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Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten EDA

**Politische Direktion PD**  
Abteilung Menschliche Sicherheit:  
Frieden, Menschenrechte, Humanitäre Politik, Migration

# **Switzerland's commitment to human rights and new challenges with regard to Covid-19**

Online Symposium „Beyond the crisis – How to create  
social benefit and resilience in tourism”

28 September 2020

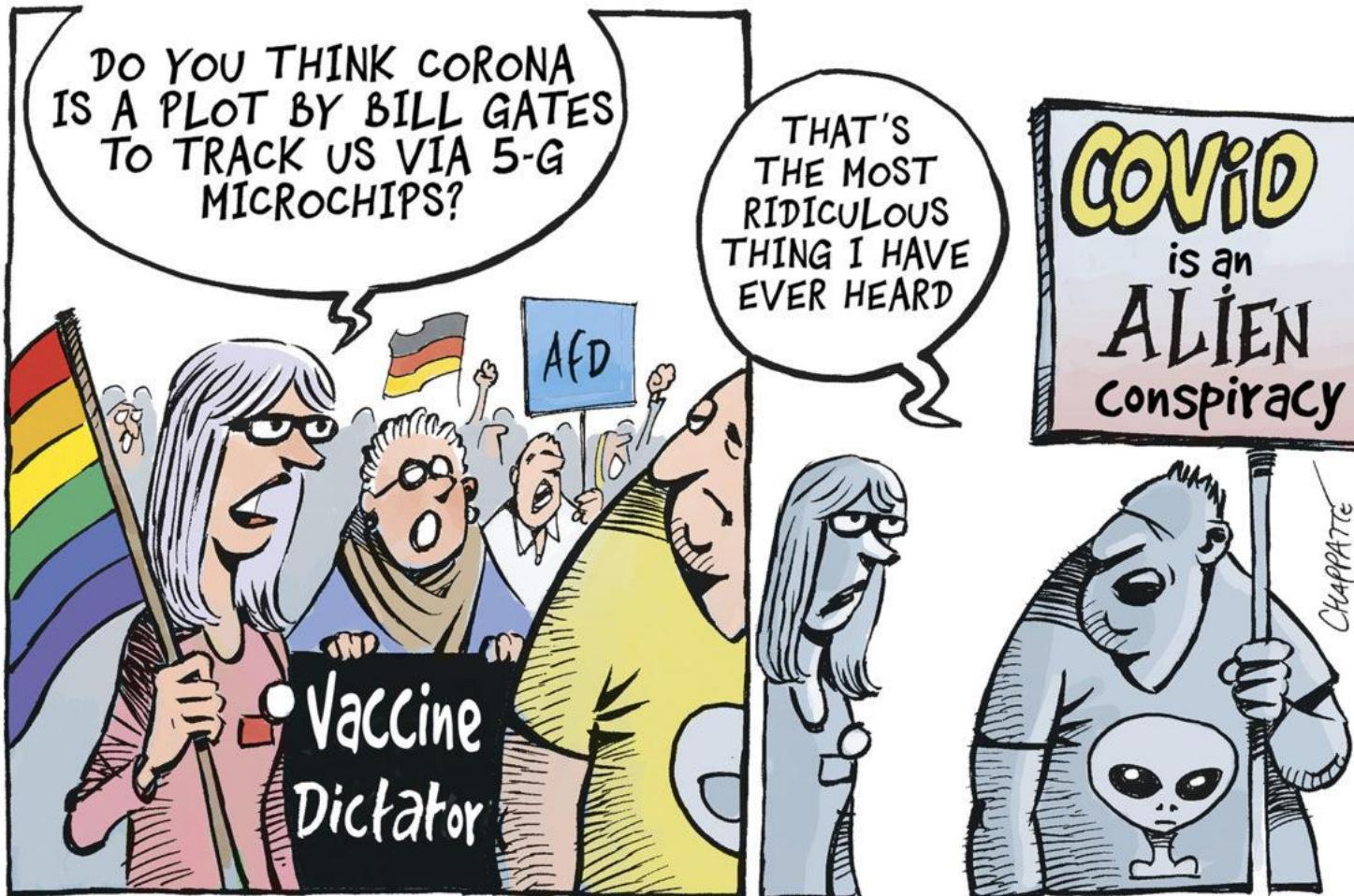


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## ÉPIDÉMIE EN BIÉLORUSSIE





- Commitment to a just and peaceful international order (art. 2 Constitution)
- Commitment to "preserve Switzerland's independence and prosperity" and to contribute "to the relief of people in need and the fight against poverty as well as to the promotion of respect for human rights, democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples and the preservation of natural resources" (art. 54 of the Constitution)
- Economic interests and values: "This commitment must not lead to a conflict between human rights and the economy. "(Foreign Policy vision 2028 - Avis 28)



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# Priorities

- Torture
- Death penalty
- Freedom of expression
- Human Rights Defenders
- Women's rights and equality
- Business and Human Rights
- Economic, social and cultural rights



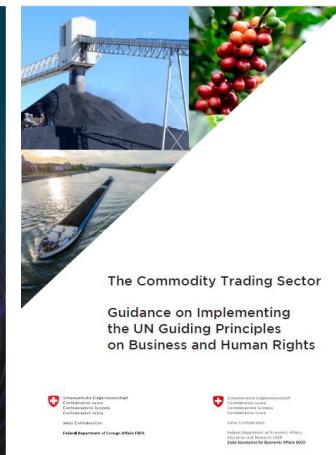
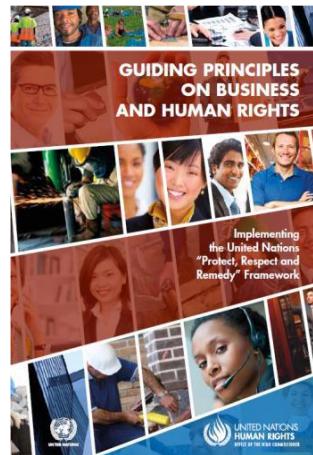
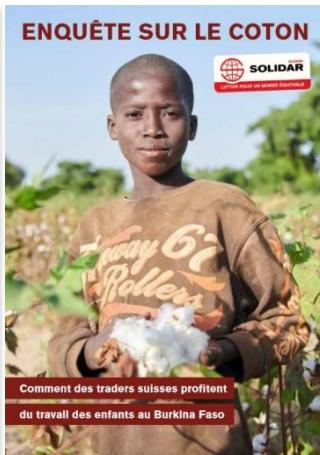
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# Business and Human Rights



swiss TEXTILES



Verband der Industrie- und Dienstleistungskonzerne in der Schweiz  
Fédération des groupes industriels et de services en Suisse  
Federation of Industrial and Service Groups in Switzerland



[www.nap-bhr.admin.ch](http://www.nap-bhr.admin.ch) et [www.csr.admin.ch](http://www.csr.admin.ch)





# National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights

- Revised NAP 2020-2023 adopted in January 2020
- Contains 35 Political instruments to:
  - Promote human rights due diligence by businesses
  - Promote accountability and transparency
  - Improve political coherence
  - Improve access to remedy
  - Reinforce expertise of Swiss representations abroad
- Smart mix of non-legally binding measures and statutory requirements where necessary (measure 8 : Human Rights in Tourism)

[www.nap-bhr.admin.ch](http://www.nap-bhr.admin.ch)



# Expectations of the Federal Council

“The Federal Council expects business enterprises based and/or operating in Switzerland **to fulfil their human rights responsibilities wherever they operate and to carry out human rights due diligence**”

“Swiss companies must therefore ensure that their business operations have no adverse human rights impacts.”

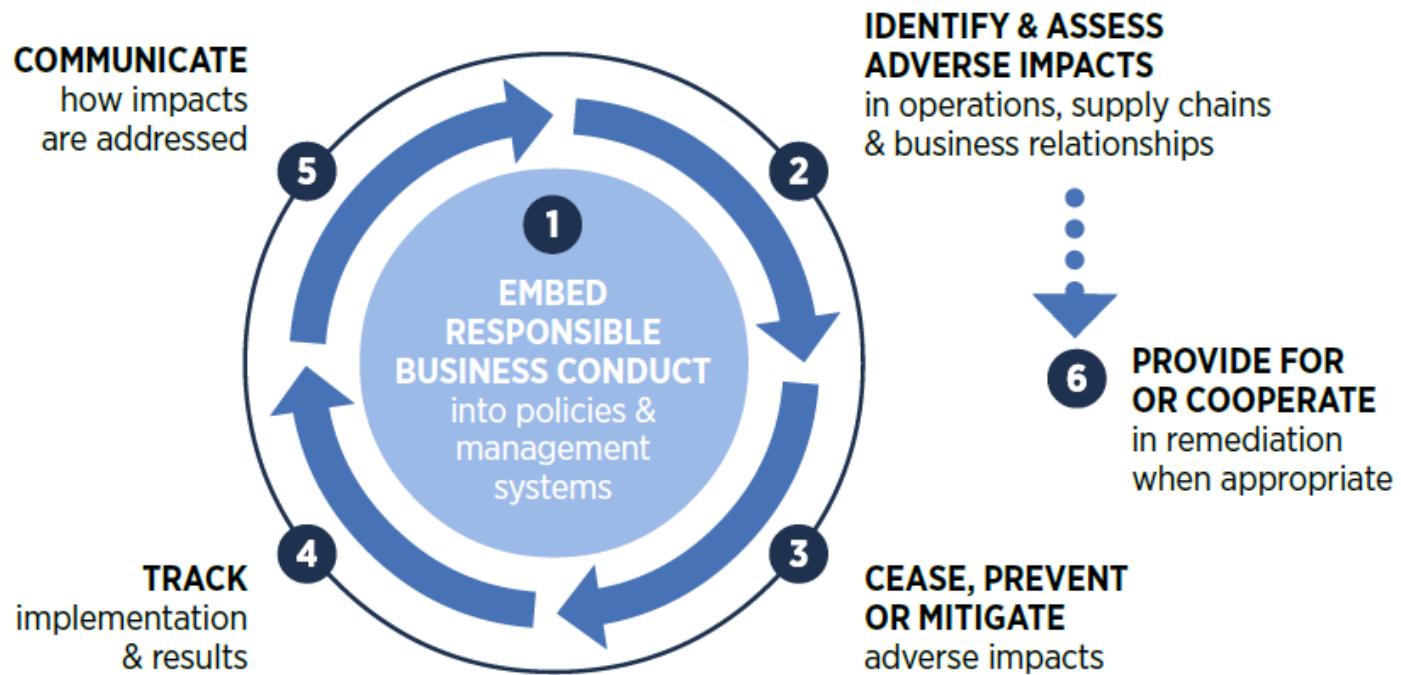


# UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

- 1. Business enterprises may abuse human rights **through their own activities.**
- 2. Business enterprises may **contribute** to abuses of human rights through their activities.
- 3. Business enterprises may be involved in abuses of human rights **via their business relationships**, without contributing to those impacts themselves.



# Human rights due diligence (UNGPs 17)





# Human Rights and the Covid-19 pandemic

- Major health challenge for all states. This makes the need to ensure respect for human rights in all circumstances more essential than ever.
- Switzerland has recalled in different fora the fundamental importance of ensuring that all measures taken in the context of COVID-19 respect the principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination.
- Moreover, they must be limited in time and comply with the international human rights obligations of States, while paying particular attention to the protection of particularly vulnerable persons.



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# UN General Assembly

- **UN General Assembly:** Switzerland has joined forces with Singapore, Indonesia and Norway, Ghana and Liechtenstein for a General Assembly resolution for "Global solidarity in the fight against Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)". The resolution, co-signed by 188 states and adopted by consensus should be actively propagated as an expression of the unity of the community of states and the importance of international cooperation to fight the pandemic and their consequences.



# Human Rights and the Covid-19 pandemic

- The FDFA has been actively involved in areas that have been hit during the crisis and also uses opportunities resulting from this.
- A Rapid Response Instrument of CHF 1 million was set up by the Human Security Division to act quickly, in a goal-oriented and coherent manner.
- The following options for action were developed :
  - Statements: Switzerland takes appropriate bilateral and multilateral measures against disproportionate restrictions on human rights and the rule of law.
  - Prevention: Support for selected projects and activities to prevent human rights violations, especially in connection with COVID-19.



# Human Rights and the Covid-19 pandemic

- Switzerland has expressed concerns about the numerous cases of abuse of measures taken in the context of COVID-19 to silence dissenting voices.
- It has reiterated that no measure aimed at protecting the health of all should be invoked as a pretext to justify abusive restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. In particular, journalists and human rights defenders must be able to carry out their work freely.



# Human Rights and the Covid-19 pandemic

- Disinformation risks undermining efforts by authorities to combat the spread of COVID-19. Switzerland has encouraged other governments to ensure that credible information on the pandemic and best responses to it are quickly and reliably available in order to counter misinformation.
- States must guarantee affordable health care without discrimination. Those most vulnerable to the virus, such as the forcibly displaced in or outside camps, people in detention, the elderly, people with disabilities and pre-existing health conditions, as well as the homeless and people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation must be protected.



# Human Rights and the Covid-19 pandemic

- In order to "build back better", it is necessary to address in a comprehensive and coordinated manner the root causes of the inequalities exacerbated by the virus. The private sector should be involved in socio-economic responses to the crisis.
- Ex : the crisis has exposed structural inequalities that workers face in the garment sector. There are calls for a new social contract with a more equal distribution of wealth along the supply chain. Brands and suppliers need to do their share in protecting workers.
- In providing medical and health goods and services, private companies must be considered as potential partners in order to provide local and structural solutions, while remaining attentive to the contexts in which they evolve (conflict-sensitivity/do-no-harm approach).



# Examples

- **Human Rights Defenders** are particularly vulnerable to the danger of abuse of emergency measures designed to stifle dissenting voices, and when prisoners, by the poor sanitary conditions : Swiss representations abroad are encouraged to intervene on the basis of existing guidelines.
- **Multinational companies:** Switzerland is in contact with a network of multinational companies and national initiatives in the corporate and human rights framework, such as the UN Global Compact, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and the International Code of Conduct Association.
- Human rights due diligence in times of Covid 19 with a focus on **tourism** resumption in Thailand and Myanmar.



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# Thank you !

Follow us on Twitter: @HumanSecurityCH

The screenshot shows the Twitter profile page for @HumanSecurityCH. The header image is a photograph of two children looking through a hole in a wall. The profile picture is the Swiss flag. The bio reads: "Swiss Human Security @HumanSecurityCH Official foreign policy account for #peace, #humanrights, #peacemediation & #protectionofcivilians in #armedconflicts #migration @SwissMFA @EDA\_DFAE". It also lists location as Berne, Switzerland, website as idfa.admin.ch/humansecurity, and joined February 2019. There are 106 tweets, 262 followers, 712 following, 5 likes, and 4 lists. A "Folgen" (Follow) button is visible. The timeline section shows a single tweet from the account itself welcoming users. The "Neu bei Twitter?" section encourages users to register for a personalized timeline. The "Weltweit Trends" section lists hashtags like #LEC19, #MFJ19, #climategchange, and #SDGs.