

Guidelines on Water 2022–25



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Federal Department of
Foreign Affairs FDFA

Foreign Policy Strategy
2020–23



International Cooperation Strategy
2021–24



Guidelines on Water
2022–25

The *Guidelines on Water 2022–2025* substantiate the principles of the [Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23](#) and the [IC Strategy 2021–24](#) in relation to the foreign policy thematic priority of water. The structure is framed by the five key objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership. The guidelines are part of the third level of the cascade of core foreign policy documents. They are primarily aimed at the FDFA but may also provide guidance for other departments and actors. A glossary explains the key terms.

Foreword



We are made of water. The body of an adult human being consists of 60 percent water. Without water, there is no human life. Water is life, and access to this resource is a human right. Even more: water is an indispensable prerequisite for human beings and thus for society as a whole.

The Guidelines on Water 2022–25 are based on this statement and put people at the centre. Poverty reduction means creating access to water. The development of a society can only be peaceful if it is sustainable in the following **three dimensions**: environment, economy and society.

Environment, because the availability of water is closely correlated with the protection of the environment. Climate change, which is shaping our times, is disrupting the water cycle. Droughts and floods threaten the supply of clean water to people and agriculture, and cause poverty, migration and death. Water means **security**.

Economy, because water is a means of transport that enables contact between people, trade and thus growth and development. Rivers, lakes, seas and oceans are important communication routes for a large part of the world's population. Around **70 percent** of the earth's surface is covered by water. Yet people also speak of **blue gold**. Water means **prosperity**.

Society, because water creates added value for society when it is shared and available in sufficient quantities. Communities have developed around water. Good water management is a prerequisite for stability. Water means **peace**.

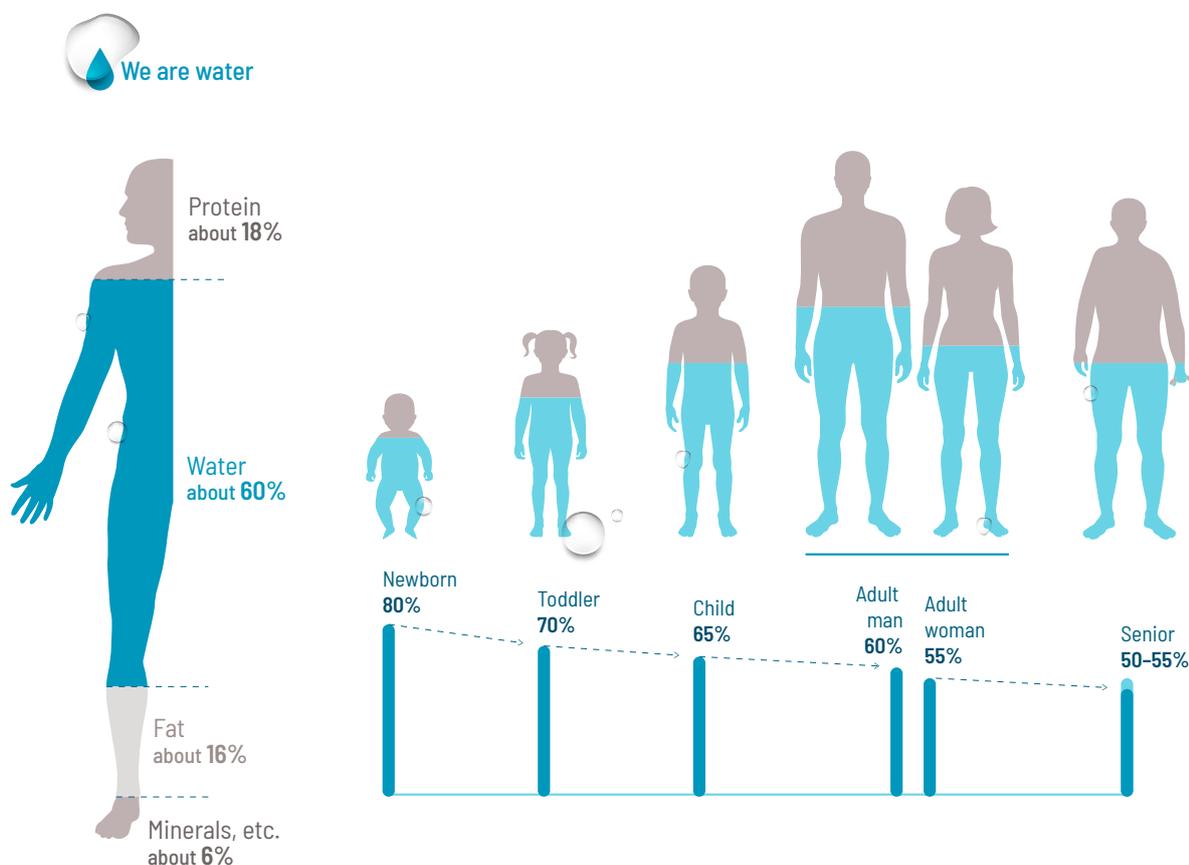


Figure 1: Water content of humans throughout life (Zoi Environment Network 2022).

Disputes over the control of water resources have occurred throughout human history. The growth of the world's population in recent decades and climate change remain today the causes of hundreds of conflicts over the control of this vital resource. Meanwhile, more people are killed for blue gold than for black gold.

These guidelines provide a concrete basis for the Confederation's commitment and set out corresponding principles. Water is also an important resource in Switzerland. And not only that: the Swiss Alps are of the utmost importance as a water tower for neighbouring countries. Good water management is not a simple and spontaneous process. However, we have succeeded in reaching compromises with neighbouring states, thus securing peace and prosperity. In the context of

international cooperation, this Swiss know-how is an added value: it serves as an instrument for peace (Blue Peace), for human development (agriculture) and for economic development (water management). It is no coincidence that in 1992 the UN drew the attention of the states and peoples of the world to this issue by declaring 22 March World Water Day.



President of the Swiss Confederation Ignazio Cassis
Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs



Figure 2: Water: Key element of life on Earth (Zoi Environment Network 2022).

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1 Introduction



Rice fields flooded by the River Niger in Mali (© George Steinmetz, National Geographic).

“THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE TO WATER IS WATER.”

Danilo Türk, chair of the High-Level Panel on Water and Peace initiated by Switzerland in ‘[A Matter of Survival](#)’.

Demand for fresh water is growing worldwide. The UN [estimates](#) that it will exceed available water supply by 40 percent by 2030. World population growth, progressing climate change and environmental pollution are just a few of the factors which are constantly increasing pressure on available water resources.

Switzerland has been helping to develop solutions to meet water-related challenges for many years and has developed vast expertise in this area. These guidelines seek to enhance this profile, thereby further improving the coherence and effectiveness of Swiss contributions to water issues.

The *Lignes directrices sur l'eau 2022–25* are based on a wide range of core principles. Firstly, at *national* level, they are

guided by the [Federal Constitution](#). This requires the Federal Council to assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world, to promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful co-existence of peoples and the conservation of natural resources (Art. 54, para. 2). The Confederation must also ensure the economic use and the protection of water resources within the scope of its powers (Art. 76, para. 1). Fundamental legal principles of the guidelines are laid down in the [Federal Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid](#) and the [Federal Act on Cooperation with the States of Eastern Europe](#).

At the political level, the [Foreign Policy Strategy 2020–23](#) and the [IC Strategy 2021–24](#) set out – as part of the foreign policy strategy cascade – how Switzerland promotes environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources internationally. In addition to the IC Strategy, various [geographical follow-up strategies](#) (MENA 2021–24, Sub-Saharan Africa 2021–24 and the Americas 2022–25) at the second level of the cascade also contain Federal Council principles concerning water. The thematic follow-up strategy on the [Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–24](#) outlines key considerations on the use of new technology in IC. Various FDFA publications at the third level of the cascade are

also relevant reference documents for the *Guidelines on Water 2022–25*. These include the [Human Rights Guidelines 2021–24](#), the [General Guidance on the Private Sector in the context of the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24](#) and the [OSCE Action Plan 2022–25](#). Switzerland's [2028 Foreign Policy Vision \(AVIS28\)](#) also addresses the issue of water and provides an additional source of inspiration. Outside of the strategy cascade, the [2030 Sustainable Development Strategy](#) constitutes an important part of the basis for the guidelines. It was adopted by the Federal Council on 23 June 2021.

At international level, the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) is the most important reference document for the *Guidelines on Water 2022–25*. In relation to this agenda, Switzerland is endeavouring to achieve balanced development, taking account of the three dimensions of the environment, economy and society. It has created the appropriate structures in the Federal Administration and is working with all relevant actors at national and international level to promote protection of the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and future-oriented economic and social development. SDG 6 concerns water – Switzerland made a major contribution to the formulation of this goal.¹

In addition to the *2030 Agenda*, the *Guidelines on Water 2022–25* are embedded into an extensive and well-established system of various global frameworks in which Switzerland also participates. The [UN Water Convention](#) and the [UN Watercourses Convention](#) are unique global legal instruments that aim to ensure the sustainable use of cross-border water resources. In the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030](#) water plays a major role in improving disaster preparedness and aid. The [Protocol on Water and Health](#) is a legally binding instrument which seeks to protect human health by improving water management and reducing water-borne diseases. Various other global agreements highlight the universal importance of the water cycle, including the UN Conventions [on Climate Change](#), [to Combat Desertification](#), [on Biological Diversity](#) and in the [Ramsar Convention](#).

¹ Section 2.3.

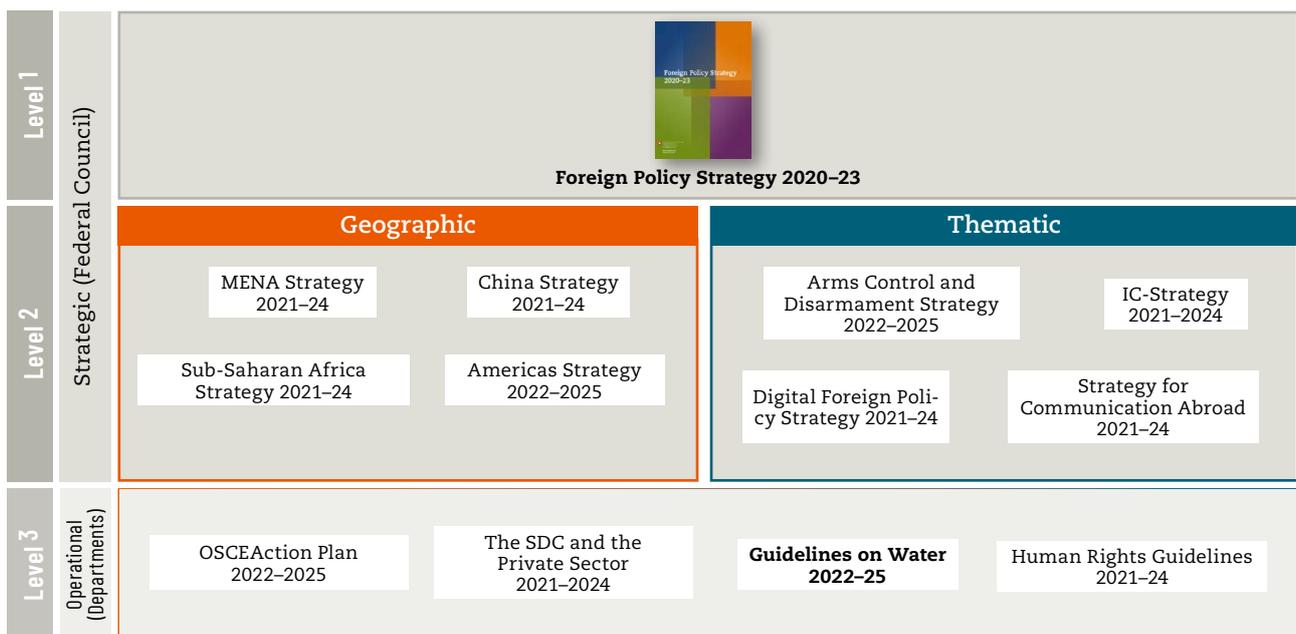


Figure 3: Foreign policy strategy cascade (source: FDFA – illustrative selection of documents).



Floods cause both material damage and human casualties (© Antara Foto Agency / Reuters).

The *Guidelines on Water 2022–25* also refer to the recognition of access to clean water and sanitation as a human right by the UN General Assembly in 2010. Since 2015, the right to water and the right to sanitation have evolved into two distinct rights. Switzerland has supported these developments from the outset. While UN General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding and cannot be enforced, they are politically significant. The right to water and the right to sanitation are closely linked to other human rights, especially the right to food and the right to health.

The FDFA has drawn up its *Guidelines on Water 2022–25* based on these key principles. Firstly, trends, opportunities and challenges are identified in a brief environment analysis which is used to define the principles for activities concerning the thematic priority of water. The themes and respective priorities are then outlined. Finally, information is provided on the implementation of the guidelines.

2 Environment

2.1 Irreplaceable resource

Water is life – it has a huge influence over nature, culture, society, the economy and politics. All life on Earth depends on water. But this precious and irreplaceable resource is coming under increasing pressure. While demand for water from a wide variety of beneficiaries grows, supply is continually – and sometimes rapidly – declining in many places, both in terms of quality and quantity. In the World Economic Forum’s annual [Global Risks Report](#), the global water crisis has featured amongst the five greatest global risks in relation to impact on humanity for several years.

Water shortage is often not primarily due to geo-physical factors, but instead to shortcomings in terms of governance, distribution and sustainable management. Supply and demand for water must be brought into line with the wide range of human requirements, but also those of nature as a whole. This is the only way to ensure sufficient water of adequate quality is available for all stakeholders in the longer term – including the ecosystems vital for life.

2.2 Trends

Water consumption

Global water consumption has been rising by one percent a year on average since the 1980s due to population growth, economic development and changes to consumption.² Water resources are exposed to a wide range of risks and dangers. These pose a threat to the basis of existence for millions of people, jeopardise economic goods and cause a high level of environmental, economic and social damage.

Pollution

Estimates indicate that around 80 percent of all waste water generated worldwide is still disposed of into the environment without any treatment. This unacceptable type of disposal primarily takes place in countries with medium and low income levels.³ As water consumption is constantly rising globally, pollution caused by waste water is also increasing worldwide too. Direct effects include the degradation of aquatic ecosystems and their ability to regenerate as well as the spread of diseases transmitted by contaminated water.

More and more pollutants are now also finding their way into groundwater. As the global groundwater reserves store around 97 percent of the fresh water available on the planet, they play a crucial role in securing access to water in future. Purifying them is technically challenging, complex and extremely expensive.

Climate change

Not only are the glaciers and polar caps melting and the sea level rising due to global warming caused by climate change, the phenomenon of either too much or too little available water is also increasingly commonplace. Alternating periods of drought and flooding in the same geographical area are becoming more and more frequent. Managing enormous variations in water supply presents a major challenge for many regions. The frequency and strength of severe storms are also increasing in many places, further altering the existing natural water cycle. Estimates indicate that the number of people exposed to the risk of flooding is set to rise by 30 percent by 2050 – from 1.2 billion today to around 1.6 billion.⁴

Demographics

Issues that concern water are invariably related closely to both the size and development of a population, and how that population is distributed geographically in the given country or region. The concentration of fast-growing populations is particularly significant, especially if this is linked to increasing urbanisation in large cities and megacities. This is because it often occurs in places which are already experiencing problems in ensuring a continuous supply of water and sanitation with the necessary quality. This is happening in a number of different contexts but particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. In some cases, people are adopting unsustainable approaches to deal with the issues, such as tapping groundwater resources without realising what the medium- and long-term consequences of such actions are.

² [UN World Water Development Report 2020](#)

³ [UN World Water Development Report 2017](#)

⁴ [World Meteorological Organization, 2020](#)

Geopolitics

The water sector faces additional challenges from the growing geopolitical polarisation at both global and regional level. Water-related issues can fuel or exacerbate conflicts. In 2017 for example, water scarcity was a key issue in 45 countries affected by conflict – primarily in the Middle East and North Africa.⁵ Water, or denying access to it, can also be used as a weapon of war, in violation of international law. Cross-border solutions aimed at ensuring equitable access to water are often complicated by political fragmentation and the prioritisation of vested interests. Conversely, water cooperation can be an effective instrument for building trust and preventing or resolving conflicts.

All of these trends are contributing to increasing water stress, as can be seen in the ratio of water consumption to water availability (figure 2).

By the middle of the 21st century, an estimated 40 percent of the world population will live in places under constant water stress.⁶ Competition for this precious resource is growing – both within national borders and between neighbouring states sharing water resources.

5 [UN OCHA World Humanitarian Data and Trends, 2018](#).

6 [UNESCO, 2020](#).

Water stress 2040

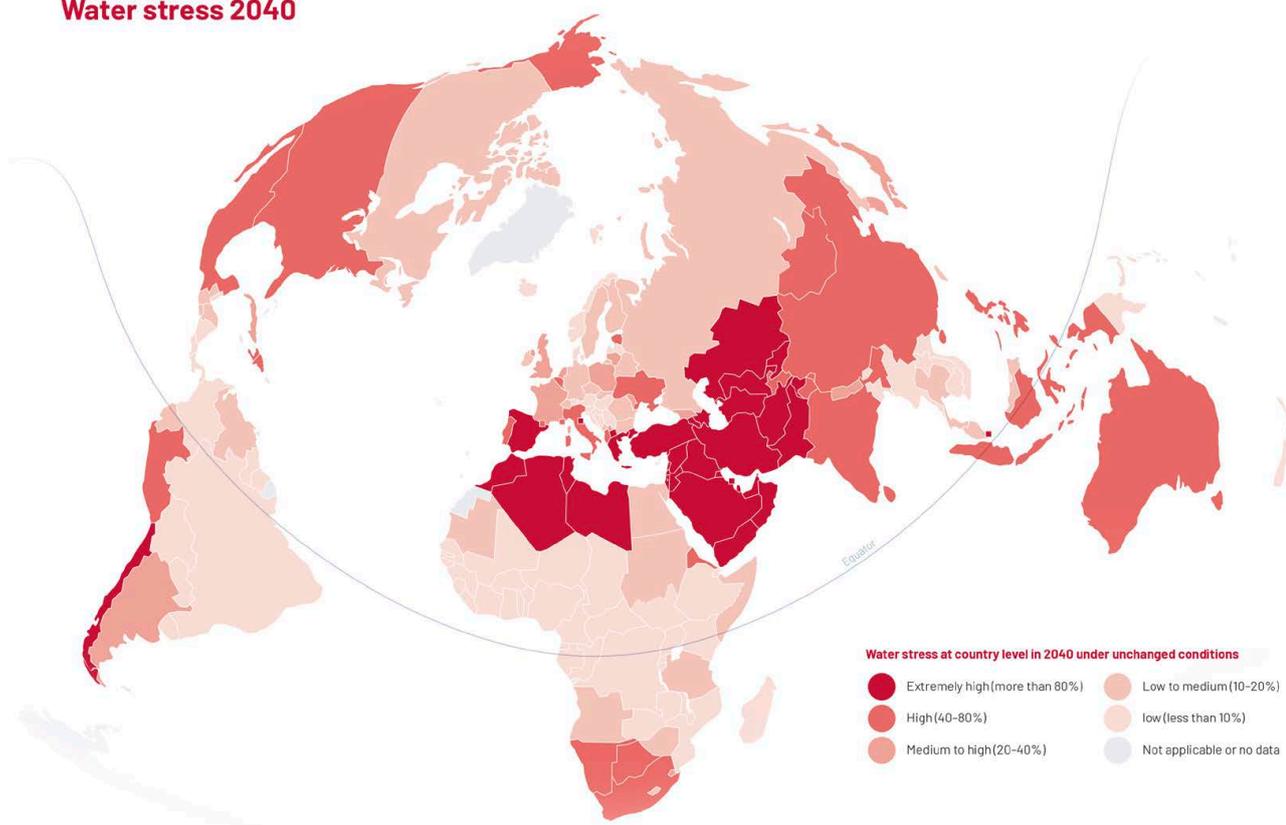


Figure 4: Global distribution of expected water stress in 2040 at country level (map produced by Zoi Environment Network 2022 based on [Luo T. et al. 2015](#)).

2.3 Opportunities and challenges

The vital necessity, limited availability, unequal distribution and irreplaceability of (drinking) water make it one of the most important natural resources worldwide. The trends outlined in section 2.2 and the adjustments to climate change required highlight the fact that responsible management of water represents a growing challenge. Well planned and implemented adaptation measures – especially with regard to the climate – nevertheless also represent opportunities to improve water management in general. Technological progress can also contribute towards managing existing water problems more effectively.⁷

The opportunities include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development providing the international community with an instrument that offers both a visionary and practical global framework for action on water. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly hampered the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, it remains the decisive reference document for coherent commitment to sustainable development over the coming years.

Switzerland has pledged to make a contribution to the 2030 Agenda in general and to «SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation for all» in particular. SDG 6 adopts an integral approach where water is a key factor in social change towards more sustainable development. The goal expressly refers to the

principles of human rights, equality and non-discrimination. SDG 6 should not be viewed in isolation. It makes strong and wide-ranging references to other SDGs where water plays a major role, such as health, combating poverty, hunger and climate change, and also to promoting biodiversity.

Switzerland supports the UN's vision of a world where the availability of water is universally secured and in which all people, with their respective cultures, and the economy can thrive in a responsible way and become more resilient to risks such as climate change. In this respect, it adopts a comprehensive approach, combining the various foreign policy instruments, and structures its *Guidelines on Water 2022–25* based on the five critical dimensions of the 2030 Agenda.⁸

7 Section 3.10.

8 Section 4.



A destroyed water pipe in Aleppo, Syria (© Reuters / Hosan Katan).

3 Principles

Switzerland is working to achieve a world where there is a secure supply of water – of sufficient quantity and quality – for everyone. It does so based on the following principles.

3.1 Promoting the human right to water

Switzerland supports the implementation of the human rights that ensure access to clean water and sanitation.

In accordance with the Guidelines on Human Rights 2021–24, Switzerland promotes human rights in favour of sustainable development. The right to water is defined as a priority. The lack of access to safe, sufficient and affordable water, sanitary facilities and hygiene services has a negative impact on the health, dignity and prosperity of many people and has significant consequences in terms of fulfilling other human rights. The states are obliged to provide water and sanitary services and must ensure the rights to water and sanitary facilities are met equally and without discrimination.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It promotes respect for human rights to water and sanitary facilities. It focuses on ensuring equal access for everyone regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or any other type of discrimination.
- It is committed to ensuring human rights to water and sanitary facilities are appropriately taken into account in the respective economic and political context at national and sub-national level.
- It also works to ensure that right holders – i.e. people as water users – assume their responsibility and use water carefully. They should also pay a reasonable price for its use and associated services.

3.2 Taking account of cycles

Switzerland promotes an understanding of an integral water cycle. Focusing exclusively on access to water and basic sanitary facilities is not sufficient. The long-term availability of water can only be secured by adopting an integral approach to water usage and the water cycle.⁹

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It acts to ensure the natural water cycle continues to viably function by treating waste water and recovering the nutrients contained in it.
- It promotes the assumption of responsibility by all individuals and bodies to take account of the water cycle and to adopt and implement suitable measures to protect water.
- It supports efforts to reduce water consumption, loss, pollution and overexploitation, applying the « polluter pays principle » wherever possible.
- It endeavours to bring future supply and demand for water into line with the changes brought about by climate change.

⁹ This point is explained in greater detail in section 4.2.

3.3 Incorporating interactions

Switzerland takes account of and fosters an understanding of interactions at all levels. A systematic approach is vital to take account of the complex dependencies and interactions. Water is closely interlinked with other sustainable development issues. For example, a wide range of interactions exist with agriculture, fishing, the food industry, energy generation, mining, industrial production and shipping. Interventions in the water cycle and balance have a direct or indirect impact on many ecosystems, their viability and biological diversity. In view of the many different needs for water, there is potential for tension and conflicts of interest, but also for synergies, compromises, better disaster risk management and more efficient use of resources.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It promotes the integrity of ecosystems and their functional viability; it ensures the role and importance of water is adequately taken into account in key areas, such as agriculture or urban planning, and that the effects of climate change are included in reflections on sustainable management of water as a resource.
- It promotes measures aimed at preventing and protecting against water-related natural hazards, such as flooding, storms, droughts or landslides, for people, infrastructure and ecosystems (info box 1).
- It aims to ensure extensive, water-related interdependencies are reflected in relevant political decision-making processes and in the financing agreements.
- It promotes awareness of the importance of water to all other SDGs and also to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Info box 1: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

DRR is a preventive and integrated approach that aims to save lives, safeguard development gains and ensure lasting socio-economic development. Its activities include measures taken before, during or after a disaster with a long-term focus on strengthening institutions, human resources and infrastructure. DRR seeks to address the three main phases of a crisis:

1. **Prevention:** planning and preventive measures to reduce existing risks and prevent new ones;
2. **Management:** organising and training rescue teams to mitigate the impact of disasters;
3. **Recovery:** building back better to improve resilience and reduce future damage.

Switzerland actively implements the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 by reforesting watersheds after landslides, mapping forests, fortifying riverbanks, constructing protective dams and developing earthquake- and hurricane-resistant schools and shelters, for example. The SDC is also engaged in developing early warning systems and organising and training rescue teams.

3.4 Valuing

Switzerland encourages the appreciation of the value of water in all of its dimensions. Water is irreplaceable and performs a range of functions which must be taken into account and protected. In addition to its direct use in everyday life and for economic activity, water also plays a crucial role in ensuring the environment remains healthy and intact. It also possesses sociocultural value, such as recreational and spiritual benefits. Without a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional value of water and respect for it, this critical resource cannot be protected for the benefit of everyone.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It encourages economic, political and civil society actors to assume their responsibility for specific impacts on this vital resource and to jointly ensure its sustainable management.
- It works to ensure governments and companies primarily see water as an asset which must be managed carefully, sustainably and fairly.
- It contributes towards ensuring the provision and use of water of adequate quality and quantity is reasonably priced. It aims to reconcile and bring into line the various requirements, expectations, perspectives and values of the various actors concerned.
- It supports legitimate concerns of minorities, vulnerable and neglected stakeholders, and promotes appreciation of the material and immaterial value of water amongst the wider public.

3.5 Promoting good governance

Switzerland promotes good governance in relation to water at all levels. Many water-related issues and problems arise due to poor political leadership. This is why good governance over water and sanitary facilities must be fostered. This means politicians must provide an effective and coherent legal framework with clearly defined institutional areas of competence and responsibility. Applying this legal framework correctly is also important.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It endeavours to ensure the coherence and implementation of water-related policies are improved through solid legislation, appropriate regulations, effective institutional and financial agreements and transparency.
- It encourages constructive dialogue between various stakeholders to achieve sustainable management of water resources through compromises and agreements. It provides good offices and participates in platforms and structures which give a voice to all stakeholders.

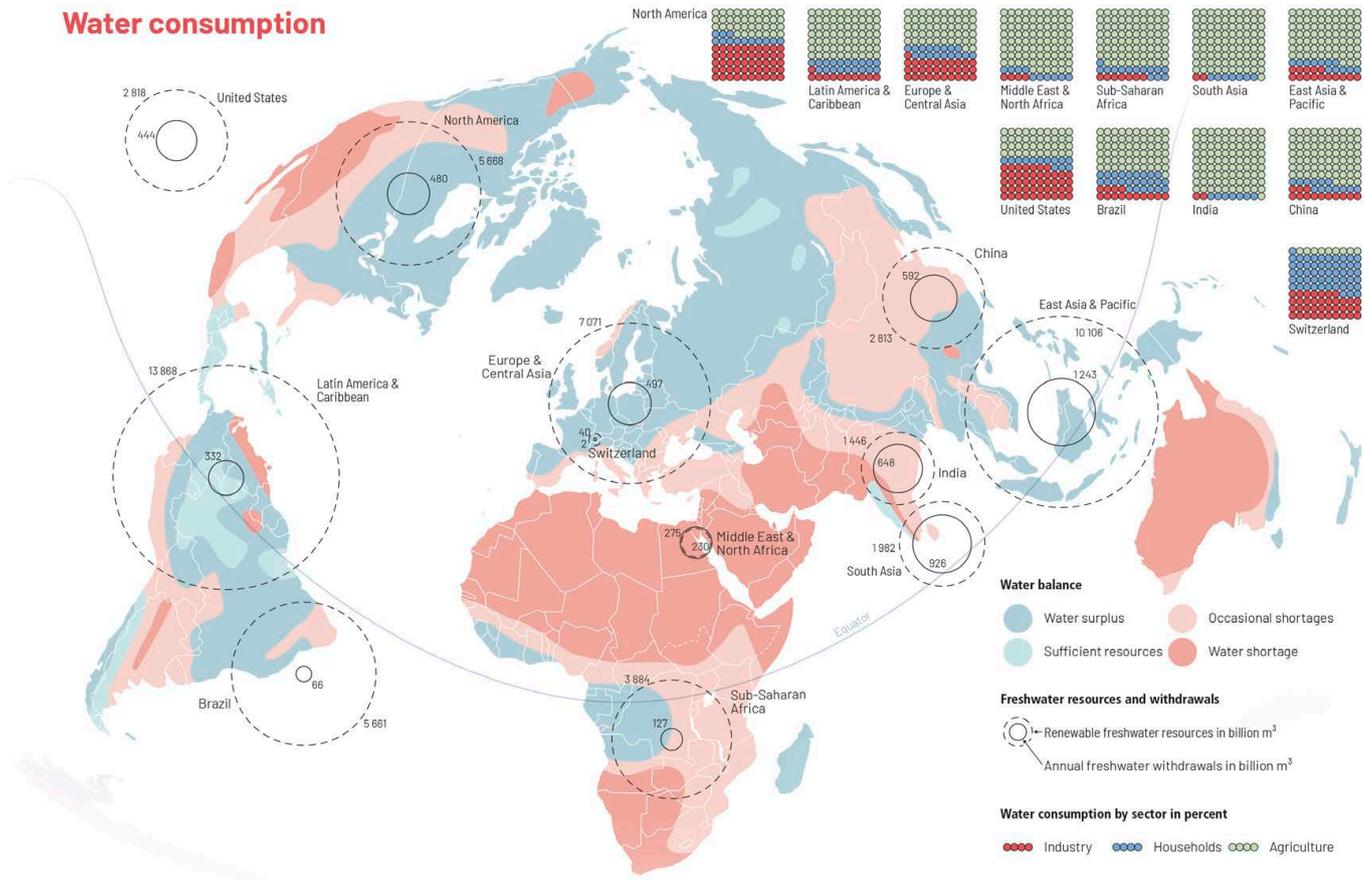


Figure 5: World map of water consumption by sector relating available quantities to freshwater readings (map produced by Zoi Environment Network 2022 based on information from the World Bank).

3.6 Ensuring inclusivity

Switzerland advocates the inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged stakeholders. Cooperation between all relevant stakeholders is needed to overcome the wide range of water-related challenges. Sustainable solutions require an inclusive approach.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It is committed to raising awareness of the importance of an integrative water policy and participative dialogue so that all actors, groups and individuals have the opportunity to express themselves appropriately and to contribute towards resolving the issues.
- In particular, it promotes the voices of women, young people, disabled and disadvantaged groups on water-related issues.
- It seeks to bring together the various disadvantaged or under-represented concerns where appropriate to ensure they receive greater attention from decision-makers.
- It fosters dialogue between the generations, strengthens relevant networks and creates opportunities to participate in normative processes and negotiations.

3.7 Peacebuilding

Switzerland uses water as a vector for peace, security and prosperity. Switzerland's approach aims to counteract the trend of increasing conflicts over water so that water can become a driving force for cooperation and trust-building. This requires all stakeholders to participate in relevant dialogue and cooperation formats.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It promotes the «Blue Peace» initiative (info box 2) that it launched which provides it with the instruments required to foster cross-border, inter-sector and cross-generational cooperation in conflicts over fresh water to encourage a more peaceful and sustainable community and to achieve stability and prosperity.
- It advocates this approach in the form of joint institutions and on the basis of a framework which brings countries together to resolve their differences peacefully and to manage water jointly as the foundation for more extensive economic and diplomatic cooperation.
- It provides its good offices to enable the peaceful transformation of conflicts over water.

Info box 2: «Blue Peace»

The «Blue Peace» initiative⁸, launched by Switzerland in 2010, aims to promote cooperation on water issues across borders, sectors and generations. It thus makes an important contribution to peace, stability and sustainable development in regions that suffer from permanent water stress and where several countries share the few sources of water available. It uses a combination of political-diplomatic dialogue and practical support, for example in the field of training, strengthening joint institutions or collecting data and information.

The «Blue Peace» initiative focuses on three world regions – the Middle East, Central Asia and West Africa – and links established instruments of development cooperation with diplomacy. Thanks to this initiative, Switzerland has developed an internationally recognised profile in water diplomacy.

3.8 Supporting cooperation

Switzerland fosters cooperation and uses strategic partnerships on water in a targeted way. The wide variety of actors in the field of water at all levels – often with conflicting interests – presents a challenge. With its independent and credible profile in foreign policy and in international cooperation in particular, Switzerland is well positioned to establish partnerships and shape forms of cooperation which are beneficial to all sides. This requires a strategic, coherent and well-coordinated approach.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It promotes partnerships with all stakeholders, particularly with the private sector. In the case of the latter, local small and medium-sized enterprises play a key role. As part of these partnerships, sustainable solutions will be developed which – in cooperation with government authorities – not only meet stringent social and ecological requirements, but also achieve great range and therefore more significant impact thanks to their economic viability.
- It implements a whole-of-government approach¹⁰ so that a coordinated procedure involving various administrative units beyond departmental boundaries results in joint, sustainable solutions to particular problems.
- It works to ensure that accountability, transparency, coherence, validation, reporting and the exchange of experience and knowledge are consolidated and strengthened with and as part of cross-sector partnerships and cooperation.
- It promotes the triple-nexus approach in international cooperation to enable emergency humanitarian aid geared towards immediate intervention, longer-term-oriented development cooperation and peacebuilding to be combined effectively at operational level. The various instruments of international cooperation – prevention, emergency aid, reconstruction, socio-economic development, peacebuilding, diplomacy, and support for good governance – complement one another in a synergistic way in this approach.

¹⁰ Glossary.

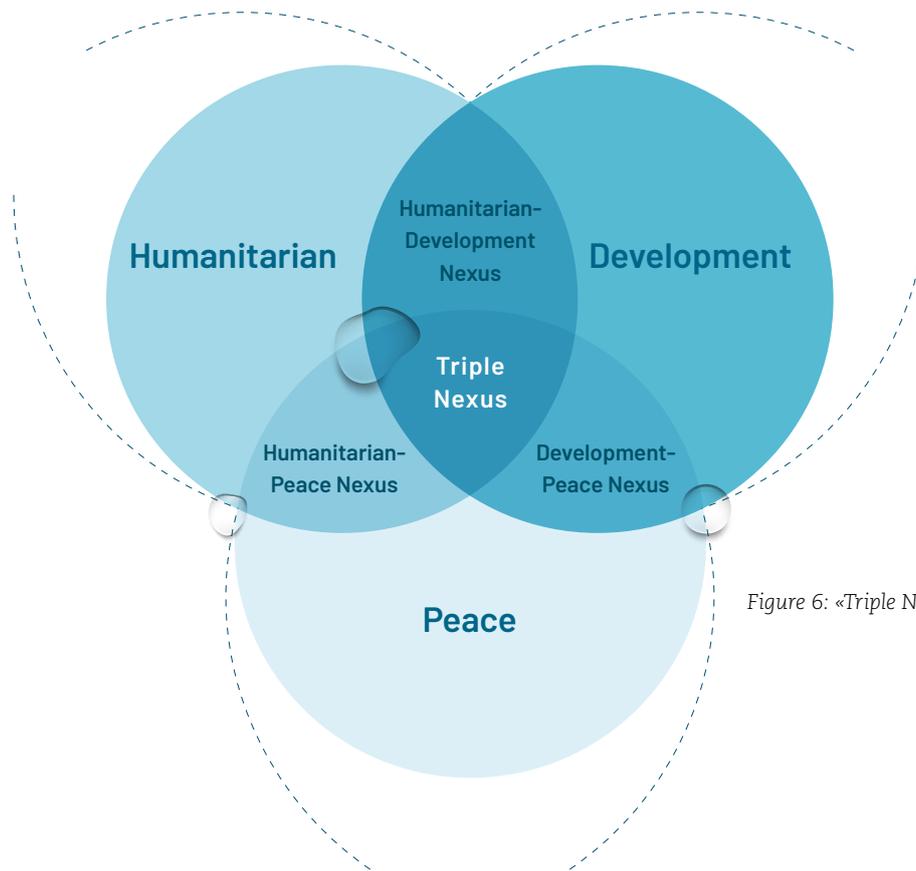


Figure 6: «Triple Nexus» approach.

3.9 Incorporating knowledge

Switzerland promotes the use of relevant know-how for fact-based opinion-forming, implementation and management. Knowledge and facts are a fundamental requirement for far-sighted policymaking to secure access to water and basic sanitary facilities as human rights on a long-term basis. The experiences and insights of local knowledge systems play a vital role in international development cooperation.

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It fosters the recording of key data and information concerning water and basic sanitary facilities at all levels with the emphasis on the Global South to establish a solid foundation for political and social decision-making (info box 3).
- It endeavours to strengthen the necessary institutions and promotes the development of employee skills, attaching particular importance to gender equality and the promotion of minorities.
- It integrates knowledge and experience from local, traditional and indigenous knowledge systems.
- It focuses in particular on improving coherence and overcoming obstacles which hold back progress and prevent the attainment of the goals set.

Info box 3: Decision-making based on data and facts

The regular collection, analysis and use of reliable data and information is key to informed, knowledge-based and factual decision-making by public and private actors.

To this end, Switzerland supports the UN-Water Integrated Monitoring Initiative for SDG 6 ([IMI-SDG6](#)) at global level. The initiative aims to provide high-quality data for policymaking, regulation, planning and investment at all levels via technical and institutional capacity building support. One example is the collection and publication of the latest country, regional and global data on all SDG 6 indicators. This gives an ongoing picture of where progress is being made and where more action is needed.

Switzerland also takes part in other international projects such as the [Alliance for Hydromet Development](#), and helps governments prepare national water management plans such as in Kosovo.

3.10 Enabling innovation

Switzerland promotes innovation in the interests of sustainable water usage. Switzerland has consistently developed innovative approaches to water, such as « Blue Peace ». As part of international cooperation, it encourages the use of new technologies to improve the effectiveness of its projects.¹¹ Innovation will also be a key feature of Switzerland's foreign policy activities concerning water over the coming years. This also involves a shift away from purely water efficiency towards more comprehensive water effectiveness. Whereas innovations were previously often aimed at improving efficiency, the effectiveness approach adopts an integral perspective in the interests of society and nature conservation.¹²

To implement this principle, Switzerland adopts the following approach:

- It promotes a holistic outlook where water efficiency and water effectiveness are successfully combined, technical innovations are fostered and deployed in a targeted way and interconnections with other environmental, economic and social impacts of production and consumption systems are consistently incorporated.
- It uses innovations to promote greater appreciation of more effective cooperation and stronger solidarity between various stakeholders and generations.
- It advocates further research and use of the leveraging potential of new technologies and digitalisation with a view to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of future activities.

¹¹ See [Tech4Good](#) or the [Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator \(GESDA\)](#) foundation which strengthens International Geneva's role as a hub for governance issues concerning digitalisation and new technologies.

¹² Glossary.

4 Themes

The *Guidelines on Water 2022–25* are based on the five critical dimensions of the 2030 Agenda:

- «**People**» – advancing human development by providing universal access to water and sanitation;
- «**Planet**» – protecting the environment by adopting a responsible approach to water and by preserving and restoring ecosystems;
- «**Prosperity**» – environmental development by ensuring sustainable access to the productive use of water;
- «**Peace**» – fostering peace, trust-building and stability through joint management of (cross-border) water resources;
- «**Partnerships**» – promoting global solidarity by pooling strengths, both within and outside of states and across sectors.

Switzerland's water-specific priorities are defined below in the context of these key themes.



A crowd of people at a draw well in Gujarat, India (© Amit Dave / Reuters).

4.1 People

“We are determined to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Switzerland focuses its efforts on people and is committed to enabling everyone to lead a healthy, worthwhile and dignified life. Secure access to sufficient clean drinking water and adequate sanitary and hygiene facilities are indispensable requirements. However, over two billion people still get their water from sources contaminated by faeces.¹³ To achieve the goal of universal access to secure water supply and sanitary facilities for all by 2030, the current rate of progress must be increased four-fold.¹⁴ As existing efforts fall well short of the mark and the health of many people remains at acute risk, Switzerland is prioritising this objective.

The principle of promoting human rights of access to clean water and sanitary facilities outlined in section 3.1 is a key element in this respect. This puts people at the centre of development processes and places an obligation on states as the main actors responsible for meeting fundamental human needs.

Focus is on the following priorities:

- Switzerland is committed to ensuring accelerated access for all to a secure and indispensable supply of water and provision of sanitary facilities, supplemented by basic hygiene measures and recognising water as a key factor for health (project example 1).
- Switzerland aims to ensure no stakeholders are disregarded – this also entails systematically applying a gender-specific approach; it acts consistently using conflict-sensitive methods to prevent any stakeholders from inadvertently being adversely impacted.
- Switzerland is especially committed to ensuring the availability of water and sanitary facilities in emergency humanitarian situations and also focuses its efforts on coordinated, longer-term, sustainable development.
- Switzerland advocates better compliance with international humanitarian law in armed conflicts, ensuring more effective protection of the environment – including water.
- Switzerland supports local and social-minded companies (social entrepreneurship)¹⁵, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, thereby contributing towards the creation of jobs in the water sector and beyond.

Project example 1: WASH consortium of Swiss NGOs

WASH stands for water, sanitation and hygiene, and highlights how these three aspects complement each other in efforts to improve public health via safe drinking water, the proper disposal and reprocessing of waste water, and promotion of general hygiene. Introducing and maintaining systematic hand hygiene helps to counter the spread of epidemics and pandemics. In 2021, an estimated 2.3 billion people worldwide were still unable to wash their hands at home with clean water and soap.

In light of this situation, Switzerland’s IC supports a programme for water, the provision of sanitary facilities and hygiene in basic healthcare centres and schools in West and East Africa and Asia via a consortium of eight Swiss NGOs. This programme improves sustainable access to clean drinking water, individual toilets and hand-washing facilities. This enables the transmission of diseases to be drastically reduced and the quality of life of many disadvantaged population groups to be improved.

¹³ WHO, 2019 [↗](#).

¹⁴ UN Water, 2021 [↗](#).

¹⁵ Glossary.

4.2 Environment

“We are determined to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Switzerland is working to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources long-term. Water as a resource vital for life is of fundamental importance here. Particular emphasis is placed on the principles of ‘incorporating cycles’ and ‘taking account of interactions’.¹⁶ The water cycle must be considered and understood in its entirety so that its wide range of functions are recognised and safeguarded in the long term.

The natural cycle allows water to continually circulate in its various states of aggregation on the Earth’s surface, in the ground and in the atmosphere. However, only around 0.0125 percent of global water reserves are [accessible](#) to humans as surface fresh water and groundwater. This available water knows no geographical boundaries and is used for a variety of often competing purposes. Overexploitation and pollution are having an adverse impact on water’s ecological role to everyone’s detriment. Around 80 percent of waste water worldwide is still released untreated into the environment,¹⁷ while estimates indicate that at least 20 percent of global groundwater is being overused.¹⁸

As climatic events are the driving force behind the natural water cycle, global warming and climate change associated with it are having a direct impact on the cycle. The melting of the polar caps and glaciers, the rise in the sea level and hurricanes fed with more energy are visible and tangible examples of such impact. This means the measures required to adapt to global climate change and its containment must be undertaken immediately to prevent a collapse in the water cycle from a human perspective. Recognition of the need for effective climate protection measures can be promoted by adopting an integral approach to water with its wide range of interactions.

Focus is on the following priorities:

- Switzerland supports and promotes an Integrated Water Resources management (IWRM) approach at all levels and with all actors and stakeholders involved.
- Switzerland is playing a leading role in tackling water pollution. It favours the application of the « polluter pays principle », the introduction of minimum standards in industrial production coupled with highly promising innovative, technical solutions
- Switzerland contributes to a smart and far-sighted approach in relation to sustainable water management, combating climate change, environmental pollution and containing natural hazards where it uses its good reputation as well as its know-how.

¹⁶ Sections 3.2 and 3.3.

¹⁷ [UN World Water Development Report 2017](#)

¹⁸ [UN World Water Development Report 2018](#)



Global water resources on earth are estimated at about **1400 km³** of which only **0.175 km³ (0.0125%)** are easily accessible surface freshwater.

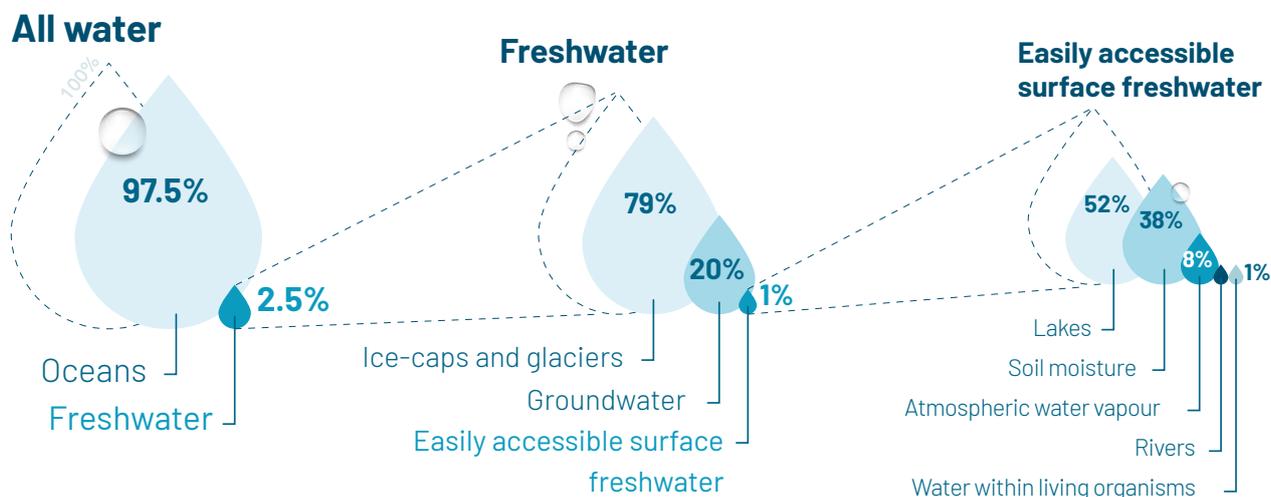


Figure 7: Distribution and presence of water on Earth with the focus on the share of fresh water actually available (illustration produced by Zoï Environment Network 2022 based on FAO data).

4.3 Prosperity

“We are determined to ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Switzerland wishes to achieve sustainable economic development in the long term, ensuring sufficient prosperity for all. This is reflected in a world where a secure supply of clean water is a resource available to all and where the potential for socio-economic development with economic value creation ensures the prosperity of future generations and the integrity of the ecosystems. The 2030 Agenda calls for constructive cooperation with the private sector to jointly mobilise the financial resources and solutions required to attain the SDGs. The private sector is part of the solution, especially as obligations are increasingly being placed on it. The [General Guidance on the Private Sector in the context of the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24](#), points the way forward for Switzerland here.

Two of the principles outlined in section 3 are of particular importance in relation to this issue: On the one hand, a broader understanding of the multidimensional value

of water is needed.¹⁹ On the other, extensive reflection on moving towards more effective use of water is called for – in addition to improving efficiency – so that the constant growth in demand for water can be met in the long term.²⁰ This approach takes account of the wide spectrum of social, economic, ethical and ecological aspects of water as the basis of life for all living beings. Consequently, water must be managed and used more sustainably by society as a whole to achieve an integral value status and fairer distribution and pricing policy. Taking account of natural conditions, this will allow water consumption to be reduced, especially in regions with a significant water deficit. This means communication and cooperation between economic, social and political actors needs to be stepped up.

The « Water Stewardship » approach can point the way forward in this respect. This term refers to the responsible and careful use of water which is socially and culturally appropriate, environmentally sustainable and economically advantageous. Good water stewardship is achieved through a participative process which involves all stakeholders and incorporates both location-specific measures as well as those

¹⁹ Section 3.4.
²⁰ Section 3.10.

at the level of water catchment areas. This means companies understand their impact on water and water dependencies as well as the risks involved, not just in their direct operations, but also across the entire value chain. They assume their share of overall responsibility for the ecological, social and economic areas in which they operate.

Focus is on the following priorities:

- Switzerland advocates – including through water stewardship – a responsible approach to water by major beneficiary stakeholders, such as industry and agriculture (project example 2).
- Switzerland also applies circular economy principles to the water sector. Firstly, this enables the consumption of raw materials to be reduced and the recycling of raw materials from waste water to be improved compared with linear, unclosed production processes.²¹
- Switzerland positions itself as an innovation leader in the water sector and is developing relevant solutions.
- It encourages a fair distribution and pricing policy and supports sustainable, effective and partnership-based financing of the solutions required in the water sector at all levels working closely with the private sector.

21 Glossary.

4.4 Peace

“We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence. There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development” (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Switzerland works to ensure the peaceful coexistence of all people, regardless of their origin, gender and religion. Water often plays a key role in ensuring peaceful coexistence in view of the increasing shortages and resultant disputes over distribution. In accordance with the principle of ‘peacebuilding’ outlined in section 3.7, Switzerland is seeking to turn water into a potential instrument for peace and cooperation through a change of perspective and mediation activities. Water crises often do not involve a physical shortage of water, but are instead the result of poor, unfair or uncoordinated water management. This means water is not used sustainably nor in agreement with other stakeholders by the actors and institutions involved. While there are

Project example 2: Reducing the water footprint of private companies in Latin America

Rising water use in industry worldwide is leading to continual growth in the private sector’s water footprint. To counteract this trend – particularly in regions with limited water resources – requires new instruments and mechanisms.

The programme to reduce the water footprint in five Latin American countries – Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru – involves various coordinated interventions:

- Producing national water studies in close cooperation with governments and environmental associations, and documenting and analysing water use and water pollution control in different production sectors such as coffee;
- Providing input for the formulation and implementation of public water policies;
- Cooperation and awareness-raising activities to motivate private companies to invest in improving efficiency in the use, treatment and reuse of water across their production processes, and to support the restoration and protection of degraded ecosystems.

263 cross-border river basins and around 300 cross-border groundwater basins worldwide,²² there were only intergovernmental agreements in 24 countries with cross-border water resources in 2020.²³

Water shortages or inadequate water quality can trigger tensions between interest groups or states. Such disputes and armed conflicts are expected to arise more frequently in future owing to rising demand and climate change. Water can also be used as a weapon or as a means of exerting political pressure or manipulating population groups. Any tensions over water should therefore be resolved peacefully. The huge potential of water in terms of cooperation and peacebuilding should be harnessed to a greater extent. The activities of the Blue Peace initiative launched in 2010 will be continued to help achieve this goal.

22 [UNECE, 2015](#).

23 [UN Water, 2021](#).

Focus is on the following priorities:

- Switzerland is strengthening its profile as a pioneer in international water-related peacebuilding (project example 3).
- Switzerland endeavours to ensure that governments conduct active and participative dialogue with all legitimate interest groups, including the citizens concerned.
- Switzerland also addresses deeper-lying problems, such as corruption, promotes effective legal frameworks and supports their implementation.
- Switzerland supports the collection of objective data and information about cross-border water resources and their usage as the basis for fact-based exchange and dialogue on drawing up balanced and implementable agreements.

Project example 3: Promoting peace, stability and prosperity in the Middle East

Switzerland's ['Blue Peace Middle East'](#) (BPME) programme launched in 2010 focuses on four key challenges of sustainable water management: i) improving the reliability of water data; ii) strengthening capacity-building and trust; iii) promoting dialogue between neighbouring/partner countries; and iv) ensuring efficient water management.

A regional mechanism for water dialogue was set up under the BPME programme in 2019. It is the first of its kind in the modern history of the Middle East. Under the joint leadership of Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey and with support from a regional coordination office, it aims to a) create a secure space for discussions about technical and political aspects of the cross-border management of water resources, b) promote exchange and c) support the inclusion of all stakeholders. In parallel, the newly founded [Water Diplomacy Centre](#) at the [Jordan University of Science and Technology](#) has provided water and environmental actors in the region with technical support (coaching) and held a series of specific training events on water diplomacy.

4.5 Partnerships

"We are determined to mobilise the means required to implement this Agenda through a revitalised Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, based on a spirit of strengthened global solidarity" (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development).

Switzerland supports strong, long-term partnerships at all levels and in all situations. The efforts and cooperation of all actors involved are required to ensure fair and sustainable water management in the long term. Only if politics, the economy – including the financial sector – science and society act in unison can the wide-ranging challenges concerning water be overcome and opportunities seized.

Water is a connecting element by its very nature. In international cooperation it acts as a binding force between sustainable development, peacebuilding and the promotion of prosperity and security. Through wide-ranging and intensified north-south and south-south cooperation, new actors are emerging on the stage, including young activists campaigning for climate protection, cities aiming to achieve sustainable living conditions and companies which are embedding sustainability into their strategies. In general, private companies are becoming increasingly important partners in IC by fostering sustainable solutions and creating jobs, for example. Promoting art and culture can also contribute to an integral understanding of water and its many varied roles and how it is interlinked with other issues and challenges.

Focus is on the following priorities:

- Switzerland establishes expedient partnerships with various stakeholders and interest groups in the water sector and other relevant sectors.
- Switzerland plays the role of bridgebuilder and mediator to provide secure forums for formal and informal dialogue and negotiations in the water sector.
- In line with the principle of 'ensuring inclusivity',²⁴ Switzerland aims to ensure the voice of marginalised actors is heard and that they can play an active role in tackling water issues.
- Switzerland pursues effective partnerships with the private sector, working to mobilise the innovative strength and resources of individual businesses to achieve the water-related development goals.²⁵

²⁴ Section 3.6.

²⁵ [Guidelines on the Private Sector 2021–24](#).



Too much or too little water is increasingly harming people's living conditions (© A. Ishokon / UNEP).

5 Implementation

Switzerland relies on a wide range of instruments for its water-related activities. Bilateral and multilateral instruments are flexibly deployed and optimally coordinated and harmonised within the Federal Administration.

5.1 At the bilateral level

Universality: Switzerland discusses water-related issues – based on the principle of universality – with all states and actors and at all levels. Humanitarian aid is used to rapidly address the needs of the population in desperate need, especially in times of crisis, in the event of natural disasters or during armed conflicts. To deploy the limited resources as effectively as possible, requirements are prioritised, paying particular attention to individual stakeholders in relation to the issue of water. Switzerland is guided by the principles of the core foreign policy documents (strategy cascade) including their guidelines. It remains flexible and agile to allow it to respond to new developments.

Water diplomacy («Blue Peace»): With specially selected neighbouring states of cross-border water resources (rivers, lakes, aquifers), Switzerland conducts specific political dialogue as part of regional and national «Blue Peace» initiatives in the aim of achieving sustainable, cross-border water management. This dialogue is backed up by specific support projects, including technical cooperation on the training of specialists and on improving data collection, both of which are vital for the joint management of water resources. Switzerland regularly reviews the pertinence and effectiveness of the «Blue Peace» initiatives whereby the feasibility of support projects in cooperation with relevant social actors represents a key requirement for continuing this dialogue.

External network: The Swiss external network of representations – i.e. the embassies, cooperation offices, consulates and missions – plays a key role in the respective host country or region, analysing the context on an ongoing basis and maintaining dialogue with the host states and local social actors. With a view to achieving the highest possible degree of coherence and effectively incorporating Switzerland’s experience in the field, the units responsible at head office coordinate with those in the external network when

implementing foreign policy-related activities.²⁶ The feasibility of implementing technical cooperation and attaining results in relation to water is also continually evaluated and reported on.

Projects: To promote access to water and sanitary facilities and sustainable management of the resource in the long term, Switzerland implements specific multi/bilateral projects in close collaboration with international and national actors.

²⁶ Special attention in this regard is paid to the priority countries of development cooperation.

5.2 At the multilateral level

UN/International Geneva: Switzerland supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through targeted cooperation with multilateral institutions and partnerships in the field of water (including various UN organisations, financial institutions such as the World Bank and regional development banks, and other global actors), taking account of interfaces with other relevant sectors, such as agriculture. In this context, Switzerland calls for effective and transparent reporting. Through a partnership with [UN-Water](#), which coordinates the UN’s water-related activities, and active cooperation with the Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace, Switzerland exerts influence over the international frameworks for water. This strengthens Geneva’s position as an international competence centre for water-related issues and as the headquarters for numerous multilateral institutions working in this field.

Regional organisations: At the regional level, Switzerland’s engagement is essentially through the «Blue Peace» initiative, promoting cross-border cooperation in the water sector, particularly in the Middle East, Central Asia and West Africa. Where possible and expedient, it seeks to cooperate with regional institutions – for example, river organisations or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).²⁷

Overarching cooperation: The involvement of social actors, science and the private sector is key to ensuring effective multilateralism. This is why Switzerland fosters cooperation between multilateral organisations and non-state actors on water and provides these partners with its knowledge and practical expertise (e.g. emergency aid). It utilises the potential of International Geneva in this respect.

²⁷ In accordance with the OSCE Action Plan 2022–25, Switzerland is working to strengthen water diplomacy, including by promoting a participatory approach and by applying new technologies, such as digital solutions and mobile applications.

5.3 Coordination

Interdepartmental: Within the Swiss Federal Administration, efforts are made to ensure the federal authorities involved with international aspects of water issues act coherently as part of the whole-of-government approach.²⁸ This horizontal coordination between departments takes place within the framework of established mechanisms and through an inter-departmental committee (ISDC Water).²⁹

FDFA: Within the FDFA, the SDC takes the lead on water-related matters. Depending on the issue, close cooperation takes place with the State Secretariat, the Directorate of International Law or other directorates. For example, the instruments of international cooperation and diplomacy are deployed in a coordinated way as part of the «Blue Peace» initiative. The core foreign policy documents and the international cooperation programmes ensure the coherence of Swiss interventions abroad.

²⁸ The federal authorities include the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, the Federal Office for the Environment, the Federal Office of Public Health, the Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office, the Federal Office for Agriculture and the State Secretariat for International Finance.

²⁹ The Interdepartmental Sustainable Development Committee (ISDC) focuses on various sustainable development issues and plays a coordination role between various federal authorities. ISDC Water is the sub-committee dealing specifically with water-related issues in foreign policy.

5.4 Communication

At national level: Switzerland's activities in the field of water are publicly presented and their value highlighted in an appropriate form. Anticipated effects, suitable forms and appropriate channels are taken into account. Preference is given to using digital media and channels for communication. This means consideration is given to public interest and digital development. Communication always takes place in agreement with other internal units involved and the relevant communication units of the departments concerned.

At international level: Switzerland's foreign policy credibility with its humanitarian tradition, neutrality, good offices and expertise in international cooperation also provides a good framework for communicating its activities in the water

sector internationally. This applies to water diplomacy in particular. Communication here must be carefully balanced and targeted. Communication may be proactive and broad, but equally passive or aimed at a limited target audience. Smooth coordination between head office units and the representations is vitally important.

Reporting: Reporting on the implementation of these guidelines and Swiss activities in the field of water is carried out as part of the Federal Council's Foreign Policy Report. In addition, the units responsible report on the impact of international cooperation projects through the mechanisms created for this purpose.



The «1 Million Youth Actions Challenge» mobilising young people from all over the world to act on water, climate change, disaster risk reduction and the environment is an initiative of the SDC (© Gabriele Maselli).

Annex 1: List of abbreviations

AVIS28	Switzerland's 2028 Foreign Policy Vision
BPME	Blue Peace Middle East
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019 caused by SARS-CoV-2
EAER	Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research
FDFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
IC	International cooperation
ISDC	Interdepartmental Sustainable Development Committee
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
UN	United Nations
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

Annex 1: Glossary ↗

2030 Agenda: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 goals provides a global framework of reference for the three inextricable dimensions of economy, environment and society. Switzerland recognises the 2030 Agenda as an important guiding framework. While it does not represent a binding legal framework, it is a means of setting political goals and shaping opinion in both domestic and foreign policy.

«**Blue Peace**»: «Blue Peace» is a vision where water is used all over the world as the basis for peaceful coexistence. «Blue Peace» is also a diplomatic initiative of Switzerland. It is based on a series of projects and programmes which promote cross-border, inter-sector and cross-generational cooperation in relation to water at various levels, with the aim of supporting sustainable socio-economic development and contributing to stability, prosperity, security and peace.

Circular economy: The circular economy is an integral approach which takes account of the entire life cycle of the materials used, from raw materials extraction, to the design, manufacturing and distribution of a product, to its longest possible lifespan and recycling. The circular economy closes material and product cycles so that raw materials can continually be reused. This results in the consumption of less primary raw materials than in the linear economic system. The product value is also maintained for longer and less waste is produced.

Civil society: Civil society is the part of society which is organised relatively independently from the state and private sector. It is comprised of groups who have common interests, goals or values. This includes non-governmental organisations, charitable associations and foundations, civic groups, religious organisations, political parties, professional associations, trade unions, social movements and interest groups.

Cross-border water management: 153 out of 195 countries worldwide share their water resources (rivers, lakes, groundwater etc.) with neighbouring states. Cross-border water management develops integral strategies and planning instruments for the sustainable, inter-state use of water resources where there are conflicting claims to use from all neighbouring states and a need to protect water resources exists.

External network: Switzerland's external network includes 170 representations abroad (embassies, permanent missions to the UN/international organisations, consulates general, cooperation offices, other representations) and around 200 honorary representations (as at May 2021). Switzerland's external network is guided by the principles of universality, coherence and effectiveness.

Foreign policy: This shapes a state's relations with other states and international organisations, and protects a state's interests abroad. It comprises various policy areas, including trade, the environment, security, development and culture. In Switzerland, the entire Federal Council is responsible for foreign policy. The FDFA is responsible for coordinating foreign policy and ensuring coherence with the other departments.

Good governance: Good governance means that public duties are performed competently and in the interests of all citizens. Mismanagement, corruption, legal uncertainty and the unfair distribution of power and resources are major causes of poverty, inequality and conflict. Combating them requires efforts to ensure better governance at all levels.

Human rights: Human rights are inherent and inalienable rights granted to all people without differentiation based on their humanity alone. They are key to protecting human dignity, and physical and psychological integrity, and constitute a fundamental basis for the development of every single person. They are guarantors of a society based on the obligation to respect the rights of the individual. They apply in both international relations and at the national level. Human rights are universal, indivisible and closely interrelated. Every state is obliged to respect, protect and implement human rights.

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM): IWRM is a process based on the coordinated and harmonised development and management of water, land and related resources. IWRM expressly aims to maximise economic and social prosperity fairly, without jeopardising the sustainability of ecosystems vital to life and the environment.

International cooperation (IC): Switzerland's international cooperation covers all instruments of humanitarian aid, long-term development cooperation, peacebuilding and human security used by the FDFA, the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) and other departments.

International Geneva: Geneva is the heart of the multilateral system of the United Nations and the European headquarters of the UN. 38 international organisations, programmes and funds as well as 177 states and 750 NGOs (see *non-governmental organisations/NGOs*) are represented there (as at May 2021). International Geneva provides employment for around 45,000 people and contributes over 11 percent to the GDP of the canton (around one percent of Swiss GDP). Around 3,300 international conferences are held in Geneva each year. Main themes are: 1) peace, security, disarmament; 2) humanitarian aid and international humanitarian law, human rights, migration; 3) work, economy, trade, science, telecommunications; 4) health; and 5) environment and sustainable development.

Multilateralism: Multilateralism is when issues of public interest are discussed and negotiated between more than two states. International organisations and bodies, such as the UN, the OSCE and the Council of Europe, are forums for such discussions. Multilateralism allows Switzerland to achieve leverage through alliances and thereby increase its opportunities to exert influence.

Non-governmental organisation (NGO): Any charitable private entity organised at local, national or international level to pursue common objectives and ideals without significant state-controlled participation or representation. NGOs are part of civil society (see *civil society*).

Peacebuilding: Civilian peacebuilding includes efforts aimed at preventing, defusing or resolving armed conflict, in particular through trust-building, mediation and by promoting humanitarian international law and human rights (see Guidelines on Human Rights 2021–24). Peacebuilding activities after an armed conflict include dealing with the past as well as efforts to promote democratic processes and elections and to strengthen human rights. Peacebuilding creates and reinforces the conditions required for sustainable development. It comprises both civilian and military measures.

Rule of law: The rule of law refers to the supremacy of law over the rule of might. At national level, the main objective of the rule of law is to uphold the primacy of law and the freedom of citizens associated with it at all levels of the state. In terms of foreign policy, the rule of law plays a major role in international peace and security, economic and social progress, development and the protection of human rights and freedoms. It is primarily achieved by strengthening international law which ensures the political stability and dependability of international relations.

Social entrepreneurship: A social enterprise is an organisation whose purpose is based on social or environmental objectives. It may be a for-profit or charitable entity or have a mixed form. The profits of social enterprises are generally reinvested to maximise the benefit for society.

Sustainability: Switzerland promotes sustainable development on the basis of the Federal Constitution. In line with the Brundtland Commission in 1987, it defines this as development which “meets the requirements of the present without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.” The principle was substantiated and updated in 2015 by the 2030 Agenda with its 17 SDGs (see 2030 Agenda).

Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6): In addition to access to drinking water, sanitary facilities and hygiene, SDG 6 of the 2030 Agenda contains further targets on protecting and restoring water-related ecosystems. The aim is to improve water quality and reduce water pollution due to human impact. Cross-border cooperation is promoted at all levels to enable integrated water resources management. SDG 6 has many direct and indirect links to other goals and issues, such as poverty, food, health and the economy.

«Triple nexus» approach: Nexus means linking. The growing complexity, longer duration and increasing frequency of humanitarian crises, armed conflicts, extreme natural events and epidemics make necessary the integrated deployment of the three foreign policy instruments – humanitarian aid, long-term development cooperation and peacebuilding – in order to achieve more sustainable impact in crisis contexts. Simultaneously alleviating recurring humanitarian need and achieving longer-term development goals represents a major challenge. The triple nexus – also known as the humanitarian/development/peace nexus – combines and harmonises these three instruments. This means poverty, armed conflict and the underlying multisectoral causes of crises are addressed in a holistic manner.

WASH approach (water, sanitation and hygiene): The term WASH, which stands for water, sanitation and hygiene, highlights the complementarity of the three aspects in efforts to improve public health through the provision of clean drinking water, the appropriate disposal and treatment of waste water and the promotion of general hygiene. The main objective is to reduce health and environmental risks presented by contamination with faeces and the pathogenic germs and harmful compounds that it contains.

Water diplomacy: Water diplomacy involves the use of diplomatic instruments in existing or emerging disputes and conflicts over common water resources in the aim of resolving or defusing them in the interests of cooperation, regional stability and peace. Switzerland uses its diplomatic engagement on water as an instrument for peace, security and stability and is committed to protecting water and water infrastructure in conflict zones.

Water efficiency and water effectiveness: *Water efficiency* means creating more value from the water resource available. At the same time, the consumption of resources, pollution and the environmental impacts of water usage for the production of goods and services are reduced at every level of the value chain and in the provision of water services. In contrast, *water effectiveness* focuses on whether the use of water for a specific purpose in a particular context is deemed favourable overall – in terms of ecological, social, economic and political aspects at local and global level. Water effectiveness aims to directly and indirectly use the water resources available in a particular geographic area at a particular time in such a way that the intended goods or services are provided in a socially just, economically advantageous and environmentally sustainable way.

Whole of government approach: The whole of government approach aims to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of a national government's activities whereby individual government units strengthen their cooperation and improve their coordination. Various departments possess different instruments for implementing their tasks. In a whole-of-government approach, these instruments are combined and coordinated in a targeted way to perform complex tasks more successfully and effectively.

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