



**Organisation for Economic  
Co-operation and Development**

**PRESS STATEMENT  
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## **Launch of the Environmental Performance Review of Switzerland**

**By Mr. Lorents Lorentsen, Environment Director**

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues,

- ◇ On behalf of the OECD, it is a great pleasure for me to present, here in Bern, the second OECD Environmental Performance Review of Switzerland, focusing on the country's environmental achievements and challenges. It examines the environmental performance of Switzerland as a whole, due to the combined efforts of its governments, including federal, cantonal and municipal governments, as well as civil society, the business community and environmental NGOs.
- ◇ Minister, the report reviews the period since the First Review in 1998 and shows that environmental efforts of Switzerland are clearly bearing fruit. Switzerland is a country with a clean and green image, which you can rightly be proud of. But that does not mean that you cannot do better in many areas. And also, your colleagues in other OECD countries expect you to be a good performer– to be a lead country in the environmental area – because you are a rich service based economy with relatively little dirty production. I will come back to achievements and challenges in a minute.

### **THE REVIEW OF SWITZERLAND**

- ◇ This report examines the environmental results achieved, with respect to Swiss domestic and international commitments. It is not Olympics of environmental performance – ranking you as number “X” out of 30 OECD countries. But rather, it is about confronting you with what you have promised to do. It is an evidence-based report, building on data and facts. The assessments presented here are also built on the policy experience of OECD, having conducted some 59 country environmental performance reviews to date.

- ◇ An earlier draft of this report was the basis for a formal examination, which took place for a full day in September 2006 in Brussels, where representatives from all OECD countries posed questions to the Swiss delegation. The report includes 46 recommendations, which were approved by all OECD countries including Switzerland itself. So it is not a set of recommendations from the OECD-secretariat, but from colleagues in 29 other OECD countries.
- ◇ The review of policies and country performance is a core function of the OECD. Our aim is to promote policy dialogue and exchange of best practices among member countries. We have also reviewed environmental performance of key non-member countries such as China and Russia. Other OECD country review programmes address other policy areas: for instance, the next Economic review of Switzerland is coming in September 2007.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

Switzerland has made significant environmental achievements on several fronts. I will only mention a few of the many areas that you can be proud of.

### **Concerning Environmental Management**

- ◇ Switzerland has the lowest emission intensities of OECD countries for SO<sub>x</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub>. For instance, SO<sub>x</sub> emissions per unit of GDP are 0.1 (kg/1 000 USD of GDP) for Switzerland, 0.3 for France, Germany or Japan and 1.4 for the US. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions per unit of GDP are at 0.4 for Switzerland, 0.6 for Japan, 0.8 for France and Germany and 1.8 for the US.
- ◇ Your drinking water is of high quality. Advanced waste water infrastructure serves 97% of the population --while it is 70% for France, 92% for Germany, 64% for Japan and 71% for the US--, again the best figure among OECD countries.
- ◇ Your waste management and noise abatement policies are well advanced. And you have made good progress in the sustainable management of forests.

### **Concerning Sustainable Development**

- ◇ Good progress has been made to implement the polluter pays principle. This has been reflected in the increased use of economic instruments in waste and water management.
- ◇ Most importantly, economic benefits have been derived from environmental progress. Tangible results are found in tourism, eco-industry and agro-food industry.

- ◇ Environmental improvements have also led to positive outcomes in public health. The Environment/Health Plan is a major achievement.
- ◇ Environmental concerns have been effectively integrated into some sectors, as we see in the Swiss Energy programme. Also, agro-environmental measures have been developed and implemented effectively.

### **Concerning International Co-operation**

Switzerland has a very proactive attitude concerning international environmental issues. With a very open economy and with its location at the heart of Europe, Switzerland has many geographical and economic interdependencies with European partners and beyond.

- ◇ Concerning Multilateral Environmental Agreements, and those relating to trade, Switzerland has implemented effectively the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances, the Washington Convention on endangered species, the Basel Convention on hazardous waste, and the OECD Acts concerning chemical products.
- ◇ Regional co-operation has been quite fruitful, for example for cleaning up trans-frontier waters such as the Rhine and the Rhone, and co-operation with EU.

All these achievements of Switzerland are built on very solid environmental institutions, environmental legislation, environmental democracy and environmental expertise; on active co-operation and partnerships with civil society. Environmental expenditures of 1.4% of GDP (which is not a very high figure) are translating into concrete results. There is no evidence of a negative impact on the competitiveness of the Swiss industry from the pollution related efforts of the country.

Let's now move to the challenges.

### **CHALLENGES**

However, the report provides 46 recommendations for further improvements, so these are some remaining headaches. Let me particularly stress the need to strengthen further the use of economic instruments and economic analysis as well as to integrate environmental concerns into economic sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport, tourism, and in land use planning (*aménagement du territoire*) and in fiscal policies. Indeed, if traditional pollution issues are mastered here in Switzerland, there remain a range of issues yet to be mastered, many of them associated to natural resource management.

### **Concerning Environmental Management**

- ◇ “New” air pollution issues have emerged, with concern with fine particulates, ozone and their associated health impacts.
- ◇ Management of water basin and of aquatic ecosystems (such as restoration of rivers, flood control, minimum flows) have to be developed much further.
- ◇ The degradation of biodiversity urgently requires a national strategy (as requested by the Convention on Biodiversity) and it needs to be vigorously implemented.
- ◇ The rapid loss of agricultural and natural land demands a revision of the federal law on the “aménagement du territoire”.
- ◇ The network of protected areas has to be further expanded, interconnected and strengthened in its management. New national parks might be considered.

### **Concerning Sustainable Development**

- ◇ Switzerland should consider establishing a Commission to review taxes, economic instruments and subsidies from an environmental point of view.
- ◇ Reinforcing the implementation of the Polluter Pays Principle would require a thorough review of the need to get the costs of pollution or noise damages to be born by activities (e.g. energy, transport) generating them.
- ◇ All in all, efforts should be made to move towards more sustainable consumption patterns (e.g. concerning transport, land use, leisure activities), by use of economic and regulatory instruments.

### **Concerning International Co-operation**

Switzerland should aim at preserving its clean and green image, through better pollution control and natural resource management to boost the tourism and agro-food sectors, for example.

Switzerland should aim to:

- ◇ Achieve domestic and international climate change commitments, including the implementation of the CO<sub>2</sub> tax or an emissions trading system.
- ◇ Engage in pending ratifications of international agreements (e.g. Aarhus, Espoo, Alpine Convention Protocols).
- ◇ Strengthen the environmental dimension of official development assistance.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our three key messages.

- ◇ FIRST, Switzerland has achieved remarkable environmental progress concerning pollution related issues. You are among the very best OECD countries as we should expect, bravo.
- ◇ SECOND, more needs to be done to stop the degradation of nature and biodiversity, to stop the rapid loss of natural and agricultural land, to move towards sustainable consumption patterns, to maintain your green and clean image. This has also economic benefits.
- ◇ To achieve sustainable management of your natural resources, Switzerland will need to better integrate environmental concerns into key sectors, such as energy, transport, agriculture, tourism, and also land use. This should be done through both regulations and market mechanisms such as taxes and permit trading systems. Why not consider establishing a green tax commission, to examine all environmental policy areas in order to suggest policy improvements while considering competitiveness and distributional effects of possible reforms.

Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me thank all of you, and through you, the many talented and committed officials and experts who have contributed to this review in a spirit of openness and transparency. It has been a great pleasure working with you.

I will now formally hand over the report to you Mr. Minister, to transfer the ownership to you – and hope that it will be useful in your endeavours to pursue powerful environmental policies. We rely on you to keep Switzerland as a leading country in environmental performance.