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## **Annual Report VPSHR 2020 - Update**

### **Government of Switzerland**

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This update report outlines the work done by Switzerland in 2020 to implement the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VPs). The last full Swiss annual report, covering 2019, was published in February 2020.

#### **A. Commitment to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights**

##### **1. Commitment and endorsement of the Voluntary Principles**

Switzerland continues to be strongly committed to the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights (VP) as expressed in its action plan submitted when joining the VP Initiative (VPI) as a participant government in September 2011.

##### **2. Progress on implementation of its National Plan**

Switzerland's commitment to the VPs and all related actions are included in Switzerland's [National Action Plan](#) for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles. On 15 January 2020, the Swiss Federal Council updated its National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAP), four years after its inception. With this new version, the Federal Council renewed its commitment to security and human rights in measure 2 (security and human rights), measure 5 (multistakeholder initiatives) and measure 35 (grievance mechanisms). A [specific website](#) dedicated to the National Action plan includes a link the Voluntary Principles Associations.

In November 2020, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the State Secretariat for Economy jointly issued an online version of its *Human Rights sector guidance for the implementation of the UNGP by the commodity trading sector*. This guidance includes a reference to the VP and a link to the website: <https://commodity-trading.org/>.

Switzerland has reiterated its strong commitment to the VP through public statements, bilateral consultations and policy dialogues (for example in China, Columbia, France, Germany, Ghana, Nigeria and Peru).

#### **Engagement in the VPI:**

In 2019-2020, the government took the responsibility to chair the initiative for a second time after 2013-14. During this period, it moderated regular government pillar meetings and

steering committee meetings. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the plenary meeting planned in Montreux was cancelled. A range of other online events was organized in collaboration with the new chair to replace the plenary meeting.

In 2020, Switzerland took part in the Conflict prevention working group and will continue to do so.

During the year, Switzerland demonstrated its commitment to the Voluntary Principles Initiative through its implementation work in priority countries, outreach in Switzerland and abroad, and its contributions to the initiative's strategic focus and operational support for the VPs Secretariat.

Switzerland will stay in the Steering Committee for the period 2020 – 2021.

### **Transparency and dialogue:**

The government of Switzerland shares its efforts to support VP implementation regularly with other VP participants at the Plenary Meetings.

The VP have been a key topic in several bilateral consultations and dialogues with other governments, like for example with Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and Senegal.

## **B. Domestic Policies, Laws and Regulations**

### **Rule of Law**

The Federal Council expect companies based in Switzerland to respect human rights throughout their supply chains, in Switzerland and abroad.

In Switzerland, the question of corporate social responsibility was the subject of heated public debate in connection with the popular initiative 'For responsible businesses – protecting human rights and the environment', with attention focused on the commodities sector, specifically. [The initiative was rejected by the majority of cantons](#) on 29 November 2020. Efforts will now concentrate on implementing the [indirect counter-proposal](#) put forward by Parliament, as well as on monitoring developments internationally and within the European Union (EU) in particular. The new legislation will contain specific measures on minerals originating from fragile areas.

## **C. Promotion and Implementation**

### **1. Promoting awareness of the VP within the government**

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs organized the following internal events:

- A half-day webinar on commodities and human rights was organized with all Swiss African representations. Initiatives like the VPs were introduced to all embassies and cooperation field offices.
- A half-day meeting was organized with other federal departments on commodities and human rights. Initiatives like the VPs were introduced to all federal departments dealing with different aspects of commodities.

## **2. Promoting the VP in Switzerland**

- The State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs had an audience with the new head of the Swiss Trading and Shipping Association during which she highlighted the importance for Swiss companies to implementing the VPs.
- The State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs lead a round table on human rights and business with about 20 heads of commodity trading companies, NGOs and cantons during which the importance of VPs implementation was explained.
- In 2019, the Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs had an audience with the CEO of Trafigura, during which he encouraged the company to apply for VP membership. The company did so in 2020.
- Swiss representatives met with the Swiss Shipowner Association in order to raise their awareness on the VPs.
- Swiss Basel Forum in 2020: Switzerland moderated a panel on security and human rights with some practical exercises on the VPs implementation.
- Switzerland organized a training on human rights due diligence for 37 companies active in the cocoa and coffee trading during which the VPs were presented as an instrument to respect human rights.

## **3. Promoting and advancing implementation of the VP internationally:**

### *Outreach and implementation support in priority countries:*

Switzerland has renewed (for a 2 years period) its collaboration agreement with the ICRC and DCAF for the support of the implementation of the VPs. The project will support the implementation of the VPs through the development of targeted guidance material, the strengthening of multistakeholder local platforms, as well as the engagement with key stakeholders in priority countries. DCAF and the ICRC will work in partnership on disseminating good practices, conducting institution and capacity-building, and aligning the work of the initiative with other organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria, Peru, China and other contexts. The project will also operationalize the new institutional relationship for implementation between DCAF and the Voluntary Principles Initiative.

During the reporting period outreach efforts continued in the three VP priority countries where Switzerland is (co-)leading outreach to the host governments: **Peru, DRC and Nigeria**.

The Swiss Embassy in **Peru** continued to facilitate outreach and implementation support activities, particularly supporting the Peruvian VP multi-stakeholder Working Group “Grupo de Trabajo Empresas y Derechos Humanos Perú – Principios Voluntarios y Principios Rectores”, and increasing the awareness of the VP at a national level in Peru. In 2020, Switzerland provided a financial contribution to the academic institution IDEHPUCP through DCAF for ensuring the coordination and secretariat of the local VP Working Group. This project enabled DCAF to support IDEHPUCP as Secretariat of the National Working Group to expand its membership and provide thematic expertise to working group members during meetings. DCAF supported the working group to adjust its workplan in response to security and human rights challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. DCAF also supported IDEHPUCP in framing its work in relation to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights by developing an informative flyer on the linkages. DCAF also supported IDEHPUCP in activities on ensuring good practices related to private and public security and their cooperation and complementing role in general, reflected in the development of Peru’s national action plan on business and human rights, which despite the pandemic is going on.

DCAF supported the development of a regional VPs working group in the **Macro Sur region** of Peru, committed to promoting multi stakeholder approaches to addressing security challenges. Activities in 2020 included identifying stakeholders to join the working group, organizing working group meetings, and developing tools and guidance, namely a training manual for journalists reporting on security and human rights. In 2020, DCAF supported the capacity building of the Regional Working Group’s new secretariat, Guaman Poma de Ayala. In light of the COVID pandemic and resulting social tensions, Guaman Poma adapted its activities, organizing a series of multistakeholder dialogues, as well as a human rights training to respond to social conflicts arising from extractive operations.

Swiss support from this project complemented additional funding from the United Kingdom and Norway through the SHRIM.

The Swiss Embassy in the **DRC** is convening regular meetings of the multi-stakeholder VP Working Group in Kinshasa to discuss and coordinate VP outreach. Switzerland is co-chairing the VP stakeholder group in Kinshasa with the government of Canada. Switzerland holds the Secretariat of the national Working Group. Following a visit in November 2019 by the Swiss FDFA together with DCAF and ICRC, the Congolese government communicated its decision to join the Voluntary Principles Initiative in January 2020 and designated the Ministry of Human Rights to lead the process. The mission paved the way for a complementary Swiss funded project in 2020 on supporting the DRC in becoming a government member of the VPI. Collaboration between DCAF and the Congolese government was officially confirmed during a high-level meeting between the Congolese Ministers of Human Rights and Mines and DCAF in October 2020. While initial steps towards in preparation of the admissions process were taken, the envisaged timeline of the admission process has been negatively affected by the creation of a new national government.

The State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs also hold a meeting

dedicated to the adhesion of the RDC to the VPI with the Congolese Minister of Human Rights.

Two success stories of the Swiss work in the DRC are shown on the following fact sheet:



Impact of Swiss  
Support to DCAF Acti

In **Nigeria**, the Embassy of Switzerland has been able to provide effective leadership to the in-country working group. Without effective leadership, it is clear that the group would not have been able to stabilize and maintain continuity. Through its leadership role the Embassy has ensured the convening of regular meetings at its Abuja office. Working with its co-chair, the Embassy ensured the group has a methodical approach to its operations with the development and subsequent update of work plans, by the NGO co-chair of the group, which factored in suggestions by group members. The work plan incorporates a set of activities it could engage in towards the objective of promoting the implementation of the VPs in Nigeria. There will be new a revised work plan for 2021 / 22 based on the lessons learned so far.

Moreover, the Swiss Embassy has continued to conduct outreach to the Nigerian government and coordinated to this end with other VP participants in-country. A membership of Nigeria of the VPA is envisaged, if possibly in 2022 with the support of the Swiss Embassy together with the Australian and Canadian High Commission on Abuja.

Switzerland also supported implementation activities in **Guatemala, Mozambique and Myanmar**.

The Swiss Embassy in **Guatemala** supported DCAF to provide expertise in order to build up capacities of the VPs working group. DCAF worked with the Teaching Institute for Sustainable Development (IEPADES), an active civil society member of the in-country VPs working group, to foster human rights compliance and address gender-based violence in the private security sector in Guatemala. DCAF supported IEPADES in developing guidance for Guatemalan private security companies on gender mainstreaming and the prevention of gender-based violence. DCAF also supported the finalization and publication of the private security procurement guidelines developed by IEPADES in 2020. Both publications were targeted specifically to the VPs working group and were launched in a virtual workshop.

In **Mozambique**, the Swiss Embassy was involved in the early stages of the establishment of a local exchange platform on security and human rights. The embassy had consultations with different actors at the governmental, corporate and civil society level.

In **Myanmar**, Switzerland financially supports the Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business (MCRB), which acts as the Secretariat for the in-country VPs working group which holds regular discussions on in-country security/human rights risks in the extractives and other industries. In 2020, MCRB embarked on a study with private security actors to strengthen and raise industry standards and practices that respect human rights and international humanitarian law.