



# Basel Peace Office

*Advancing international peace and security through the abolition of nuclear weapons*

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## A Nobel Effort:

**Opportunities for Switzerland to advance nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament in 2026, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the First Nobel Peace Prize.**

Food-for-thought paper  
February 2026

*Last month, the world marked eighty years since the devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Every day since then, the hibakusha – the survivors – turned their suffering into a call for peace. They were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – and have stirred the global conscience. And yet every day, we see newer and even more dangerous weapons. Every day, we see newer and even more dangerous weapons. Nuclear testing threats returning. Norms eroding. Dialogue fading. And the nuclear saber rattling – louder than in past decades. Hard-won progress – reductions in arsenals, the cessation of testing – are being undone before our eyes. We are sleepwalking into a new nuclear arms race.*

**António Guterres, UN Secretary-General**

[Address to the UN High Level Plenary Meeting on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons](#), September 26, 2025

*"We need to get away from nuclear build-up and parading nuclear arsenals - back to the path of arms control and disarmament... The risk of a nuclear catastrophe will remain until the last nuclear weapon is dismantled."*

**President Ignazio Cassis, Switzerland**

[Statement to the 2022 NPT Review Conference](#)

Note: This paper updates and builds upon proposals in a 2022 paper entitled [Neutral countries and the Doomsday Clock Opportunities for Switzerland to advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament in the period 2023-2024](#).

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### 1. SUMMARY

Switzerland has played important roles nationally, at the United Nations and in other forums to help reduce the risks of nuclear war and promote global nuclear disarmament. This has included [terminating a nuclear weapons research and development program](#) and joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear State in 1977, adopting legislation to prohibit the financing of nuclear weapons and other prohibited weapons (Swiss War Materials Act), leading a successful initiative at the 2010 NPT Review Conference on international humanitarian law and the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, being an active member of the De-Alerting Working Group and the [Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament](#) and hosting nuclear arms control deliberations and negotiations such as the [Biden-Trump Summit](#) and the negotiations for the [Joint Comprehensive Plan for Action](#) (Iran Nuclear Deal).

Despite this, the risks of nuclear war today are higher they have ever been, and the prospects for global nuclear disarmament seem further away than ever. The nuclear-armed States have stepped up the nuclear arms race, collectively spending more than \$1billion annually to develop and deploy nuclear weapons. The number of allied states relying on extended nuclear deterrence has increased – not decreased – with Sweden and Finland recently joining the NATO nuclear alliance. And there are currently no negotiations on nuclear disarmament involving the nuclear armed and allied States.

In this food-for-thought paper, we explore possibilities for Switzerland to take additional measures to advance nuclear risk reduction and disarmament that might gain significant traction or make a substantive and positive impact in 2026 and beyond. These include:

1. Promoting nuclear-risk reduction measures including no-first-use (NFU) policies and agreements;
2. Advancing a common security approach to reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines;
3. Supporting the establishment of additional nuclear-weapon-free zones including in the Middle East, North-East Asia and Europe;
4. Promoting adoption of a global, timebound commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons no later than the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations in 2045;
5. Ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW);
6. Promoting negotiations for a nuclear-weapons convention or nuclear disarmament framework convention which would include the nuclear armed and allied states;
7. Promoting global divestment from the nuclear weapons industry;
8. Elevating the illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, including in the UN Human Rights Council.

In assessing the potential impact of the above measures, we give some consideration first to the political drivers that sustain nuclear deterrence and how they can be addressed in order for the nuclear armed and allied states to reduce and eliminate the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies and to join, or negotiate, a nuclear abolition regime.

We consider key multilateral forums through which nuclear risk reduction and disarmament can be advanced. These include the 2026 NPT Review Conference, Conference on Disarmament, UN General Assembly, OSCE (especially during the Swiss Presidency of the OSCE in 2026), OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, 2026 Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

And we note key anniversaries and commemoration dates that can be used to build public awareness and political attention, including:

- 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear weapons (July 8);
- 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Court of Justice (April 18);
- Nuclear Abolition Day (September 26);
- 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary (on December 10) of the very first Nobel Peace Prize, which was awarded jointly to **Henri Dunant** (Switzerland) for founding the *International Committee of the Red Cross* and to **Frédéric Passy** (France) for co-founding the *Inter-Parliamentary Union* and for being instrumental for the establishment of the first international tribunal, the *Permanent Court of Arbitration*.

## 2. OVERVIEW – POLITICAL DRIVERS THAT SUSTAIN NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

On 27 January 2026, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists set the hands of the ‘Doomsday Clock’ to [85 Seconds to Midnight](#), indicating how close humanity is coming to a civilizational catastrophe from climate change, nuclear war or a global war triggered by rising authoritarianism, militarism and acts of aggression.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has elevated the risk of nuclear war in Europe and has resulted in a strengthened adherence to nuclear deterrence by NATO countries to prevent further aggression from the Russian Federation. This situation, as well as acts of aggression and threats of aggression involving nuclear-armed States in other regions such as in the Middle East and East Asia, is putting additional strains on nuclear arms control and disarmament processes and treaties – including the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) which will have its 5-yearly review conference in April-May 2026.

This political environment makes it difficult, if not impossible, to make concrete progress on nuclear risk reduction, ending the reliance on nuclear deterrence and achieving regional and global nuclear disarmament, unless nuclear disarmament initiatives are accompanied by diplomatic and legal approaches to addressing aggression and resolving international disputes peacefully, i.e. through strengthening common security.

This food-for-thought paper explores opportunities to advance such a common security approach to nuclear disarmament through the 2026 NPT Review Conference, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Inter-Parliamentary Union, UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court.

## 3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### a. Nuclear risk reduction: START renewal and No-First-Use

The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), the last remaining pact limiting U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, is set to expire on February 5, 2026. Unless the two countries make a renewal agreement to maintain limits on their forces, the world will enter a period of potentially unconstrained nuclear build-ups—one that is more complex than the Cold War nuclear arms race given the additional dynamics of China’s nuclear expansion and destabilizing emerging technologies.

Switzerland hosted the 2021 USA-Russia Summit (Presidents Biden and Trump) which was important in maintaining START in the context of increasing conflicts and tensions (including over Ukraine). Switzerland could host diplomatic talks and/or a USA-Russia Summit in 2026 to help facilitate a renewal of START.

The use of nuclear weapons – whether by accident, miscalculation, crisis escalation or intent – would cause catastrophic medical, humanitarian, environmental, economic and political consequences. Adoption of no-first-use (NFU) policies, and ending the current military preparations for such use, would considerably lower the risks of a nuclear catastrophe occurring.

Policy options for the first-use of nuclear weapons – which are maintained by most of the nuclear-armed states – increase the risk that nuclear weapons could be used in a conflict. They provide a possibility that a nuclear-

armed state might launch a nuclear strike in response to a conventional threat or to a threat from other weapons of mass destruction, or even to neutralize a potential nuclear threat in a pre-emptive strike. NFU restricts the possibilities for launching a nuclear strike to only a situation in which a country has been attacked by nuclear weapons.

NFU can be adopted unilaterally by any of the nuclear armed States (China and India have done so), or by mutual agreement between nuclear armed states (China and Russia have done so), or through a plurilateral or multilateral agreement. Examples of possible plurilateral agreements are: the proposal by China for the P5 members (China, France, Russia, UK and US) to adopt a NFU agreement, and the proposal for NATO to adopt a NFU policy.

Adoption of NFU policies or agreements are important measures to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons (see 3 b below) and pave the way for comprehensive nuclear disarmament negotiations. The significance of NFU in facilitating nuclear disarmament arises from the fact that the maintenance of first-use policies is a major barrier preventing the nuclear armed states from participating in such negotiations. The first-use option means that they believe that they need to retain nuclear weapons for a wide range of security scenarios – not just to deter a nuclear attack. This is why the nuclear armed States that currently have NFU policies (India and China) also support the start of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention, where-as the other nuclear-armed States do not support the start of such negotiations.

A more detailed outline of the value of NFU policies and options for their adoption can be found in [Why No-First-Use](#) and [No-first use of nuclear weapons: An exploration of unilateral, Bilateral and plurilateral approaches and their security, risk reduction and disarmament implications](#).

**Recommendation 1:**

**Switzerland could offer its Good Offices to host diplomatic talks and/or a Summit between Russia and USA on a START follow-up agreement and on implementation of such an agreement.**

**Recommendation 2:**

**Switzerland could support the adoption of NFU policies by nuclear-armed and allied countries, including the Chinese proposal for a P5 agreement and the adoption of NFU by NATO.**

## **b. Reducing salience of nuclear weapons: Common Security versus nuclear deterrence**

There are currently nine nuclear armed countries and another 37 countries that rely on nuclear deterrence. Although a numerical minority amongst UN member states, these countries together comprise most of the northern hemisphere and nearly 2/3rds of the world's population.

The primary reason for the reliance on nuclear weapons by such a significant number of countries is because nuclear deterrence is perceived by them as providing security, **especially from acts of aggression**. Nuclear weapons will therefore continue to be a part of security doctrines until the nuclear armed and allied states can be confident that the security provided by nuclear weapons is no longer necessary, or that nuclear deterrence can be replaced by alternatives which are credible.

Common Security could provide such credible alternatives, and therefore make a vital contribution to reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines, and paving the way for the nuclear armed and allied states to join a nuclear abolition framework – whether that be the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, a Nuclear Weapons Convention, or a framework agreement.

Common security is an approach to achieving national security by taking into account one's own security needs and also the security of other nations, including one's adversaries. It is based on the assumption that sustainable national security cannot be obtained by undermining or threatening the security of others ('zero-sum game'), but rather on resolving conflicts with one's adversaries and ensuring that the security of all is upheld ('win-win approach'). It relies on diplomacy, negotiation, mediation, arbitration and on the application of international law to ensure fairness and security for all.

The **UN Charter** is based on a common security approach. It includes a prohibition of war, obligations to resolve international disputes peacefully and adhere to international law, and a range of mechanisms for facilitating this. The [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe](#) (OSCE) is also built on a common security framework, and provides forums for European governments and parliamentarians to advance nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament amongst the OSCE member countries. Switzerland is well positioned to highlight this during its chairpersonship of OSCE in 2026

Switzerland is already very active in promoting common security, including through its strong support for the United Nations and international law, its active neutrality policy and its engagement in the OSCE. Of particular note is the

excellent work undertaken by Switzerland through its [Good Offices](#) in which “Switzerland supports conflicting parties in their search for a negotiated solution, either acting as mediator directly or supporting negotiations and the mediation of other states or international and regional organisations.”

Also of note is Swiss promotion of the role of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) as a key judicial body for the peaceful resolution of international conflicts and encouragement of all States to accept its compulsory jurisdiction.

However, Switzerland could possibly do more to promote its positive example and the security value of its common security approach, in order to encourage and influence the nuclear armed and allied states to transition from nuclear deterrence to common security.

Two significant barriers to ensuring a common security framework can effectively prevent and address aggression, are the current use of the veto in the Security Council and the limitations on the jurisdiction over the crime of aggression in the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

With regard to the veto, Article 27 (3) of the UN Charter does not permit the use of the veto by a Permanent Member of the Security Council (P5) when that member is a party to the dispute considered under Chapter VI of the UN Charter, or whenever such use would be contrary to international law, including the principles and purposes of the UN Charter. The latter is interpreted to include cases of aggression or other mass atrocity crimes. P5 members – in particular the Peoples’ Republic of China, the Russian Federation and the United States– have repeatedly violated these provisions to prevent Security Council action on specific cases of aggression and mass atrocity crimes.

With regard to the International Criminal Court, the crime of aggression (Article 8 bis) has jurisdictional limits not placed on the other core crimes in the Rome Statute. To-date, this has prevented any cases on aggression to be considered by the ICC.

Finally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a key factor in a lack of confidence in common security, especially in the European region. A peaceful and just resolution of this conflict is of high importance. The stalemate between Russia and Ukraine regarding the legal status of Crimea, the Donbas region and the other occupied territories, remains a barrier to negotiating a just and sustainable peace. A referral to the ICJ – by mutual consent or through an advisory opinion – on the legal status of these regions could be considered as a potential element in the process for achieving a just and sustainable peace agreement.

**Recommendation 3:**

**Switzerland could introduce the common security versus nuclear deterrence framework to the 2026 NPT Review Conference, through a statement or working paper, in order to demonstrate to the nuclear armed and allied countries ways in which they can reduce their reliance on nuclear deterrence.**

**Recommendation 4:**

**Switzerland could continue its work promoting universal acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ, including by producing an updated version of the [Handbook on accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice](#) which Switzerland published in 2014.**

**Recommendation 5:**

**Switzerland could support the proposal for an International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legal limits to the use of the veto. This has been supported in Council of Europe Resolutions 2436 and 2482.**

**Recommendation 6:**

**Switzerland could support fast-tracking a process to harmonise jurisdiction on the crime of aggression with the jurisdiction on other core crimes in the Rome Statute.** This would be complementary to the proposal, already supported by Switzerland, to establish a Special Tribunal on the Crime of Aggression in the situation of Ukraine to examine questions of individual criminal responsibility for the invasion.

**Recommendation 7:**

**To assist the achievement of a just and sustainable peace between Russia and Ukraine, Switzerland could liaise with both parties to the conflict and with like-minded states in the UNGA on a potential referral to the International Court of Justice on the legal status of Crimea, the Donbas region and the other occupied territories.**

### **c. Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones**

There are a number of [regional nuclear-weapon-free zones](#) (and one single-State NWFZ) under which the countries in the region have collectively prohibited the development and possession of nuclear weapons and the deployment of nuclear weapons on their territories. The NWFZ treaties also include additional protocols for adoption by the

nuclear-weapon-states committing them to respect the zones and not to deploy nuclear weapons on the territories, nor to threaten or use nuclear weapons against the parties to the zones.

The NWFZs provide a common security approach to regional nuclear disarmament, that can provide stimulus for similar approaches in other regions, including the Middle East, North-East Asia and Europe.

The UN General Assembly has established a [Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction](#) which has met annually since 2019. The proposal for a Middle East zone has also received considerable support at NPT Review Conferences.

The proposal for a North-East Asia NWFZ which is gaining considerable traction amongst parliamentarians, policy analysts and others is the [3+3 proposal](#) which envisages three territorial countries (Japan, North Korea and South Korea) relinquishing nuclear weapons in their territories and nuclear deterrence between them, at the same time as three nuclear-weapon States in the region (China, Russia and the United States) provide binding security guarantees not to threaten or use nuclear weapons against the territorial countries. A key requirement for denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and establishing a NE Asia NWFZ would likely be parallel negotiations on a Peace treaty to permanently end the Korean War. Switzerland's membership in the [Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission](#) (NNSC), which monitors the armistice between both Koreas, provides opportunity for a mediating role for Switzerland in peace and denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Various proposals for a European NWFZ have been suggested by European governments, parliaments and policy analysts, and have been examined in [A Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in Europe Concept – Problems – Chances](#), published by the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt.

A European NWFZ would provide impetus for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons in Europe (including in NATO and in other OSCE countries) and for global nuclear disarmament. However, support by European governments for such a treaty is currently very low because of a lack of confidence in the security assurances that would be needed from the nuclear-armed States. This is primarily due to the fact that in invading Ukraine, Russia violated the security assurances they provided in the in the Budapest Memorandum to respect the territorial integrity of Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The security assurances were provided by Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States in return for the three former Soviet countries relinquishing the nuclear weapons remaining on their territories in the break-up of the Soviet Union.

Options for enhancing the credibility of security assurances in a proposed European NWFZ could include a veto-proof requirement for Security Council action and/or compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in case of violation or threat of violation of the security assurances.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**Switzerland could elevate its support for a Middle East Zone free from Nuclear Weapons and other WMD including through providing its Good Offices for confidential talks between key parties.**

#### **Recommendation 9**

**Switzerland could employ its Good Offices as a member of the NNSC to support talks and negotiations for a Peace Treaty to permanently end the Korean War and include the proposal for a NE Asia NWFZ in these negotiations.**

#### **Recommendation 10**

**Switzerland could support exploratory work on a European NWFZ and the security guarantees that would make such a zone credible for European countries to join.**

### **d. Timebound commitment to nuclear abolition**

The International Court of Justice in 1996 affirmed a universal obligation to negotiate in good faith to achieve the comprehensive abolition of nuclear weapons. The UN Human Rights Committee has affirmed this obligation. Nuclear armed states have accepted this obligation, but have failed to demonstrate good faith by refusing to commence and conclude such negotiations. At the very least, the nuclear armed States should commit to fulfilling this obligation, and achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons, no later than 2045, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NPT and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations. A [Joint Appeal](#) to this end was made at the UN General Assembly on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (26 September 2025) by a coalition of over 1,600 personalities and NGOs.

#### **Recommendation 11**

**Switzerland could call on the nuclear armed and allied states to commit to achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons no later than 2045. Switzerland could make this call at the 2026 NPT Review Conference, UN High Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (September 26), in a resolution/s in the UN General Assembly, and at the UN Human Rights Council.**

## e. Frameworks for nuclear abolition

### i. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)

The [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#) was negotiated by non-nuclear weapon states in 2017 and entered-into-force in January 2020. Currently there are 74 States parties to the treaty. The treaty prohibits States parties from developing, testing, producing, acquiring, possessing, stockpiling, using or threatening to use nuclear weapons. The Treaty also prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons on national territories of States parties, and the provision of assistance by States parties to any other State in the conduct of prohibited activities.

The nuclear armed and allied states have all opposed the treaty and have decided not to join. As such the specific provisions of the treaty do not apply directly to them. Never-the-less, the treaty serves as a strong symbol of opposition to nuclear weapons by non-nuclear states, and is based on international humanitarian law which would most likely be violated by any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, as affirmed by the ICJ in its 1996 [Advisory Opinion](#).

#### Switzerland and the TPNW

The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) examined the TPNW after supporting its adoption at the TPNW negotiating conference in 2017. On 30 June 2018 FDFA presented its assessment in a [report](#), affirming that *“from today’s perspective, the arguments against joining the TPNW outweighed the potential opportunities of joining.”*

The arguments against joining the TPNW include that it has no legal bearing on the nuclear armed and allied states who remain outside the treaty, and that politically it detracts from the nuclear risk-reduction and disarmament measures that are being promoted to the nuclear armed and allied States in other forums, including through the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The arguments in favour of joining the TPNW include that it strengthens global norms against the possession, threat or use of nuclear weapons and provides a framework for disarmament if nuclear armed and allied states decide to join. In addition, the TPNW could develop direct impact on the practices of the nuclear armed states if States Parties to the TPNW, in adopting implementation measures, decided to prohibit national/federal financing of nuclear weapons and also prohibit the transit of nuclear weapons through their territories.

Swiss civil society organizations and parliamentarians have called on the FDFA to change its position and sign the treaty. This has included a resolution, introduced by PND Member Carlo Sommaruga and adopted by the Swiss Council of States in June 2018.

In response, the Swiss Federal Council undertook [another review of the Swiss position on the TPNW](#), and on 27 March 2024, [affirmed](#) that *“there is currently no reason to change its position on the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), which entered into force in 2021. It has therefore reaffirmed the conclusion it reached in 2018 and 2019 and has decided that Switzerland will not join the TPNW for the time being. The Federal Council’s conclusion is based both on the assessment made in 2018–19 and recent security policy developments in Europe and globally. The Federal Council considers Switzerland’s commitment to a world without nuclear weapons, pursued within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to be a more effective approach.”*

Subsequently, the [Atomwaffenverbots](#) initiative presented 135,000 signatures supporting the TPNW to the Swiss government on 23rd of December 2025. The call for Switzerland to ratify the TPNW will be debated again by the Federal Assembly before being brought to a public vote in 2027/28.

#### Recommendation 12:

**Switzerland could join the TPNW and encourage other States Parties to the TPNW to end all public financing of nuclear weapons in their national/federal jurisdictions and to prohibit the transit of nuclear weapons across their territories.**

### ii. Nuclear Weapons Convention or framework agreement

In 2010, the States Parties to the NPT, which includes the five nuclear weapon States, agreed that:

*“All States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons. The Conference notes the Five-Point Proposal for Nuclear Disarmament of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, which proposes inter alia the consideration of negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or a framework of separate mutually reinforcing instruments backed by a strong system of verification”*

Non-nuclear states have undertaken extensive work to fulfil this obligation by, amongst other things, establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones and negotiating the TPNW. Nuclear armed and allied states should implement their commitments by beginning preparatory work on a nuclear weapons convention or a framework agreement. For

details, see [Frameworks for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World: Abolition 2000 working paper for the 2023 NPT Prep Com.](#)

**Recommendation 13:**

**Switzerland could promote the start of multilateral negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or a framework treaty for global nuclear disarmament. This could be proposed at the 2026 NPT Review Conference through a statement or working paper, and at the UN General Assembly through a UNGA resolution.**

### **f. Nuclear weapons industry: Divestment**

Nuclear armed states collectively spend over \$100billion per year on the nuclear arms race. This spending is stimulated in some countries by the nuclear weapons industry. This is especially true in France, the UK and the United States where the nuclear weapons and their delivery systems are primarily produced by publicly traded companies. There is a global campaign ([Move the Nuclear Weapons Money](#)) to end investments by individuals, organizations or governments in the companies which are manufacturing nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, and also a related campaign ([Don't Bank on the Bomb](#)) to end investments by banks in such companies.

Through the Swiss War Materials Act of 2013, Switzerland joined a few governments (Liechtenstein, New Zealand and Norway) in adopting regulations to end public investments in the nuclear weapons industry. This initiative would have a lot more impact if more countries joined.

**Recommendation 14:**

**Switzerland could encourage additional States to adopt regulations to end public investments in the nuclear weapons industry and provide its experience in implementing the Swiss War Materials Act as evidence of continued investment portfolio strength under such regulations (see also recommendation 12).**

### **g. Nuclear weapons and international law: UN Human Rights Council**

In 2018 the UN Human Rights Committee [affirmed that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is incompatible with the Right to Life](#), and that States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) have obligations to refrain from developing, acquiring, stockpiling and using them, and also have obligations to destroy existing stockpiles and pursue negotiations in good faith to achieve global nuclear disarmament. This complements international laws of warfare, affirmed by the International Court of Justice in 1996, which also prohibit, in general, the threat or use of nuclear weapons and require comprehensive nuclear disarmament.

All of the nuclear armed and allied states are parties to the ICCPR (except China which has signed but not yet ratified the Covenant) and are therefore **legally bound by its provisions**. The UN Human Rights Committee undertakes a review, on a rolling (periodic) basis, of each State's adherence to and implementation of their obligations under the ICCPR. The UN Human Rights Council undertakes a review of each UN member State's implementation of their human rights obligations under all international human rights law (treaties, the UN Charter and customary law), also on a rolling/periodic basis.

UN member states and civil society organizations are able to submit information, raise issues, ask questions and make proposals for the periodic reviews of any other UN member state. If issues/questions are picked up by the Members of the Committee and Council and presented to the country under review, **the country is obliged to address them**.

Engaging in these human rights process for nuclear disarmament can be very effective as it brings a new dimension to the nuclear disarmament debate which cannot be easily dismissed by the nuclear weapon and allied states, and it engages a whole new community in nuclear disarmament – the human rights community, which is much larger and more influential than the nuclear abolition community.

Basel Peace Office (and our partners) have already made use of this process by lodging submissions for the periodic reviews of [Canada](#), [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Iceland](#), [Japan](#), [Netherlands](#), [North Korea](#), [Russia](#), [South Korea](#), the [United Kingdom](#) and the [United States](#). And in 2023, Kazakhstan introduced a joint statement [Right to life without Threat of Nuclear Weapons](#)” endorsed by 34 other countries (but not including Switzerland).

**Recommendation 15**

**Switzerland could endorse the joint statement *Right to Life Without the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*.**

**Recommendation 16**

**Switzerland could engage in the Universal Periodic Reviews of the nuclear armed and allied states in order to question the implementation of their obligations under international human rights law to refrain from the threat or use of nuclear weapons, destroy existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons and negotiate for the global elimination of nuclear weapons.**



## 4. Summary list of policy recommendations

### On the following issues, Switzerland could:

#### *Nuclear risk reduction:*

1. Offer to host talks between Russia and USA on START renewal agreement and on its implementation.
2. Support the adoption of NFU policies by nuclear-armed and allied countries, including the Chinese proposal for a P5 agreement and the adoption of NFU by NATO.

#### *Common Security:*

3. Introduce the common security versus nuclear deterrence framework to the 2026 NPT Review Conference, through a statement or working paper, in order to demonstrate to the nuclear armed and allied countries ways in which they can reduce their reliance on nuclear deterrence.
4. Continue its work promoting universal acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ, including by producing an updated version of the [Handbook on accepting the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice](#) which Switzerland published in 2014.
5. Support the proposal for an International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legal limits to the use of the veto.
6. Support a fast-track process for the amendment to harmonise jurisdiction on the crime of aggression with the jurisdiction on other core crimes in the Rome Statute.
7. Liaise with both parties to the Russia/Ukraine conflict and with like-minded states in the UNGA on a potential referral to the International Court of Justice on the legal status of Crimea, the Donbas region and the other occupied territories;

#### *Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones:*

8. Elevate its support for a Middle East Zone free from Nuclear Weapons and other WMD including through providing its Good Offices for confidential talks between key parties.
9. Employ its Good Offices to support talks and negotiations for a Peace Treaty to permanently end the Korean War and include the proposal for a NE Asia NWFZ in these negotiations.
10. Support exploratory work on a European NWFZ and the security guarantees that would make such a zone credible for European countries to join.

#### *Nuclear abolition:*

11. Call on the nuclear armed and allied states to commit to achieving the global elimination of nuclear weapons no later than 2045. Switzerland could make this call at the 2026 NPT Review Conference, UN High Level Meeting on the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (September 26), in a resolution/s in the UN General Assembly, and at the UN Human Rights Council.
12. Join the TPNW and encourage other States Parties to the TPNW to end all public financing of nuclear weapons in their national/federal jurisdictions and to prohibit the transit of nuclear weapons across their territories.
13. Promote the start of multilateral negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention or a framework treaty for global nuclear disarmament. This could be proposed at the 2026 NPT Review Conference through a statement or working paper, and at the UN General Assembly through a UNGA resolution.

#### *Divestment from the nuclear weapons industry:*

14. Encourage additional States to adopt regulations to end public investments in the nuclear weapons industry, and provide its experience in implementing the Swiss War Materials Act as evidence of continued investment portfolio strength under such regulations (see also recommendation 12).

#### *Nuclear weapons and human rights:*

15. Endorse the joint statement *Right to Life Without the Threat of Nuclear Weapons*.
16. Engage in the Universal Periodic Reviews of the nuclear armed and allied states in order to question the implementation of their obligations under international human rights law to refrain from the threat or use of nuclear weapons, destroy existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons and engage in negotiations for nuclear abolition.