

Embassy of India

Berne

India-Switzerland Relations

A. Introduction

India and Switzerland have had cordial and friendly relations since India's Independence, based on shared values of democracy and rule of law. India's policy of non-alignment and Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality led to a close understanding between the two countries.

Switzerland established diplomatic relations with India soon after Independence. A Treaty of Friendship between India and Switzerland was signed at New Delhi on August 14, 1948; one of the first such treaties to be signed by independent India and an important milestone in Indo-Swiss relations. **The year 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the signing of the India-Switzerland Friendship Treaty.**

The relations between India & Switzerland have achieved new heights following the visits of Rashtrapati ji to Switzerland in September 2019, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Switzerland in 2018 & 2016 and Swiss President Mrs. Doris Leuthard to India in 2017. The Joint Statement issued during the visit of the Swiss President in 2017 noted the India-Switzerland relations as '**A Long Standing Dynamic Partnership**'.

Switzerland has an Embassy in New Delhi and Consulate Generals in Bengaluru and Mumbai; it also has Honorary Consuls based in Kolkata and Chennai. There is a Swiss Business Hub in Mumbai, and a Swissnex office in Bengaluru. India has an Embassy in Berne and a Consulate General in Geneva.

B. Bilateral visits

President Ram Nath Kovind's State Visit to Switzerland in September, 2019:

Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind paid a State Visit to Switzerland from September 11-15, 2019 accompanied by MoS for Women and Child Development Sushri Debasree Chaudhuri, Members of Parliament Dr. Ramapati Ram Tripathi and Shri Basanta Kumar Panda. A high level official and business delegation also accompanied President. President Kovind and Swiss President Ueli Maurer also made remarks at the India-Switzerland Business Round Table co-hosted by India and Switzerland on 13 September 2019 in Berne.

Swiss Vice President's visit to India in October 2019:

Ms. Simonetta Sommaruga, Vice President and Federal Councillor for Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications of the Swiss Confederation paid a working visit to India from October 18-21, 2019 and held meetings with MOS (IC) for Power, New and Renewable Energy; Minister for

Railways and, for Commerce and Industry; and Minister for Housing & Urban Affairs (I/C), Civil Aviation (I/C).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Davos in January 2018:

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid a visit to Switzerland in January 2018. During his visit, Hon'ble PM met H.E. Mr. Alain Berset, then President of the Swiss Confederation. After the bilateral segment, Hon'ble PM delivered the key-note address at the Inaugural Plenary Session of the Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum. Other Indian Ministers, Chief Ministers and senior Officials also participated in a number of sessions.

Swiss President's visit to India in 2017

President of the Swiss Confederation His Excellency Mrs. Doris Leuthard paid a *State Visit* to India from 30 August-02 September 2017, accompanied by the Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs, State Secretary for International Financial matter, amongst others and a 33-member high-level business delegation of CEOs and Senior Executives of leading Swiss companies. A comprehensive Joint Statement was issued during the visit. PM and the Swiss President jointly addressed a meeting of Swiss businessmen and leading Indian entrepreneurs with business interest in Switzerland.

PM's visit to Switzerland 2016

Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi paid an official visit to Geneva, Switzerland on 5-6 June 2016. This was a historic visit; the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Switzerland in the last several decades. Hon'ble PM was accompanied by a high powered delegation and had a packed program which included highly productive bilateral meeting with the then Swiss President Mr. Johann N. Schneider-Ammann; a Business Round Table with Switzerland's top companies; and a meeting with Indian research scholars based at CERN.

Previous bilateral visits at HOS/HOG-level:

Incoming:

- Swiss President Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey [5-7 November 2007];
- Swiss President Mr. Pascal Couchepin [6-12 November 2003];
- Swiss President Mr. Flavio Cotti [1998: first ever visit by a Swiss President to India].

Outgoing:

- President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil [30 September to 4 October 2011];
- President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam [May 2005];
- President Shri V.V. Giri [1975].

Ministerial-level and Parliamentary visits:

Incoming:

- Federal Councillor Mr. Guy Parmelin, Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research [03-04 October 2022];
- Federal Councillor Mr. Ueli Maurer, Federal Department of Finance [10 August 2022];
- Federal Councillor Mrs. Simonetta Sommaruga, [18-21 October, 2019];
- Mr. Niklaus Samuel Gugger, Member of Swiss Parliament [7-15 November 2018];
- Foreign Minister Dr. Ignazio Cassis [10 August 2018];
- Federal Councillor Mrs. Simonetta Sommaruga, [5-7 October, 2016];
- Federal Councillor for Economic Affairs, Education and Research Mr. Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, [15-17 May, 2015];
- Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs Mr. Didier Burkhalter [11-12 November 2013];
- Federal Councillor for Environment, Transport, Energy & Communications Mrs. Doris Leuthard, [18-20 October 2012];
- Federal Councillor for Home Mr. Alain Berset [1-3 October 2012];
- Federal Councillor for Foreign Affairs Ms. Micheline Anne-Marie Calmy-Rey [August 2010];

Outgoing:

- Indian Participation in Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum 2023, held in Davos [16-20 January 2023] included the Union Cabinet Ministers, GoI, Mr. Raj Kumar Singh (Minister of Power and New & Renewable Energy), Ms. Smriti Zubin Irani (Minister of Women & Child Development, and Minority Affairs), Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya (Minister of Health and Family Welfare, and Chemicals and Fertilizers), Mr. Ashwini Vaishnaw (Minister of Railways, Communications, and Electronics & Information Technology), Chief Ministers, State Ministers etc..
- Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture, Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi [28-30 September 2021];
- Indian Participation in Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum 2022, held in Davos from 22-26 May 2022 included Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Shri Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Shri Hardeep Singh Puri and Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare Shri Mansukh Mandaviya, Chief Ministers, State Ministers etc..;
- Indian Participation in 50th Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum held in Davos from 21-24 January 2020, included Union Minister of Commerce, Industry and Railways, MoS for Shipping and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Chief Ministers, State Ministers etc.;
- Minister for Health and Social Justice, Government of Kerala Mrs. K.K. Shailaja Teacher [26 November 2019, Berne];
- Chief Minister of Kerala Shri Pinarayi Vijayan (12-15 May 2019);

- Minister of State for External Affairs General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.) [26 November 2018; Berne];
- Minister of Health and Family Welfare Shri J.P. Nadda [19 May 2018].
- Parliamentary Delegation from Maharashtra [separate visits in February and April 2018];
- Minister of State (I/C) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy [June 2016];
- EAM Shri Salman Khurshid [22 January 2014];
- Minister of State (IC) for Sports & Youth Affairs Shri Jitender Singh [14-15 May 2013];
- Minister of Commerce & Industry Shri Anand Sharma [8 April 2013];
- Lok Sabha Speaker Smt. Meira Kumar [16-19 October, 2011; 16-17 July 2010];
- An 18-member Indian Parliamentary Goodwill delegation led by Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources Shri Pawan Kumar Bansal [1-4 April 2010];

Other visits

Incoming:

- Swiss State Secretary of Economic Affairs, Helene Budliger [2023];
- FDF Deputy State Secretary Mr. Stefan Flückiger [18-19 November 2022];
- Swiss FDFA State Secretary Ms. Livia Leu [2 August 2022] in New Delhi;
- Swiss State Secretary and Director SECO Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch [25-26 June 2018 in Mumbai];
- Head of International Affairs, Swiss Federal Office of Energy Jean-Christophe Fueg [10-12 April 2018 in New Delhi];
- Swiss State Secretary and Director SECO Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch [19-20 March 2018 in New Delhi];
- State Secretary of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Mrs. Pascal Bareiswyl [5 December 2017];
- Ambassador Frank Gutter, Head of Security Policy Division, FDFA and Ambassador Thomas Schneider, Head of International Affairs [23-24 November 2017 in New Delhi];
- Swiss State Secretary for International Financial matters Mr. Jacques de Watteville [15 June 2016];
- Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs Ms. Marie Gabriel Ineichen Fleisch [10 June 2016]

Outgoing:

- President of Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Shri Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe [30 October - 2 November 2021];
- Secretary, Department of Heavy Industry Shri Arun Goel [for WEF in Jan 2020]; Secretary, Department of Commerce Shri Anup Wadhawan [for WEF in Jan 2020];
- Secretary, DPIIT Shri Gurudas Mohapatra [for WEF in Jan 2020];
- Secretary, Ministry of Power Shri Sanjiv Nandan Sahai [for WEF in Jan 2020]; Chairman, Railway Board Shri Vinod Kumar Yadav [for WEF in Jan 2020];

- Joint Secretary, Ministry of Textiles Shri Joginath Panigrahi [for WEF in Jan 2020];
- Principal Scientific Advisor to GoI, Professor K. VijayRaghvan [September 2-5, 2019];
- Secretary, Department of Science and Technology Prof. (Dr.) Ashutosh Sharma [28 April-1 May 2019];
- Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Dr. K.P. Krishnan [3-6 July 2018];
- Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar [10-13 Sept. 2015];
- Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary (West) [8 March 2016];
- Secretary, Department of Science & Technology Prof. Ashutosh Sharma [16-19 Sept 2015];
- a delegation from the International Cooperation Division of M/o Skill Development and Entrepreneurship [31 August to 8 Sept. 2015];
- Secretary, Department of Sports Shri Ajit Mohan Sharan [23-25 March 2015]; Revenue Secretary Shri Shaktikanta Das [15 October 2014].

C. Bilateral Dialogue Mechanism

- i. **Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)**: The FOC were established in January 1996 with the 1st round of FOC taking place at the Secretary-level in February 2000. The latest [11th] round of FOC was held in New Delhi on 2 August 2022.
- ii. **Joint Economic Commission**: It was set up in 1959 to intensify economic and commercial relations. Its latest session [18th] was held virtually on 9 September 2021.
- iii. **Joint Committee on Science & Technology**: The 1st meeting of the Indo-Swiss Joint Committee on S&T was held on 23 September 2011 in Berne. The latest [5th] meeting of the Joint Committee was held on 30 April 2019 in Berne. The 6th Indo-Switzerland Joint Committee Meeting was held on 04 October 2022 in New Delhi.
- iv. **Consular Dialogue**: The 1st round of the composite dialogue on Consular and Legal matters was held in New Delhi on 2 March 2012. The latest [6th] round of the India-Switzerland Consular Dialogue was held in Berne on February 24, 2023.
- v. **Financial Dialogue**: The 1st round of the Financial Dialogue was held in Berne on 6 July 2012. The latest [4th] round was held on 11 May 2021.
- vi. **Defence Dialogue**: The 1st Defence dialogue was held on 18 November 2016 in New Delhi.

D. Commercial Relations

- Commercial contacts between India and Switzerland date back to the early 19th century when in 1851 the Volkart Trading Co. established its offices in Basel and Mumbai. In 1915 when Europe was in the grip of the war and the need of the hour was to secure for Switzerland food and economic prospects, the Swiss Consulates were set up in key locations across the world including Mumbai. The Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, set up based on 1949 agreement signed between the Government of India and the Swiss Cars and Elevators Manufacturing Ltd. Zurich, celebrated its diamond jubilee in Sept. 2015. It expanded its network, diversifying its activities, and soon becoming the backbone of Switzerland's economic presence in India.
- The Indo-Swiss Treaty of Friendship signed in 1948 laid the foundation for a strong economic content to the bilateral relationship. Article 3 to 6 of this Treaty secured the "most favoured foreign nation treatment" to Switzerland. As provided by the Treaty itself, it has set the pace for further treaties like Double Taxation Treaty in November, 1994, followed by Amendment protocol in 2010, Promotion and Protection of Investment Treaty in July 1997. The first major investment by Swiss companies in India came in the mid-50s.
- The major items of Indian exports to Switzerland are organic chemicals, pearls, precious stones and jewellery, textiles and garments, dyestuffs, electrical machinery and parts, leather products, shoes and shoe uppers, cotton, plastics, coffee. Besides bullion, Swiss exports to India consist of chemicals & pharmaceuticals, machinery, transport equipment's, precision engineering products and watches.

Bilateral Trade & Investment:

- Foreign Direct Investments from Switzerland to India for the duration from April 2000-March 2023 was **USD 9.77 billion**. Overseas Direct Investment from India to Switzerland for the duration for April 2020 –November 2022 was **USD 7.2 billion**.
- Major Indian IT companies including TCS, Infosys, HCL, Tech Mahindra, etc. have their offices in Switzerland and provide services to major Swiss pharma companies, banks and insurance firms.

Bilateral trade figures (Million USD)

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
India's Exports	1034	987	1235	1276	1268	1287	1340

India's Imports	14973	20525	18025	17785	11342	29512	16291
Total Trade	16007	21512	19260	19061	12610	30799	17631

[Source: DoC, Ministry of Commerce & Industry]

MISSP: Market outreach initiative of the EoI, Berne

- The Swiss SMEs are well integrated in the European Assembly Line and makes up around 99% of the Swiss companies. Therefore, in order to introduce Swiss SMEs to explore, enter, and expand in the Indian market, the Embassy of India, Berne, launched the 'Momentum in India: Swiss SMEs Programme' (MISSP).
- As of date, the MISSP programme has onboarded 151 nos. of Swiss companies which represent various sectors i.e. Defence, Pharma, Food & beverages, Machine Tools, Railways, Chemicals, AI, Spece Tech and others.
- The MISSP focusses on providing integrated, facilitative platform for connecting the Swiss SMEs sector for India market entry services. It is a one-stop source for companies requiring support services for their Indian access strategy with the benefits of special workshops and webinars, networking events, information exchange, etc.
- Also, the MISSP programme responds to the need for an organized platform dedicated to assist Swiss SMEs establish successful business models across the value chain in India. The program is implemented with the support of Central and State Governments in India and other key Indian and Swiss industry partners, who assist the Swiss SMEs have a smooth experience in various aspects of doing business in India.
- Since the inception of the MISSP Program, is to promote India as a growing global business hub, Mission organized various sectoral focused events / workshops and webinars in close collaborations with Swiss Associations, Indian EPCs and Invest India.

E. Sectoral Cooperation

Science & Technology: During the State visit of Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind to Switzerland, a Letter of Intent in the form of an India-Switzerland Science and Innovation Alliance between the Government of the Republic of India and the Swiss Federal Council was signed in September 2019. To oversee and coordinate S&T Cooperation, the Joint Committee on Science and Technology has been set up. The Call for Proposals 2020 will support proposals in cutting-edge Systems Medicine including current COVID 19 pandemic.

Railways: During the visit of the Swiss President to India in August-September 2017, two MoUs were signed in the field of Railways. The first joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting between India and Switzerland under the MoU was held on

October 21, 2019 at New Delhi. 2nd meeting of JWG on technical cooperation in rail sector was held at Berne on 30 August 2022. During the meeting a 3-member delegation from Railway Board, Ministry of Railways, Government of India, officials from Swiss Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, Federal Office of Transport, members of SwissRail and representatives of few railway equipment manufacturing companies based in Switzerland were present.

Civil Aviation: An Air Services Agreement (ASA) was signed in May 2001. Swiss Airlines commenced direct flight to Delhi from December 2007. The Protocol amending India-Switzerland Air Services Agreement was signed in March 2020.

Tourism: According to the Swiss Federal Statistics Office, 347,750 Indian tourists visited Switzerland in 2018 and they were responsible for 780,815 overnight stays in the country. As per the agreed minutes of 17th session of India-Switzerland Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in Berne on March 2, 2020, an MoU between India and Switzerland in the field of Tourism is being considered.

AYUSH: Complementary Medicine is a part of the Swiss Federal Constitution. The Government of Switzerland regulates the Ayurveda profession.

➤ The Association of Swiss Ayurveda and Therapeutics was one of the Partner organisations for the 4th edition of the CII Global Ayurveda Summit which took place in 2020.

➤ During the 8th Geneva Health Forum, a session on 'Indian Traditional Medicine Systems interacting with Modern Medicine System' was held in 2020, in which Ayurveda and Unani streams of medicine were discussed. Keynote speeches during the inaugural Plenary were made by Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare and Hon'ble Minister of State for AYUSH.

➤ A virtual meeting on India-Switzerland Bilateral Health Cooperation took place in 2021 with the participation of Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (India) and Ministry of AYUSH (India).

Climate Change & Environment: During the State visit of Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind to Switzerland from September 11-15, 2019, MoU on Technical Cooperation in the field of Climate Change and Environment between Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change and Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of the Swiss Confederation has been signed.

F. Cultural relations & people to people contacts

- Switzerland has always been a meeting point for East and West and the connection between Himalayas and Alps are stronger and deeper. Swami Vivekananda visited Switzerland in 1896. During his stay at Saas Fee, he compared Switzerland with miniature Himalayas.
- Switzerland is an important cultural destination for projection of our soft power. During the last few years, Mission has accelerated its cultural outreach to promote various cultural activities including Yoga, Ayurveda, Spiritualism, Indian Classical Dance and Music, Indian Festivals and Cuisine, Bollywood Films, Indian Literature and Indian Paintings etc.
- A 'Festival of India' in 12 cities of Switzerland and Liechtenstein was organized in 2018 under the theme 'Connecting Himalayas with Alps' which was well received. The celebrations of 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi provided great opportunities to promote Gandhian values.
- 'India in the Alps' - an Indian cultural festival showcasing music, dance, exhibition, cuisine, crafts, Bollywood & yoga in Switzerland was organized in 2022 at Berne, Zurich & Geneva as a part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav celebrations. The events were well received by diaspora as well as Swiss populace.
- To celebrate 75 years of India's independence and 75th anniversary of India-Switzerland diplomatic relations, photo exhibitions of great Indian personalities like Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel & Swami Vivekananda were organized in various cantons across Switzerland during 2022-2023.
- The entire region has an India connect and it could be seen in most of the museums. For instance, Swiss Games Museum in Montreux has a unique collection of games which originated in India. While the Lugano museum has some of the rare collections of photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, the Swiss National Museum in Prangins has an exhibition of unique collection of cotton fabric from India. The Charlie Chaplin Museum at Vevey also has an India connect.
- Museum Rietberg in Zurich has one of the best collections of Indian Miniature paintings. Currently, the exhibition, 'Being Jain: Art & Culture of an Indian Religion' at Museum Rietberg, which showcases Jainism in India and the intrinsic philosophies of non-violence, tolerance, ecology etc. that it propagates, features 20 objects loaned from various Museums in India as a part of the display.
- Every year several hundreds of thousands of Indians travel to Switzerland for tourism. Almost every city in Switzerland has an Indian restaurant and also group of citizens who believe in yoga and practice it every day. Indian film industry continues to look at Switzerland as a shooting destination.
- **Courses on Indian Studies at Swiss universities:** The Universities of Lausanne (UNIL) offer courses on Indian Studies which covers language and literature (Hindi & Sanskrit), culture and history.

➤ The University of Zurich (UZH) offer courses on Indian Studies/ Indology. In addition to the introduction to Indology, the course offerings include a diverse range of modules in the core areas of language acquisition (Hindi, Sanskrit & Pali), culture and society.

➤ **Statues/busts of Indian icons:**

- A Mahatma Gandhi Statue was installed at Ariana Park, Geneva in 2007.
- A bust of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was unveiled at University of Lausanne in October 2011 by former President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil during her visit to Switzerland.
- A bronze bust of Swami Vivekananda was installed at Saas Fee in August 2013 on the occasion of 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The scenic town of Saas Fee in the Swiss Alps in the canton of Valais has cultural and historical significance which was visited by Swami Vivekananda in August 1896.
- In a major public event, former President of India Shri. Ram Nath Kovind unveiled a bronze bust of Mahatma Gandhi in September, 2019. The bust is installed along the banks of Lake Geneva at a picturesque location in Villeneuve where Mahatma Gandhi had visited in 1931.

➤ **Yoga:**

- Yoga is very popular in Switzerland. Many private yoga studios/resorts/ retreats offer yoga classes/ sessions in almost all cantons of the country. About a quarter of a million residents are yoga practitioners and women make up the bulk of the yoga-practicing population.
- Embassy of India was the part of “The Guardian Ring” programmes envisaged for International Day of Yoga 2022 celebrations.
- In its efforts to further the reach of Yoga in Switzerland, Embassy of India, Berne organizes Yoga sessions at various cities in Switzerland throughout the year. The main event of 9th International Day celebrations was held on 21 June 2023 at the iconic Bundesplatz in front of the Swiss Parliament.

➤ **Bollywood Connection:** Indian films are regularly shot in Switzerland. The first Indian film to be shot in Switzerland, Sangam was shot in 1964 in the famous alpine region of Grindelwald-Jungfrau. Since then many Indian movies, including Bollywood blockbuster movies have been shot in the Swiss Alps.

➤ The Indian filmmaker Yash Chopra has shot many Bollywood movies in Switzerland, making the country popular among Indian masses. For his contributions, the city of Interlaken in Switzerland honored him with a bronze statue at Interlaken.

G. Indian community:

- The Indian Diaspora in Switzerland comprises approximately 27,300 Indians including over 8,750 persons of Indian origin. Most of them are professionals in Engineering, IT, pharmaceuticals and paramedical fields. Few are deployed in the International Organizations like UN, UPU and other prestigious Swiss institutes like Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich and EPFL, Lausanne.
- The Diaspora also includes Member of Federal Parliament, a member of Cantonal Parliament, Mayor, CEOs and senior executives of several companies, senior Government officials, professors, doctors, engineers and students.
- The Indian community is concentrated in Zurich, Geneva, Basel, Baden, Berne and Lausanne. About 750 Indian students are studying in Switzerland. Diaspora in Switzerland is now nurturing the second and third generations. A number of Indian associations actively organize cultural activities and celebrate Indian Festivals and national days.

October 09, 2023