specific objective 7	Promote access to renewable energies; promote the transition towards renewable energies and energy efficiency						
	Peace and governance: Resolve conflicts, promote peace, democracy and the rule of law, and uphold human rights						
Specific objective 8	Promote democratic processes and institutions at local and national levels, support accountability mechanisms						
Specific objective 9	Strengthen and promote participatory rights and gender equality (inclusion)						
Specific objective 10	Promote the rule of law, good governance and separation of powers						

Table 10

Measuring the effectiveness of IC

IC goals are pursued at the level of individual projects, country and thematic programmes and multilateral contributions. Various complementary instruments at different levels are used for measuring the effectiveness of these activities.

Monitoring and evaluation





IC programmes and projects have established monitoring systems. They are based on a variety of programme- and context-specific indicators that serve three main purposes: guiding and steering activities, measuring success relative to objectives and maintaining accountability to local stakeholders.

IC units have created standardised indicators that complement project-specific indicators so that these highly context-dependent results can be aggregated. This allows results to be aggregated from various projects and programmes and then connected to the objectives of the IC Strategy and the SDGs. These quantitative elements are supplemented by qualitative data analysis and insights from evaluations.

Since 2023, standardised indicators at the SDC have been recorded digitally (Results Data Management RDM), which will allow for better comprehensive data analysis, and reporting in the future.

Evaluations are carried out by independent experts and allow for a systematic and objective outside view of the strategic or operational aspects of IC. Evaluations assess to what extent the results of a measure or strategy correspond to the objectives that were set. Evaluations have three purposes, which are weighted differently depending on the type: steering, learning and/or accountability. SECO also commissions an external committee to review the implementation of recommendations from evaluations. As part of the annual audits for ISO-9001 certification, SECO must demonstrate what measures it has taken to ensure efficiency and improve processes when carrying out its projects. These are important undertakings for the continuous improvement of quality and strategic management.⁹⁰

Figure 13: Reference indicators from the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24 (EAER)

		DDC	SECO	DPDH
	Human development: Save lives, alleviate human suffering and provide access to high-quality basic services for the most disadvantaged	31		
	Sustainable economic development: Create decent jobs by fostering appropriate general conditions, a dynamic local economy and the private sector	20	15	
	Climate and environment: Guarantee environmentally friendly development, resilient to climate change and natural hazards, for the benefit of the most disadvantaged	15		
	Peace and governance: Resolve conflicts, promote peace, democracy and the rule of law, and uphold human rights	24		2

90 www.oecd.org > Mid-term Review of Switzerland, 2022

Evaluations are conducted at three different levels:

Evaluations of country programmes, entire thematic sectors (e.g., climate change) and institutional aspects that involve strategic orientation and programme planning.

Project evaluations to gain insights for adapting ongoing projects or planning new measures.

Evaluations of multilateral efforts by independent evaluation units such as the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank.

The evaluations conducted within the Swiss IC framework follow OECD DAC standards and examine the following criteria depending on the evaluation in question: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. As an OECD member, Switzerland advocates for international evaluation standards and benefits from exchanging experiences with other countries.

Multilateral organisations

In the governing bodies of its priority multilateral organisations, Switzerland consistently advocates for ensuring that conditions are in place for carrying out programmes in a goal- and impact-oriented way. For instance, multilateral development banks (MDBs) use corporate scorecards to establish strategic, institutional and operational development objectives that undergo annual measurement and review⁹¹. MDBs set specific objectives and indicators for each project to guarantee accountability and ensure that they can be systematically monitored. UN organisations put out strategic plans in which they set targets for development impacts and organisational effectiveness in the relevant countries. These UN organisations provide annual reports to governing bodies regarding the achievement of these targets. Furthermore, independent evaluation units continuously assess the strategic direction and effectiveness of both MDBs and UN organisations. Their findings create the conditions for achieving better results.

Limitations of effectiveness measurement

Societal developments are influenced by a variety of factors such as social structures, political and macroeconomic changes and climate change. It is often not possible to draw a direct line of causality between IC projects and developments of this kind. Systemic changes, such as success in combating corruption, can often only be described qualitatively, while for other projects that involve something like a drinking water supply, it is possible to directly measure how many people were reached.

Achieving development results in an IC context also depends on the development status and stability of the partner country in question. This means that in fragile or conflict-affected regions such as the Sahel, different results can be expected than in more stable contexts, such as the Western Balkans.

Strengthening effectiveness measurement

The IC units have defined three action areas for improving effectiveness measurement over the medium to long term. These areas apply to both monitoring and evaluation and are closely interconnected:

91 www.cgdev.org > How Multilateral Development Banks Measure Their Institutional Success

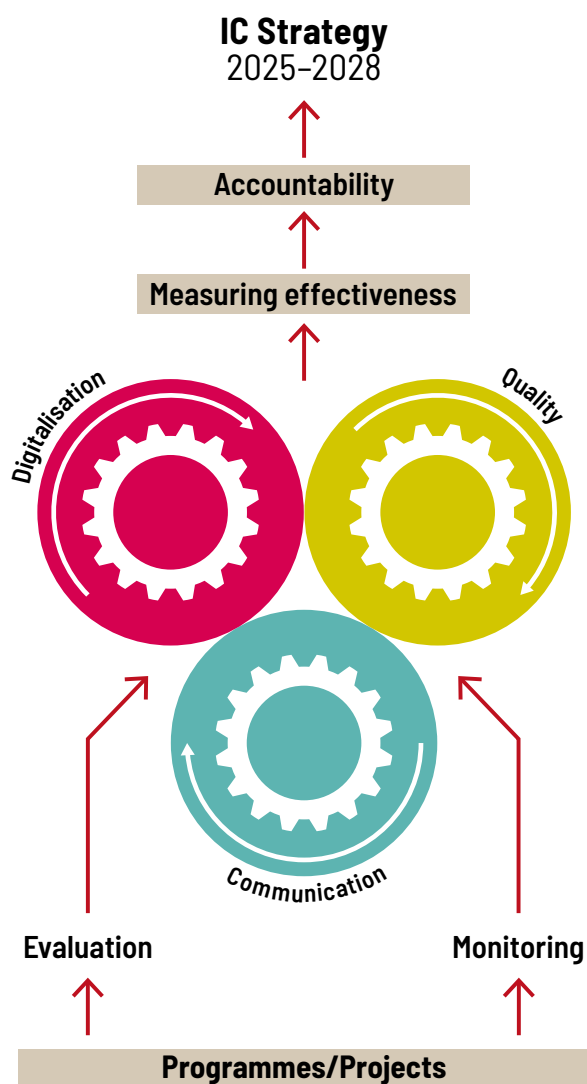


Figure 14: Three action areas for effectiveness measurement (FDFA)

1. Quality: Improving the foundation of data

- Implementation of the Control Committee's recommendations to improve the quality of project evaluations
- Strengthening evaluation activities, for instance by conducting evaluations after a project is completed

2. Digitalisation: Modernising data processing

- Digital collection of project results for cross-cutting data analysis
- Digital evaluation platform to promote using evidence and learning from it

3. Communication: Accessibility of development results

- Public accessibility of digital platforms
- Communication about the successes and failures of IC

List of abbreviations

AC-IC	Advisory Commission for International Cooperation	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
ACT-A	Access to Covid-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator	OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
BLW	Federal Office for Agriculture	PHRD	Peace and Human Rights Division
Cst.	Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation of 18 April 1999 (SR 101)	SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals from the 2030 Agenda
DCAF	Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance	SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
DDPS	Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport	SEM	State Secretariat for Migration
DETEC	Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications	SEP	Swiss Expert Pool for Civilian Peacebuilding
DRR	Disaster risk reduction	SERI	State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation
EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research	SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit
EFTA	European Free Trade Association	SIFEM	Swiss Investment Fund for Emerging Markets
ETHZ	ETH Zurich	SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
EU	European Union	UN	United Nations
FAO	UN Food and Agriculture Organization		
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs		
FDFA STS	FDFA State Secretariat		
FDHA	Federal Department of Home Affairs		
FDJP	Federal Department of Justice and Police		
FOC	Federal Office of Culture		
FOEN	Federal Office for the Environment		
FOPH	Federal Office of Public Health		
FPS	Foreign Policy Strategy		
FSO	Federal Statistical Office		
GCSP	Geneva Centre for Security Policy		
GDP	Gross domestic product		
GICHD	Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining		
GNI	Gross national income		
HA	Humanitarian aid		
IC	Switzerland's international cooperation		
IC-HA Act	Federal Act of 19 March 1976 on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (SR 974.0)		
IC-HA Ordinance	Ordinance of 12 December 1977 on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (SR 974.01)		
ICIDC	Interdepartmental Committee for International Development and Cooperation		
ICM	Interdepartmental structure for international cooperation on migration (encompasses the affected departments of the FDFA, EAER, and FDJP, created by the Federal Council in 2011)		
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross		
IDA	International Development Association of the World Bank		
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development		
IMF	International Monetary Fund		
IPI	Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation		
ODA	Official development assistance (ODA)		

Glossary

The FDFA website contains a [glossary](#) with foreign policy-terms, which is kept continually up to date. The aim of the glossary is to contribute to a common understanding of foreign policy terms.



Imprint

Editors:

Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
3003 Bern
www.fdfa.admin.ch

Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs,
Education and Research EAER
3003 Bern
www.wbf.admin.ch/en

Publication date:

04.08.2025

Design:

Projects Section, FDFA Communication

Cover photograph:

© unsplash.com / Muhammad Murtaza Ghani

Maps:

The borders and names used on the maps in this brochure do not imply official recognition or acceptance by Switzerland.

This publication is also available in German, Italian and French and can be downloaded at www.fdfa.admin.ch/strategy

Bern, 2025 / © FDFA

