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Upcoming events
Once again this year, the figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) on global arms transfers have prompted much reaction and polemic in Switzerland and elsewhere. Some give as justification the country’s economic interests or current security challenges. Others focus the debate on the promotion of peace and human rights and draw attention to the dramatic impact these exports can have on many countries. The subject might spark lively debate, but the fact that it can be debated at all is evidence of a properly functioning democracy.

This issue discusses the controversy around the arms trade as well as the role of Swiss civil society. The latter has, indeed, a duty to get actively involved in this debate. Whether on the ground, in Switzerland or internationally, it can analyze and report realities and help to forge public opinion with key information. The ultimate goal is to be able to influence national and international legislation. In that regard, the actions taken by many NGOs in the last few days in Geneva, at the first Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, have been in many ways exemplary.

Marie Seidel, editor
The issue of arms exports is a highly political one in Switzerland. There is a conflict of interest between the economy, security policy, and peacebuilding that neither legislation nor the allocation of responsibilities in the administration can overcome. Swiss civil society has a crucial role to play at both a national and international political level as well as in project countries. Exchanging information via platforms like KOFF helps develop a joint strategy to influence arms export policy from a peace policy point of view.

According to the latest figures from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), worldwide arms sales between 2011 and 2015 climbed by 14% compared to the previous five years. The arms industry is growing and Swiss businesses such as RUAG (a federally owned defense company) are playing a part. Figures from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) reveal that Swiss companies exported CHF 446.6 million of war material to 71 countries in 2015, including to Saudi Arabia and its allies involved in the Yemen conflict after the export moratorium ended in April 2016.

Selling arms to other countries is a highly political issue, leading to heated debates in Switzerland amid tensions between the economy, security policy, and peacebuilding. This
all revolves around assessing the integrity of potential buyers. Although all parties involved fundamentally share the same objective of promoting security, peace, and good living conditions for everyone, there is an ongoing debate over how best to achieve it. Economic considerations are of central importance to the arms industry, which sees the free market, job security, and Switzerland’s ability to compete as an industrial center as top priorities. Advocates of a military security policy believe that the army, the arms industry and the arms trade are important mainstays of state sovereignty and lay the foundations for stability and defense in Switzerland. For representatives of peacebuilding in civil society and politics, protecting human rights is key to the definition of security. They highlight the serious consequences of Swiss companies exporting war material to countries that are involved in military conflicts, that sell arms on to other countries at war, or that use them against their own people.

Legally, Swiss exports of arms or war material are regulated by the Swiss Federal War Material Act and the Goods Control Act. The War Material Act aims to fulfill Switzerland’s international obligations and the respect of its foreign policy principles by means of controlling the manufacture and transfer of war material. However, at the same time, a certain amount of capacity must be maintained in the arms industry in order to safeguard the country’s security. The scope for interpretation in the law correlates with the tense framework in which decisions relating to peacebuilding and security policy are being made.

Specific terminology used in legislation and further technological developments are also giving rise to controversial debates. For instance, Switzerland draws a distinction between war material and “specific military goods”, which are not subject to the strict export and licensing regulations under the War Material Act but to the more lax provisions of the Goods Control Act. The War Material Act only covers munitions and equipment that are not also used in civil contexts. However, technological developments have increased the potential for civil goods being converted and used for military purposes and it is the buyer who ultimately decides how these so-called dual-use goods will be employed. Subsequent inspections by Swiss authorities to check their use can be carried out under a non-re-export declaration. These are meant to prevent arms from being sold on to third countries that will use them against the civil population. However, they can only be contractually agreed for arms. The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in late 2014 has relaxed the relatively strict legal framework even further.

The licensing procedure in arms exports is also complex. In principle, SECO decides on licenses for exports of war material. However, it is the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) that has the expertise to evaluate the human rights situation in the recipient country. If different federal offices reach different conclusions, SECO can present export deals to the Federal Council. With the legal provisions leaving a great deal of room for interpretation and weighting, there is a risk that individual parties could assert their own interests.

Swiss civil society therefore plays an important role in this respect: Swiss organizations involved in humanitarian aid, development cooperation, or peacebuilding are seeing the consequences of the presence of arms and their effects on the population every day. They have an in-depth insight into the situation on the ground and can document it with facts and figures. Organizations that advocate stronger controls on the arms trade in Switzerland and at international level can take advantage of this key information when they want to
denounce specific war material exports or call for stricter enforcement of legislation and transparency in licensing practices. This also helps to actively engage public opinion.

A platform like KOFF offers such diverse actors a valuable opportunity to discuss these kinds of issues. In debates on topics such as the arms trade and its relevance to peace policy, experiences can be shared and the various points of view and strategies considered despite differences of opinion. This is a sign of a healthy democracy. KOFF also helps break through the silo mentality and reinforce a coherent peace policy that takes human rights seriously: jointly developed solutions have a greater potential to influence arms export policy.

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links
- swisspeace: Policy & Plattform
- SECO press release on war material exports in 2015, February 23, 2016 (in German)
- Federal Act on War Material
- Federal Act on the Control of Dual-Use Goods, Specific Military Goods and Strategic Goods
- Complete text of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

reports
Weapons are everywhere in Honduras
Even on my morning jog around a small, public park in Tegucigalpa, the capital city of Honduras, I encounter two heavily armed, young soldiers guarding the park. Firearms are everywhere in Honduras. They are seen as an important means of self-defense and a way of ensuring personal safety. According to the Honduran Law on Controlling Explosives, Firearms and Munitions, every living person of majority age has the right to register up to five firearms. Politicians, judges, public prosecutors, and members of the diplomatic corps are even allowed to possess firearms without a license. However, in the prevailing climate of impunity, with a high level of corruption and illegal smuggling of arms from the neighboring countries El Salvador, Guatemala, and the United States, it is difficult to monitor the law and the illegal possession of weapons has become widespread. Around four fifths of the 48,094 registered murders between 2008 and 2015 were carried out using a firearm.

The country’s strong militarization has led to an omnipresence, not just of armed police, but also of armed military forces. Private armed security personnel can also be seen in front of shops, department stores, big hotels, banks, and sometimes also private houses, which is why “weapons prohibited” signs can often be seen in public spaces, swimming pools, and bars.

Even human rights defenders may sometimes be armed. However, international human rights observers such as those from Peace Watch Switzerland do not accompany armed human rights defenders in accordance with the principles of non-interference, political independence, and non-violence. The challenge for the observers lies in monitoring this issue and raising awareness of it in rural regions. However, there is a slight glimmer of hope that human rights defenders might be able to work with less fear of gun violence in the future: a forthcoming discussion in parliament about revising arms control legislation could be the trigger needed to change society’s views on the use of weapons.

Peace Watch Switzerland
Angela Escher
Former Human Rights Accompaniment Volunteer in Honduras
Data and analysis are key to deal with armed violence

The proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons represents a grave threat to human security. The unchecked spread of these weapons has exacerbated inter- and intra-state conflicts, contributed to human rights violations, undermined political and economic development, and devastated the lives of millions of people. More than 500,000 people die violently every year. According to the Small Arms Survey’s Global Burden of Armed Violence 2015 report, 44% of these deaths involve the use of a firearm.

The Small Arms Survey, whose mandate is to generate evidence-based, impartial, policy-relevant knowledge and expertise on all aspects of small arms and armed violence, is convinced that the future success of efforts to deal with small arms and light weapons depends in large part on the development of accurate information concerning the global flow of these weapons and on reliable analyses of the causes and consequences of their proliferation.

International arms control instruments, such as the 2001 UN Programme of Action and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty, provide a framework for measures to address small arms proliferation and to prevent legal arms from becoming illicit. In adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015, UN member states also confirmed that peace and development are inextricably linked. Within SDG 16, the inclusion of Target 16.4, aimed at reducing illicit arms flows, reflects the role of small arms in driving conflict and violence.

The successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies, will depend on cross-sectoral partnerships that effectively mobilize actors from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector. Promising partnerships include the Global Partnership on Small Arms, initiated by the German Government at the end of 2015, and the SDG 16 Data Initiative. The Survey provides data,
analysis, and expertise on small arms and lethal violence for both initiatives.

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links
- Small Arms Survey
- Global Partnership on Small Arms
- SDG 16 Data Initiative

reports

Campaigning for a controlled arms trade since 1945

The Swiss Peace Council was founded in 1945 with the aim of promoting Switzerland’s political openness after the Second World War. It fought for both the European unification process and for Switzerland to join the United Nations. It soon went on to tackle many peace-policy issues of its own, such as the arms trade. The Swiss Peace Council campaigned, for example, to uphold the arms export ban, which was enacted in September 1944 by the Federal Council under the full powers regime and extended in June 1946, and embed it in the constitution.

The failure of UN accession in the mid-1940s triggered Switzerland’s stand-alone security policy during the Cold War, and thus led to far-reaching militarization. Plans were developed for Swiss nuclear weapons and for setting up a national defense program. As a result, opposing total national defenses and advocating an open society and human rights became the focus of the Swiss Peace Council’s work. Initiatives for banning nuclear weapons and arms exports, such as limiting military arms expenditures, failed initially. However, the Swiss Peace Council’s continuous resistance helped pave the way for Switzerland to sign up to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and restrictions to the arms trade. It also led to force meaningful statistics being collected for the first time. The total defense project was buried unceremoniously at the end of the Cold War and state peacebuilding activities were established at the same time. This enabled Switzerland to campaign for combatting illegal arms trading at an international level and to advocate the international Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

These days, the focus of the debate surrounding arms export is less on any resistance
movement against the state, and more on cooperation between peacebuilding organizations and the relevant offices of the federal administration. However, the interest-driven fronts remain entrenched to a certain extent.

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links
- Swiss Peace Council

reports

Putting an end to Swiss war material exports

The war material export figures published by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in February 2016 show that Switzerland exported war material and special military goods such as unarmed military training aircraft or reconnaissance drones worth CHF 1,611,698,558 in 2015. This puts it in 11th place among the world’s top exporters. In fact, Switzerland is the second biggest exporter of arms per capita in the world. Based on the SECO statistics, the Group for a Switzerland without an Army (GSoA) has created a public database that details all of the Swiss war material that has been exported over the last few
years. This database keeps media professionals, organizations, and interested private individuals up to date with the latest figures, with the aim of increasing transparency, building pressure, and clamping down on war material exports.

Apart from industry, Switzerland’s financial institutions also play a key role in exporting war material. According to the “Don’t Bank on the Bomb” report published by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in November 2015, UBS and Credit Suisse contributed around CHF 6.5 billion in issuing shares and corporate bonds or through direct investment in the nuclear weapons industry in 2015. The Swiss National Bank also invested over CHF 600 million in companies that produce nuclear weapons, while Swiss pension funds supplied around CHF 8 billion of capital to the arms industry. To prevent Switzerland as a financial center from becoming even more entangled in international armament corporations, the general assembly of the GSoA decided to launch a federal popular initiative in spring 2017 to prohibit the financing of war material. The intention is for public pension funds, which are to some extent subject to different legal regulations than private investors, to set a leading example in this respect. The GSoA is to launch community initiatives in Bern, Zurich, or Lucerne to prohibit municipal pension funds from investing in arms companies.

Group for a Switzerland without an Army (GSoA)
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links
- Group for a Switzerland without an Army (in German)
- Database of Swiss war material exports over the past few years (in German)
- GSoA popular initiative on financing war material (in German)
- SECO press release on war material exports in 2015, February 23, 2016 (in German)

The grey area of ammunition

Aside from humanitarian mine action and combatting the illicit arms trade, Switzerland attaches particular importance to the safe and secure management of ammunition. There are two aspects to this. Firstly, secure storage and management prevents the proliferation of ammunition, which can fuel armed conflicts, organized crime, and terrorism. Secondly, safe storage and management helps prevent explosions in and of munitions sites. Both aspects are key to promoting and maintaining peace and security. However, in contrast to humanitarian mine action and the fight against illicit arms trade, ammunition management
is a grey area that is not governed by any specific politically or legally binding multilateral treaties.

In light of this, Switzerland launched a diplomatic initiative in November 2015. A consultative meeting in Geneva revealed cross-regional interest in this issue. In the first phase, Switzerland, together with a group of interested states, is now working on specific measures for improving the application of existing ammunition management standards. A second international meeting is set to be held in Geneva in December 2016 in the form of a technical workshop.

With this initiative, Switzerland is adopting a cross-sectoral approach. On the one hand, the initiative unites military, diplomatic, and other experts from the relevant countries and organizations thanks to the close cooperation between the FDFA and DDPS. On the other hand, Switzerland’s comprehensive pre-emptive approach is aimed at preventing or defusing conflicts by making it more difficult to gain illegal access to instruments of violence throughout their whole life cycle. In these contexts, mines, ammunition, and weapons can no longer be considered independently of one another and integrated approaches are required to significantly reduce the threats to civilians. Switzerland will be adopting this comprehensive approach in the new edition of its small arms strategy for the 2017–2020 period.

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links
- Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)
- Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS)

reports

Switzerland’s commitment to a responsible international arms trade

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which came into force in December 2014, is the first binding agreement under international law to regulate the global arms trade with the aim of contributing to peace, and international and regional security and stability. Switzerland has been actively involved in the negotiations and was able to exert its influence on the drawing
up of the treaty, particularly with regard to the relevance of international humanitarian law, the scope of the treaty, and technical issues surrounding export controls. It contributed significantly to the regulation stating that all arms transfers are to be assessed for risks of violating international humanitarian law as well as human rights and that exports that could be used to commit genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes are to be strictly prohibited. Switzerland was also part of a group of states that campaigned for the inclusion of small arms and light weapons in the scope of the ATT.

The common standards specified in the ATT for controlling cross-border transfers of conventional weapons and the cooperation measures to combat their proliferation set a new benchmark in the fight against the uncontrolled arms trade. Switzerland has therefore assumed an active role in the implementation of the treaty as well. It is supporting the ATT’s implementation in countries that do not yet have functional import and export controls by providing financial help or expertise for training programs. It is also promoting the universality of the ATT through local seminars in particularly affected regions and by supporting the participation of financially constrained countries in treaty conferences.

Furthermore, Switzerland is the host country of the ATT’s permanent secretariat. With the knowledge available in the city of Geneva in the fields of security, human rights, and trade policy, as well as the close-knit diplomatic network there, it offers advantageous conditions for inclusive and effective implementation.

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links
- SECO: Arms control and arms control policy (in French)

reports
The Arms Trade Treaty and Switzerland: a humanitarian milestone?
The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) at the end of 2014 was celebrated as a great success for the international civil society. For more than twenty years, organizations such as Amnesty International and Control Arms campaigned for binding rules in order to control the global trade in arms. Yet, only the implementation of the treaty by the state parties will show if the ATT becomes a humanitarian milestone or if it will end as a toothless paper tiger. Since the ATT secretariat and the annual conference of the state parties are now located in Geneva, the government and civil society in Switzerland have a special responsibility in regard to this matter.

The ATT sets out, for the first time, robust global rules to stop the flow of weapons and munitions to countries when there is an ‘overriding risk’ they would be used to commit war crimes or serious human rights violations. The objective of the treaty is to contribute to “international and regional peace, security and stability” and to reduce “human suffering”.

Switzerland played a significant role in the elaboration of the ATT; under the leadership of the SECO it advocated the “strongest and most effective” text possible in the difficult international negotiations. However, Swiss interests were less concerned with the promotion of peace than in maintaining the trade of the Swiss arms industry. After signing the ATT, Switzerland lowered its national arms export control regime twice:

In March 2014 parliament lowered the arms export controls to the level of the ATT: the ban of arms transfers to countries which “violate human rights in a systematic and serious manner” can now be set aside if the arms in question are not directly involved in these violations.

In April 2016 the federal council undertook an adventurous new interpretation of the war material ordinance: the ban of arms transfers to countries which are “involved in an internal armed conflict” shall no longer apply if the conflict is not taking place in the
Loosening instead of strengthening the arms control: with this policy, Switzerland undermines its function as a role model which it should assume as the host of the ATT in Geneva. 130 states have already signed the treaty and 87 have ratified it but its implementation will depend on the political will of the governments. In order to achieve the objectives of the treaty, the commitment of the civil society and the public scrutiny of the negotiations of the ATT will remain crucial for a long time.

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links
- Amnesty International Switzerland (in German)
- Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat
- Amnesty International. Applying the Arms Trade Treaty to ensure the protection of human rights. February 2015

reports

The Arms Trade Treaty from a feminist perspective

From the perspective of feminist peace policy, arms exports are fundamentally contradictory to the policy of “human security”, which aims to reduce non-military threats such as social inequality, human rights violations, poverty, and hunger. The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is the first internationally legally binding instrument ever to go some way towards counteracting this imbalance: its goal is to alleviate human suffering through binding arms trade standards.

As a feminist peace organization, cfd is dedicated to fighting all gender-based violence (GBV), whether physical or psychological in nature. Small arms in particular play a fatal role in cases of GBV such as sexualized violence in war and domestic violence. Possession of arms is not gender-neutral; it reflects power and gender relations that fuel violence and is still strongly linked to the traditional image of masculinity, even though it is a long time since the modern man has needed weapons to prove his virility. Yet, firearms continue to reinforce stereotypes and threaten and traumatize women. They also drastically increase the propensity for violence. According to international comparative studies, people’s physical safety and sense of security increase when access to arms is restricted.
According to Article 7 of the ATT, the arms trade is illegal if the weapons in question are being used, among other things, to facilitate or promote serious gender-specific violence. The only way to guarantee a decrease in GBV and other forms of violence is through consistent compliance with the provisions of the treaty.

Along with other NGOs, cfd is therefore calling for strict enforcement of the ATT, which has also been applicable to Switzerland since April 2015. As the host country for the ATT’s permanent secretariat, Switzerland has a particular duty in this respect.

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links
- cfd: Feminist peace politics
- cfd: Arms Trade Treaty (in German)

in depth

Mapping arms data: visualization of the global arms trade

Mapping Arms Data is a visual presentation of the global arms trade created by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in cooperation with the Igarapé Institute. The underlying database contains over 35,000 entries representing exports and imports of small arms and munitions from 262 countries between 1992 and 2012.

The impressive three-dimensional illustration allows the viewer to easily follow the trade of various goods, such as military and civilian weapons and munitions. A menu allows users to display any specific trade flows they are interested in. The intensity of trade between countries across the globe is illustrated by illuminated connecting lines, with moving, radiating points symbolizing the amount of weapons traded.

The Mapping Arms Data project offers to discover global arms trade in a surprisingly entertaining way, thus making you momentarily forget how serious the issue is. In any case, it is an effective and useful tool for building a picture of the global arms trade.

links
- Mapping Arms Data
Database of ATT-relevant activities

The Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is a multilateral agreement that regulates the international arms trade. The “Mapping ATT-relevant Cooperation and Assistance Activities” website operated by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) supports the countries involved in the treaty by helping with procuring information and documenting global activities relating to the ATT.

The intention is for the processes and information developed by different countries and actors to be collected in the database and made available to others. The database, which provisionally includes sub-Saharan Africa, Latin American, and the Caribbean, can be searched with specific queries based on pre-defined criteria such as the type of activity or the partner organizations involved. The database can help to speed up learning processes and avoid duplications.

ATT-Assistance is a powerful and interactive platform that should be used by as many states involved in the ATT as possible in order to support the work of countries with weak administrative institutions.

Examining Swiss war material exports

The question of Swiss war material exports often leads to controversial debates. A factual and informative platform for discussion is therefore essential. The Swiss Forum on Foreign Policy foraus provides one with its discussion paper “Der Schweizerische Kriegsmaterialexport auf dem Prüfstand” (Examining Swiss war material exports). Although the paper was published four years ago, it looks into aspects of Swiss legislation on munitions that are still surrounded by controversy.

Various aspects of the legal framework are discussed in detail and possible suggestions for improvements are outlined. The paper explores the export of war material to problematic
countries, the licensing process, and the question of Swiss neutrality. Finally, it calls for the strict application of non-re-export declarations and the sanctioning of violations, as well as clarity and transparency in the federal government’s communications.

A useful reference for an objective and accurate debate.

**links**
- foraus. Der Schweizerische Kriegsmaterialexport auf dem Prüfstand. Publication No. 10. April 2012 (in German)

**news**

**swisspeace / KOFF**

**National Dialogue & Peace Mediation Course**

National Dialogues are increasingly seen as an inclusive tool to address and transform deep political crises and post war transitions. They can be set up before, during or after peace negotiations and serve to provide a space to discuss issues of national relevance and build trust among different segments of the population. Being nationally led, such processes are crucial in promoting ownership, inclusivity and legitimacy.

Jointly offered by swisspeace and the Berghof Foundation, the National Dialogue & Peace Mediation course provides insights on how to define, design and support National Dialogue processes as well as hands-on training in dialogue and mediation skills. Participants will reflect on lessons that can be drawn from previous cases, exchange experiences and become part of a community of practice.

The course will take place from 13-17 February 2017 in Basel. It can be taken as one module of the Certificate, Diploma and Master of Advanced Studies in Civilian Peacebuilding Program offered by swisspeace and the University of Basel. Registration closes on 30 November 2016.

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**links**
- Further information
- Registration
Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts Training

Despite the widespread emergence of theories of change in strategy and project documents, they are rarely used to their full potential. Organized by swisspeace, the training “Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts” focuses on how 'good' theories of change can be created that will help practitioners gain an in-depth understanding of their programs and their impacts.

Participants will understand the concepts of theories of change and the basics to work with them, build theories of change on different levels with practical exercises, and get insights on different uses of theories of change for design, monitoring and evaluation. They will also develop ideas on using theories of change as a tool to foster organizational learning and grapple with complexity.

The training will take place from 1-3 February 2017 in Basel. It can be taken as a module of the Certificate, Diploma and Master of Advanced Studies in Civilian Peacebuilding programs offered by swisspeace and the University of Basel. Registration closes on 30 November 2016.

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links
- Further information
- Registration

Latest Publications from swisspeace

In 2015, the working group on Women, Peace and Security led a critical reflection on the Women, Peace and Security agenda of the United Nations Security Council. It organized three workshops on Syria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Switzerland. The findings from these discussions have now been published in a report. This alternative civil society report, the first of its kind, offers an independent assessment of the current situation regarding the implementation of the Swiss National Action Plan (NAP) 1325 and shows new possibilities for action for gender-sensitive peacebuilding.

The latest swisspeace working paper “Conflict Sensitivity: Taking it to the Next Level” is the product of a critical debate between forty international experts with the aim of taking analyses, discussions and solutions surrounding conflict sensitivity to a new level. Contributions from leading researchers include a critical retrospective as well as current political debates, essays on engaging companies in conflict-sensitive business practice
and articles on conflict sensitivity as a vector for peacebuilding across sectors.

links

news

KOFF member organizations

Certificate of Advanced Studies in Arts and International Cooperation

What role can art play in the context of reconstruction and peacebuilding? Can artistic strategies help to dissolve social divisions and promote social change? How can we link artistic work to conflict sensitivity? What artistic concepts should be applied to international cooperation?

These questions have been at the heart of the work of artasfoundation, the Swiss foundation for art in conflict regions, since 2012. In cooperation with Zurich University of the Arts and an international network of practitioners, it has now developed the Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS) course in arts and international cooperation, which offers scope for reflecting on a field of activity in which the theories and practices of modern art, humanitarian work, and international cooperation come together. The course is aimed at both employees of state organizations and NGOs as well as artists and people involved in cultural activities.

Successful completion of a CAS module can be counted toward swisspeace’s other advanced studies courses (MAS/CAS) and vice versa.

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links
Over the past fifty years, Colombia has suffered one of the world’s most protracted and violent conflicts, with more than 200,000 deaths, thousands of forced disappearances and kidnappings, and almost 7 million people displaced. In June 2016, and after almost four years of peace negotiations in Havana, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have announced a historic ceasefire agreement. In “Innovations in the Colombian peace process”, Conciliation Resources and NOREF describe a number of innovations and other developments leading up to this agreement that might be relevant to peace processes elsewhere. These include clear procedural distinction between peace negotiations and the peace process; positioning the rights of the victims at the center of the talks; addressing the structural problem of rural development; creating a Gender sub-commission; and planning for implementation long before the agreement is signed.

“PeaceLab 2016: A fresh look at crisis prevention” is a platform for discussing the German Federal Government’s new directives for crisis management and peacebuilding. The blog’s editorial team is based at the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi) in Berlin and the project receives financial support from the German Foreign Office.

Kicking off the debate on the new directives on July 5 in Berlin, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Frank-Walter Steinmeier called for “open discussions about where we are already working well and where we can improve and become more efficient.” To this end, experts from politics, civil society, and academia contribute regularly to the blog, along with
members of the general public. The editorial team will keep you up to date with a weekly newsletter outlining any upcoming interesting blog posts.

links
- PeaceLab2016-Blog (in German)
- Subscribe to receive the newsletter

CDA – Collaborative Learning Projects

International actors increasingly see a role for the private sector in peacebuilding in conflict-affected states. When armed groups are active near corporate projects, however, companies are challenged to meet their commitment to responsible business standards. They find it yet more difficult to know whether they indirectly finance conflict actors, how to protect communities from violence, and whom to engage in contexts of polarization, concealed affinities, and armed actors’ pressure on others. These make it difficult to assess opportunities to engage with peace actors. There is presently only limited understanding of and guidance on how companies can effectively manage their impacts on conflict dynamics, human security, and peace efforts when they operate in the presence of armed groups. CDA is leading a collaborative learning project to develop practical, evidence-based resources to help companies operate responsibly in conflict. Expressions of interest in the project or information on relevant resources are welcome.

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links
- CDA - Collaborative Learning Projects
- Further information about the project

calendar

Upcoming events

September 5, 2016
Lucerne, Switzerland

Conference on the Sustainable Development Goals
Are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) realistic? What are the consequences of Agenda 2030 for the condition of women? What role do the SDC and Swiss civil society have to play in implementing this program? How can the SDGs be applied to the Swiss context?
These questions will be part of a discussion in which representatives from Alliance Sud and the SDC as well as journalist Andreas Zumach will be taking part.

**Further information**

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<th>Until September 10, 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CDA course on “Systems Approaches in Peacebuilding”</strong></td>
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<td>CDA is organizing a 5-day advanced course on “Systems Approaches in Peacebuilding – Reflecting on Peace Practice II Training”. The application deadline is September 10. The course will take place from October 10-14, 2016.</td>
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<td><strong>Further information and registration until September 10, 2016</strong></td>
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<th>Until September 15, 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Register for the swisspeace course on Business, Conflict &amp; Human Rights</strong></td>
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<td>What is needed for businesses to operate responsibly in volatile areas? The swisspeace course on Business, Conflict and Human Rights explores this question from various angles. It discusses state of the art international standards on business and human rights and ways for companies to implement them. Through a focus on active participation and common experiences, it sheds light on the roles and strategies of companies, governments, international organizations, and civil society in promoting responsible business practices. The course is organized in collaboration with SAFESTAINABLE. It will take place from November 10-12, 2016.</td>
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<td><strong>Further information</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Registration until September 15, 2016</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 17, 2016</th>
<th>Bern, Switzerland</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Information session from PBI and PWS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Peace Watch Switzerland (PWS) are organizing an information session in Bern enabling participants to learn more about opportunities to support human rights in their projects abroad and in Switzerland. This provides a chance to find out more about the work done by volunteers on the ground, the training process and the workings of the organizations. Another information session will take place on October 1 in Zurich.</td>
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<td><strong>Further information</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>September 21, 2016</th>
<th>Basel, Switzerland</th>
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**International Day of Peace**

Is there an aesthetics of non-violence? This question will be discussed at the University of Basel on the international Day of Peace by three experts of arts and peace research. The event is organized by swisspeace in partnership with NCCR eikones and the University of Basel.

Further information

Contact

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**September 23-24, 2016**

**Basel, Switzerland**

**swisspeace’s CAS introductory module**

The introductory module of swisspeace’s CAS in civilian peacebuilding Essentials 2016/2017 will take place from September 23-24, 2016. Designed for practitioners with an academic background, this CAS consisting of 21 days spread over one year provides a holistic understanding of civilian peacebuilding, reflects critically on peacebuilding practices and draws on current insights from research.

Further information

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**October 14-15, 2016**

**Basel, Switzerland**

**CAS thematic block: Peacebuilding & Statebuilding**

The thematic block “Peacebuilding & Statebuilding” will take place on October 14-15, as part of swisspeace’s CAS in civilian peacebuilding Essential 2016/2017.

Further information

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**October 27, 2016**

**Bern, Switzerland**

**KOFF roundtable on Colombia**

KOFF is organizing a roundtable on the role of civil society in the colombian peace process. With the participation of a delegation of Colombian partner organizations of the peacebuilding program.

Further information

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**November 3, 2016**

**Bern, Switzerland**

**Roundtable on Art and Peacebuilding**

In collaboration with artasfoundation, KOFF is organizing a roundtable on the topic of art and peacebuilding. With the participation of dancer and artist Meret Schlegel as well as Vesna Matkovic (International Alert) and Dagmar Reichert (artasfoundation).

Further information
November 1-3, 2016
Geneva, Switzerland

Do you want to enhance your facilitation skills?
The CAUX-Initiatives of Change Foundation (CAUX-IofC) and the Institute of Cultural Affairs UK (ICA:UK) offer trainings in facilitation methods that will strengthen your role as facilitator in private, public or community settings.

Further information

Until November 30, 2016
Basel, Switzerland

Register for the swisspeace training on Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts
Despite the widespread emergence of theories of change in strategy and project documents, they are rarely used to their full potential. The swisspeace training on Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts focuses on how 'good' theories of change can be created that will help practitioners gain an in-depth understanding of their programs and their impacts. The training will take place from February 1-3, 2017.

Further information
Registration until November 30, 2016

Until November 30, 2016
Basel, Switzerland

Register for the swisspeace course on National Dialogue & Peace Mediation
The National Dialogue and Peace Mediation course offered by swisspeace and the Berghof Foundation provides insights in how to understand, design and support national dialogue processes, training in dialogue and mediation skills and reflection on lessons that can be drawn from previous cases. The course will take place from February 13-17, 2017.

Further information
Registration until November 30, 2016

December 2-3, 2016
Basel, Switzerland

CAS thematic block: Business & Peace
The thematic block “Business & Peace” will take place on December 2-3, as part of swisspeace’s CAS in civilian peacebuilding Essentials 2016/2017.

Further information

December 5-9, 2016
Berlin, Germany

Steps for Peace: designing trainings for peacebuilding
Trainings and seminars in peacebuilding, conflict transformation and conflict management
by international and national experts are a central component of capacity development of civil society actors in crisis regions. Often international experts support national partner organizations in the implementation of educational offers. Designing trainings for peacebuilding provides an overview of basic skills in analysing, planning and implementing educational measures in a difficult context.

Further information
Registration

January 27-28, 2017
Basel, Switzerland

CAS Thematic Block: Dealing with the Past
The thematic block “Dealing with the Past” will take place on January 27-28, 2017, as part of swisspeace’s CAS in civilian peacebuilding Essentials 2016/2017.

Further information
KOFF is a dialogue and exchange network facilitated by swisspeace. It is jointly supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) and the following Swiss NGOs which are members of the platform: