

Remarks by Amb. Jürg Lauber to Forum of Federations Strategic Council



Amb. Jürg Lauber
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

As the Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the UN in Geneva, I extend a warm welcome to all of you. I bring you the best regards from Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, who would have loved to attend this event himself, but unfortunately has other commitments tonight.

Federalism is a central pillar of Switzerland's democracy, as it empowers individuals and enables decision-making closer to the people. Alongside Canada, Switzerland has been a driving actor in establishing the Forum. Twenty years ago we were pleased to host the Second International Conference on Federalism in the city of St. Gallen. The Forum is a crucial strategic partner of Switzerland in promoting peace, democracy, and the rule of law internationally, as mandated by the Swiss Constitution and the strategic priorities of Switzerland's foreign policy.

The Forum's proficiency in federalism, decentralized governance, and local democracy is essential, particularly at a time when democracy is under pressure worldwide. The Forum's uniqueness lies in combining its focus on federalism and decentralization with democratic and inclusive governance. With its diverse membership, the Forum serves as an ideal platform for peer learning among federal states and a source of support for emerging federal countries and countries in conflict.

The Forum has proven to be an important partner for Switzerland in working at sub-national levels, which we consider a viable approach for tackling the root causes of conflicts and inequality.

An example of such cooperation is our successful partnership with Nepal. In Nepal, the federal structure was a cornerstone of the peace and constitutional process, supported by Switzerland, which ended the long-lasting internal conflict. The Forum has assisted Nepal in drafting a new constitution and implementing a decentralized governance system, which I believe represents a critical component in sustaining peace in Nepal.

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As a founding member, Switzerland recognizes the productive cooperation with the Forum and the many good results this has produced so far. We will continue our cooperation and funding based on the Forum's new 2023-2028 strategy. Allow me to say a few words about the link between federalism and multilateralism, as exemplified by international Geneva. This city, often referred to as the "Capital of Peace," has been pivotal in fostering international cooperation and diplomacy for a long time, mirroring the complementary forces of federalism and multilateralism that underpin our current order of rules-based global governance. Multilateralism and federalism may differ, but they share parallels in terms of their underlying principles and objectives. Both distribute power among multiple entities and require cooperation to achieve common goals. They also prevent the concentration of power in the hands of a single entity by creating checks and balances and value certain levels of sovereignty and autonomy of their constituent parts.

In conclusion, let me quote the renowned Swiss diplomat, historian, and politician, Max Petitpierre who wrote: "Federalism, like multilateralism, is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It is a way to share powers, to ensure that different voices are heard, and to find solutions that are acceptable to all." With this in mind, may we always remember that our collective strength lies in our ability to work together, to listen to diverse perspectives, and to seek common ground.

Thank you.