

Observer Status to the Arctic Council: Switzerland's Candidature



Swiss Camp on Greenland Ice Sheet, 80 kilometers northeast of Ilulissat, 1100 m above sea level. The Camp was built in 1990 and Swiss researchers work here each year for at least a month.

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Switzerland is applying for observer status to the Arctic Council. This candidature is part of Switzerland's long-lasting commitment to peaceful international cooperation and to research excellence.

Seven reasons for Switzerland's high degree of involvement in the Arctic

The characteristics of the Swiss landscape, like the Arctic, have been shaped by the ice ages. The landscape is composed of mountain ranges containing numerous glaciers, among them the largest ice flow of the Alps. Scientific exploration of the Arctic has consequently always been of particular importance to Switzerland.

Swiss mountain climate can be harsh. Similar to the Arctic environment, it has provided a challenge for its people to cope with an ever-changing environment in creative and sustainable ways, continually shaping their culture.

Swiss research in the Arctic has a long tradition dating back to the 19th century. The very diverse fields of research include geology, geo-ecology and geophysics, glaciology, climatic history, botany and ethnology.

Switzerland's glaciology work in the Arctic provides a substantial contribution to climate change research.

Swiss partnerships include a long track record of working with partners from all Arctic Council Member States. Over the past decade, Swiss researchers have participated in some 50 international Arctic projects involving several Arctic Council Members States.

Switzerland's strong commitment to international polar research cooperation has led to numerous scientific exchanges.

In 2018, Switzerland will host the bi-annual conference of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research and the Arctic Science Summit Week in Davos.

Swiss leadership in international negotiations has been critical in addressing climate change, depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer and transport of pollutants, all of which disproportionately affect both high-mountain areas and polar regions. Switzerland was among the major drivers for an effective international regulation in chemicals management.

Swiss maritime presence is well-established. As a landlocked country, Switzerland has ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and all

major conventions concluded within the framework of the International Maritime Organization. Switzerland supports strict safety standards and advocates strong anti-pollution measures in Arctic waters.

Swiss solidarity has led to a strong advocacy for indigenous issues in international fora. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is crucial for indigenous peoples and local communities. As stewards of natural resources over time, they know best how to strike the balance between economic development and environmental protection.



Inuit with animals (material: whalebone), artist unknown © Cerny Inuit Collection

Artefacts of the Arctic have a circle of dedicated collectors in Switzerland, providing income opportunities and maintaining local craftsmanship and traditions in the Arctic.



Jungfrauoch, Sphinx Mountain Station

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The Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL) provides world-class research on snow, the atmosphere, natural hazards, permafrost and mountain ecological systems. Other centres of excellence include the High Altitude Research Station on Jungfrauoch, the Paul Scherrer Institute, the two Federal Institutes of Technology and various Swiss universities, especially the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS) at Zurich University and the Oeschger Centre for Climate Change Research at Bern University, host of the international

Past Global Changes Programme (PAGES). The Swiss Committee on Polar and High Altitude Research of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences provides a platform of exchange and coordination for scientists participating in the work of the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC) and International Partnerships in Ice Core Sciences (IPICS) and the Climate and Cryosphere project of the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP).

Switzerland is in full compliance with the admission criteria required from Observers to the Arctic Council:

Acceptance and support of the objectives of the Arctic Council as defined in the Ottawa Declaration of 1996.

Recognition of the sovereignty of the Arctic States, their sovereign rights and their jurisdiction in the Arctic.

Recognition of and adherence to the extensive legal framework that applies to the Arctic Ocean, notably the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides a solid foundation for responsible management of the Arctic Ocean.

Respect of the values, interests, traditions and the culture of Arctic indigenous peoples and other inhabitants of the Arctic.

Political willingness and financial ability to contribute to the work of the Permanent Participants and Arctic indigenous peoples.

Interest and expertise relevant to the work of the Arctic Council, as demonstrated by the long track record of Swiss participation in international scientific research in the Arctic.

Capability and interest to support the work of the Arctic Council, including through partnerships with Member States and Permanent Participants, in their endeavour to

promote Arctic concerns in global decision-making bodies, such as, inter alia, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the International Whaling Commission, currently presided by a Swiss national, and conventions on chemical compounds such as persistent organic pollutants and mercury.



Great Aletsch Glacier, UNESCO World Heritage Site, Jungfrau-Aletsch Area
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