

UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

Address by
the President of the Swiss Confederation,
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Address delivered at the UN Summit
for the adoption of
the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

New York
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Check against delivery

President of the General Assembly,

Secretary-General,

Heads of State and Government,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

How did the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development come about?

Today 193 States agree to pursue an ambitious agenda for a sustainable world following a three-year process that in its own way was unique. They were not alone in putting this process into place, however.

They were energetically supported by international civil society, the private sector, academia, and specialists from the UN and the international finance institutions. Prior to that, consultations were held in more than 100 countries around the world and more than 8 million people took part in a survey, giving them an opportunity to voice their needs and priorities.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is thus an agenda *of the people, by the people, for the people*.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We all know the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is not a magic wand which will simply wish away all the problems of this world. However, I

firmly believe that the agenda is an extremely promising approach to resolving many of the world's problems, and that with it we can set a great deal in motion and make big changes.

For Switzerland, it was clear right from the beginning of this process that:

- we can no longer promote development in the Global South while the so-called developed world carries on with business as usual;
- development must be sustainable, meaning that we not only need to promote social and economic development, but also take the environment into account;
- development without respecting and ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law can never be sustainable;
- and lastly, sustainable development is only possible if the entire international community – not just States – works together.

People are at the heart of the agenda. We will only do justice to this much-cited claim if we really stick to the credo of leaving no one behind, in particular:

- if we pay special attention to the most marginalised and most vulnerable;
- if we counter growing inequality with a culture of balance;
- if we preserve and not waste our natural resources; and
- if we provide all children and young people job prospects.

For these reasons, in the work on defining the new goals, Switzerland gave special importance to the following five issues:

1. A goal on water that goes beyond access to drinking water and sanitary facilities, one that covers all aspects of sustainable water management. The Millennium Development Goals helped to almost double - to 4.2 billion - the number of people with access to piped drinking water. The achievements in the water sector, however, can only be sustained if ecosystems are protected, waste water is treated, and water management is made more efficient.
2. An ambitious goal on gender equality, the promotion of women and corresponding measures. In the last 15 years it has been possible overall to achieve gender equality in primary education. Our goal must be to eliminate gender disparity in all areas of society. In most countries, women still only earn on average 60-75 per cent of what men earn. And although the proportion of women in parliaments has almost doubled in the last 20 years, only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians are women.
3. An independent goal on peace and inclusive societies in order to promote the rule of law, access to justice, respect for human rights, as well as to fight violence and corruption.

4. A goal on healthcare that also addresses non-communicable diseases, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and strengthening healthcare systems. Sixty per cent of all deaths are attributable to non-communicable diseases, whereby low- and middle-income countries are especially affected, even though non-communicable diseases can be prevented to a large extent.

5. And specific sub-goals on disaster risk reduction, the role of migrants, and sustainable consumption and production.

These goals must be implemented. For this reason we have strongly advocated for an effective review mechanism. We firmly believe that the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is well positioned to carry out this function.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Switzerland we have a system of direct democracy with very wide ranging rights to political self-determination. Our society and our citizens are used to having a say in the political process. Over the last 200 years, more than one third of all referendums held worldwide took place in Switzerland. For us therefore it was not difficult to include, right from the beginning, representatives of civil society, the private sector, politics and academia in the process of defining our priorities for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In implementing the SDGs, we will proceed with the same approach: while the process will take place within a political framework, citizens will be given the opportunity to contribute.

In the federal government's new strategy on sustainable development for the period 2016-2019 and in its strategy on international cooperation in 2017-2020, we will set out how Switzerland intends to implement the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we all know, one of the biggest challenges in this globalised era is to create a closer relationship and greater trust between citizens and politics and their institutions.

This is why the participatory process in the development of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was so important. Now, let's get to work – together, with the people, for the people!
