

Delegation from the Swiss Confederation
Position Paper for the General Assembly

The topic before the General Assembly (GA) is Climate Change: Mitigating its economic, environmental and social effects. The Swiss Confederation recognizes the urgent need for a stronger and even more ambitious cooperation on a global level to avert the most serious effects climate change will have on the world's environment, economies and societies. It –therefore– looks forward to discussing the topic at the upcoming conference.

I. Climate Change: Mitigating its economic, environmental and social effects

Climate change adaptation and mitigation are becoming more deeply embedded in governmental structures in line with the increasing profile of climate action in national political agendas. Member States are establishing inter-ministerial committees to oversee climate action and comprehensive national systems to monitor, evaluate and report on progress. As regards climate change adaptation, more than 90 countries have launched their process to formulate and implement a National Action Plan (NAP). However, significant scientific, political, technological, investment and public support related challenges need to be overcome before countries can be considered to be fully prepared for the expected global temperature increase. Although government policies during the COVID-19 pandemic have drastically altered patterns of energy demand around the world, current emission trajectories and planned efforts of Member States are not in line with meeting the 2 and 1.5 °C goals, which would require the peaking of global emissions well before 2030, followed by a global annual emission reduction of between at least 1.3 and 2.8 percent.

In a joint effort, Member States have taken into consideration many agreements and protocols with different policies to adopt climate change. These include climate action as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, the Cancun Agreements, the Montreal Protocol, the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Ever since the ratification of the UNFCCC in December 1993, Switzerland has been committed to the convention's ultimate objective of the "stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system". Having ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2003 and its Doha Amendment in 2015, Switzerland is also a member of the Paris Agreement. At national level, Switzerland's environmental and climate policy is based on the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Confederation, which aims at the "long-term preservation of natural resources" under Article 2. To achieve its 2030 target of a 50% emission reduction from levels of 1990 under the Paris Agreement, Swiss legislation has worked on a significant revision of its CO₂ Act, on which a public referendum will be held in 2021. The revision will provide an increase of required domestic emission reductions and constitutes an important step towards Switzerland's goal of greenhouse gas neutrality by 2050. The corresponding 2050 Climate Strategy has been adopted by the Federal Council on January 27th, 2021. Apart from drastic emission reductions and the increased usage of renewable fuel and new drive technologies, remaining emissions shall be balanced by means of Carbon Capture and Storage (CSS) as well as Negative Emission Technologies (NET). While the international community has not yet agreed on the design of a global carbon market, Switzerland has recently signed a carbon offset deal with Peru – the first of its kind under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement – which can serve as an example to other Member States.

Switzerland proposes before the GA to once more help build momentum, stressing the need for Member States to drive forward the regional implementation of the Paris Agreement. In cases where members of the Paris Agreement are not yet able to meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with the reduction of domestic emissions only, Switzerland suggests the GA to elaborate on common rules and oversight provisions for carbon credit agreements to facilitate the implementation of such transfers. Following the UN Secretary-General António Guterres' six climate positive actions to recover from the COVID-19 Pandemic, Switzerland further advises the GA to translate the demanded actions into more concrete policy recommendations to provide Member States with clear directives for action. In this context, the Swiss Confederation would like to refer to the latest Adaption Gap Report, stressing that the strengthening of nature-based solutions and investment into adaption measures towards climate change must not be neglected in the formulation of such recommendations.