



## Universal Periodical Review of Switzerland

*UPR-Info Pre-session*

*11<sup>th</sup> of October 2017*

*“From the politics of taking life to the politics of affirming it”  
“From the financing of conflict to the financing of peace”*

Mister/Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,  
Good morning,

This Statement is delivered by the Center for Global Nonkilling, a worldwide congregation of scholars working to create societies that do not kill and by Conscience and Peace Tax International, whose aim is the creation of peace funds, where tax payers can pay for peace instead of paying for military budgets. Both organizations have ECOSOC status.

### **The right to life**

It is good living in Switzerland. However, they are still major exceptions to the full respect of the right to life.

Suicide is the second cause of violent deaths in the world, after road traffic and before interpersonal violence and conflict related deaths. Switzerland ranks badly on suicides, 73<sup>rd</sup> country in the world. It must be mentioned that suicide has a highly discriminatory gender bias. 3 times more men die from suicide than women and generally speaking it is older people who are mostly affected. These discriminations must be addressed while preventing suicides.

Happily in Switzerland, between our initial submission in March and today, the Swiss Government has published its suicide prevention action plan<sup>1</sup>.

**1. However, we encourage Switzerland to keep enhancing its suicide prevention mechanism, and addressing the gender issue therein.**

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### **Adequate standard of living.**

Though one of the richest countries in the world and despite a provision in the Constitution guaranteeing a right to assistance<sup>2</sup>, Switzerland has a high poverty rate; 6.6 % of the people are living below the poverty line and 13.5 % more are at risk of poverty<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, social systems are dispersed<sup>4</sup> and have been tightening up in recent years, resulting in many administrative complications for people in need of social protection. To “End poverty in all its forms everywhere” is the first of all Sustainable Development Goals.

**2. We encourage Switzerland to present, in the Universal Periodic Review, its program to fulfill SDG 1 and eradicate poverty.**

### **Arms exports and financing of the weapons industry**

Switzerland has always been keen on promoting peace and on linking peace and security issues with human rights concerns. We strongly compliment Switzerland for these policies and these achievements – they are one of the things making me proud of being a Swiss citizen – but we would also like the country to be more coherent. Switzerland is the 14<sup>th</sup> greatest arms exporter in the world<sup>5</sup>, most of it being small arms and ammunition. And Swiss financial companies, despite a ban in the law<sup>6</sup> on direct and indirect financing of military nuclear activities, or of other weapons of mass destruction fabrication, still do finance companies doing so<sup>7</sup>.

**3. We encourage Switzerland to be an example in arms reduction, by ceasing or drastically reducing arms exports and arms production financing.**

### **The Right to Conscientious Objection**

Alternative service for conscientious objectors is routinely available in Switzerland. However, the following problems remain.

The length of the civil service is too long and it is impossible to calculate it<sup>8</sup>.

Swiss soldiers and persons doing the alternative service serve through an initial period and then have recall periods the following years. But while soldiers do not have to finish their remaining assigned days when they reach the age limit, persons doing the civil service are strictly obliged to finish their days before reaching that same age limit, sometimes being threatened of, or being imprisoned for being late. The length of time during which the civil service has to be done is the same as the one given to soldiers, while the civil service is legally half time longer. Worse, because the army does not publish the number of days done or remitted to soldiers at the age limit, it is impossible to know what the true length of the civil service is compared to the effective length of the military service. The number of days done by persons doing the civil service could end up being as much as twice as long as the ones effectively done in the military service, an extended length which is considered to be of punitive nature under international law. These discriminatory practices must cease.

**4. We encourage the Government of Switzerland to disclose the number of days done by soldiers and to reduce accordingly the number of days imposed on persons doing the alternative service.**

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There is no scrutiny of the motives of the persons demanding the civil service, but the recruitment procedure is fully in the hands of the army and only those fit for military service can thereafter ask for the civil service. Many persons willing to serve the community by doing a civil service are barred from doing so because the army considers them, righteously or not, unfit for military service.

**5. To avoid this, we encourage the Swiss Government to include civilians at the recruitment and to adopt lighter admission criteria for those demanding the civil service.**

### **Human rights of soldiers and right of access to an appropriate remedy**

Soldiers are called to do their recall periods any time during the year. They are most often warned sufficiently in advance, case being to obtain changes of the dates of service. However, there is no judicial control over this procedure<sup>9</sup> and many soldiers finally resort to medical reasons to avoid military service at an un-proper time.

**6. Because this violates various human rights, we ask for a judicial or independent control over these periods of service.**

Without further developments, if not yet addressed, we also ask of Switzerland:

**7. To establish independent mechanisms for the prevention and control of use of force.**

**8. To adopt exemplary measures to regulate business and human rights.**

**9. To present its plan to reach 0.7% of GDP for development** (and for the implementation of recommendation 123.84 made by Kuwait and Bangladesh as well as to fulfill SDG 17.2).

**10. To explore new ways to enhance the effective participation of youth in the decision-making process.**

**11. To open up a peace fund where tax payers and conscientious objectors can pay their taxes, instead of paying them for the military budget.**

**12. And as a champion of “direct democracy”, to forward the concept and its advantages, worldwide, whenever possible.**

Thank you for attention!

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bag.admin.ch/bag/fr/home/themen/mensch-gesundheit/psychische-gesundheit/politische-auftraege-im-bereich-psychische-gesundheit/aktionsplan-suizidpraevention.html>

<sup>2</sup> Article 12, Swiss constitution. Right to assistance when in need. “Persons in need and unable to provide for themselves have the right to assistance and care, and to the financial means required for a decent standard of living”.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19995395/index.html#a12>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics/economic-social-situation-population.html?publicationID=7014>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Trends-in-international-arms-transfers-2016.pdf>, table 1

<sup>6</sup> War material act: <https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19960753/index.html#a8b> and

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/19960753/index.html#a8c>

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016\\_Switzerland.pdf](http://www.dontbankonthebomb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2016_Switzerland.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> This was already mentioned in an NGO submission made for the previous cycle of the UPR.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.admin.ch/opc/fr/classified-compilation/19950010/index.html#a38>