

December 7, 2022 | Myanmar

## **Switzerland legitimising illegal Myanmar junta with meeting & invite to development summit**

Switzerland has invited the illegal Myanmar military junta to the Effective Development Co-operation Summit, according to Justice For Myanmar sources and confirmed by the Swiss Government.

The Summit, scheduled for December 12-14, is an initiative of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC), a multi-stakeholder network that includes representatives of development provider and recipient governments, UNDP, OECD, multilateral development banks, parliaments, business, and civil society.

The junta's deputy minister of investment and foreign economic relations, Dr Wah Wah Maung, is set to attend the summit virtually, along with junta representatives in Geneva.

Ambassador Thomas Gass, the Assistant Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), invited the Myanmar military junta in his capacity as GPEDC co-chair, via Myanmar's Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, which is occupied by the illegal junta.

Earlier this week, Switzerland's Ambassador to Myanmar, Tim Enderlin, also met with junta minister for international cooperation, Ko Ko Hlaing, providing further legitimacy to the junta and fodder for its propaganda. The junta featured the meeting in its TV and print media.

Switzerland's engagement with the junta comes at a peak time when the junta, a terrorist organisation, is intensifying its war of terror against the people of Myanmar.

Since the illegal coup attempt, the junta has murdered more than 2,500 people and arrested over 16,000, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners.

Last week, the junta sentenced 7 student union activists to death, after executing four activists in July.

Across Myanmar, the junta has been carrying out indiscriminate air strikes and shelling, killing men, women and children, committing rape, razing whole communities and displacing more than 1.1 million people since the military's coup attempt.

The Swiss invitation for the junta to participate in the Summit came despite the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva having barred members of the Permanent Mission of Myanmar from participating in the Human Rights Council since 2021, as they are not legitimate representatives of the State of Myanmar.

In reply to a letter from Justice For Myanmar, Ambassador Gass responded, "Switzerland did not send an invitation to the de facto authorities of Myanmar. An invitation has, however, been sent to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva. Heads of missions accredited to the United Nations Office in Geneva can participate in the Summit. An eventual online participation in the work of the Summit, as observer, does not imply any decision-making role."

The junta is not the “de facto” authority of Myanmar. Far from gaining control, a recent study by former UN mandate holders found that the junta only has stable control of 17% of Myanmar territory. The junta is a terrorist organisation under Myanmar law and definitions offered in international law.

Justice For Myanmar has appealed to Ambassador Gass to disinvite the junta from the Effective Development Co-operation Summit and invite the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN, U Kyaw Moe Tun. Ambassador Gass has yet to respond.

**Justice For Myanmar spokesperson Yadanar Maung says:** “Switzerland is about to take its seat on the UN Security Council and must support the Myanmar people’s struggle for human rights and democracy.

“Instead of upholding international law and the values of democracy and human rights, the Swiss Government’s recent and impending engagement is lending legitimacy to the illegal junta, emboldening it to continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity with total impunity.

“Switzerland’s bilateral and multilateral support for the junta must end now.

“If the GPEDC does not retract its invite to the junta and prevent junta representatives from participating in the Summit, GPEDC will undermine UN General Assembly Resolution 396(v), undermine the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and breach internal UN policy on engagement with the illegal military junta.

“This would be an affront to the people of Myanmar who have resisted the junta’s brutal attempts to gain control and power for nearly two years, bravely defending their human rights and democracy.

“The Myanmar military junta must be tried in a court of law for the systematic and widespread atrocity crimes committed against the people of Myanmar, not welcomed as an observer or a participant of a reputable international forum that aims to foster multi-stakeholder development cooperation.

“We call upon the Swiss Government, GPEDC steering committee members and stakeholders to uphold decisions made by the UN General Assembly and respect the basic rights of the people of Myanmar to choose their own government by barring the junta from the Effective Development Cooperation Summit.

“GPEDC must send an invitation to the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the UN, U Kyaw Moe Tun, who has the authority to represent the people of Myanmar within the UN system.

“It is time for Switzerland to live up to its democratic values by recognising and supporting NUG as the legitimate government of Myanmar.”

### **More information:**

Justice For Myanmar, a group of covert activists campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, is calling for an end to military business and for federal democracy and a sustainable peace.

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