Unofficial English translation of the French-language circular verbal note dated 29 May 2020

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations, the Permanent Missions to the World Trade Organisation, the Permanent Representations to the Conference on Disarmament, the Observer Offices in Geneva, as well as to the International Organisations based in Switzerland, and has the honour to inform them of the new decisions taken on 27 May 2020 by the Swiss Federal Council regarding easing of measures to protect the population against the coronavirus.

Restrictions on entry into Switzerland

The Swiss Federal Council has decided to lift border controls on **15 June 2020** with Austria, France and Germany. As of this date, persons legally residing in these countries will be allowed to enter Switzerland and persons legally residing in Switzerland will be able to travel to the countries concerned.

The Swiss Federal Council should lift the restrictions on entry into Switzerland from **15 June and by 6 July 2020 at the latest** for all Schengen Member States, under the condition that the epidemiological situation in Switzerland as well as the Member States of the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) allows this. This means that persons legally residing in these countries will be allowed to enter Switzerland and persons legally residing in Switzerland will be able to travel to the countries concerned.

The Swiss Federal Council will decide on lifting further entry restrictions for third countries later and in consultation with Schengen Member States.

Public gatherings

Until 29 May 2020, gatherings of more than 5 people in the public areas (public squares, walking areas and parks) remain prohibited. From **30 May 2020**, the limit of 5 persons will be increased to a maximum of **30 persons** (cf. Article 7, letter c, of the Ordinance on Measures to Combat the Coronavirus, Ordinance 2 Covid-19 as amended, see annex in French). A minimum of two metres distance between each individual is still required.

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1. Schengen Member States (26): Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

Major events

Events involving more than 1,000 people remain prohibited until 31 August 2020 as per the Swiss Federal Council's decision of 22 April 2020. Events involving between 300 and 1,000 people also remain prohibited and the Swiss Federal Council will review this decision on 24 June 2020.

Events of up to 300 persons

As of 6 June 2020, private and public events of up to 300 people will be permitted if hygiene and social distancing rules guarantee protection of all participants (cf. Article 6 of the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19). They can either be seated or standing events. (e.g. national holiday celebrations, receptions or meetings).

Public events

As defined in the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19, "public events" are those held in a public establishment, such as a hotel, restaurant, concert hall or theatre. The rules outlined apply to events organised by permanent missions and international organisations in a public establishment.

The organiser must comply with the following regulations:

1. Draw up and implement a protection plan to ensure the risk of coronavirus transmission is reduced for participants and staff members.

2. Designate a responsible person in charge of implementing the protection plan.

3. If participants are in close contact, the organiser is obliged to draw up a list of participants. As outlined in the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19, "close contact" applies to all situations where persons are less than two metres apart for at least 15 minutes without wearing a mask or other means of protection.

3a. The list of participants must include the surname, first name and telephone number of the participants and the organiser shall inform them in advance. If necessary, the cantonal authority will access this data in order to inform participants who have been in contact with a potentially infected person. The data on the list of participants cannot be processed for any other purpose, neither by the organiser nor by the cantonal authority. All data must be deleted no later than 14 days after the event has taken place.

Private events

As defined in the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19, "private events" are those that are not held in a public establishment, such as a hotel, restaurant, theatre or museum, and where the organiser knows the participants. The rules outlined apply to events organised by permanent missions and international organisations in their premises.

The organiser must comply with the hygiene and social distancing rules recommended by the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH). If participants are in close contact (see point 3 above), the organiser is obliged to draw up a list of participants under the same conditions and for the same purposes as those described in point 3a above.

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3 See Articles 6, 6d and 6e of the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19
4 State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), model protection plan (in the Swiss official languages): https://backtowork.easygov.swiss/fr/plan-de-protection-modele/
5 See Articles 6 and 6e of the amended Ordinance 2 Covid-19
The FOPH has published a document\(^6\) outlining the **measures**, which must be applied by the organiser of a **public or private event**:

- For seated participants, the organiser must leave at least one empty seat between each person. If possible, chairs should be arranged to provide a minimum distance of one metre between seats and rows.

- The flow of people (e.g. when entering and leaving the rooms or during breaks) must be managed in such a way that a distance of two metres can be maintained between people.

- Rooms and reception areas must be laid out in such a way as to ensure traceability in the event of close contact between people. For example, the room and reception area should be divided into marked areas to facilitate traceability. The flow of people (including entering and leaving the room and reception area) should be managed in such a way that a distance of two metres between participants is maintained.

- For standing events, a minimum of 4m\(^2\) per person is required and participants must provide their personal details to the organiser (see point 3a above).

The Swiss authorities currently have no plans to impose the use of masks or to introduce a recommendation on the subject, which would replace the current social distancing rule. The aim remains to prevent contamination by complying with the rules on social distancing and hygiene. However, the voluntary use of masks is recommended in situations where the social distancing rule is unlikely to be met.

**Protective measures for employees in the workplace**

In addition to the information outlined in the circular verbal note of 14 May 2020 concerning the implementation of a protection plan in favour of employees, clients and visitors, the Swiss Mission points out that the Swiss Federal Council continues to **recommend, as far as possible, working from home** (teleworking). However, it is up to each employer to **decide freely** on the return of its staff members to the workplace.

**Vulnerable persons must be protected at all times** and their employer is obliged to let them work at home. If their presence at work is essential, it is the employer’s responsibility to undertake all necessary measures to protect them in the workplace.

**Protective measures for customers of company canteens**

On 8 May 2020, the Swiss Mission informed permanent missions and international organisations on the conditions under which their cafeterias were authorised to reopen as of 11 May 2020. The Swiss Federal Council has decided that as of **6 June 2020**, the group limit of four people per table will be **lifted** without any obligation to collect contact data.

The other rules, in particular a distance of two metres between tables, seated customers at all times, service between 6.00 and 24.00 and accessibility for staff members only, **remain unchanged** and must be respected.

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\(^6\) FOPH, frequently asked questions (in the Swiss official languages):
Protective measures for visitors to museums and libraries

On 29 April 2020, the Swiss Federal Council decided that museums and libraries could open to visitors from 11 May 2020, if the necessary protection measures are implemented.

For example, international organisations with a visitors’ service, a visitors’ centre, permanent or temporary exhibitions or a library, accessible to the public, must comply with the protection rules defined by the Swiss authorities. They must therefore draw up and implement the protection plan for museums, libraries and archives. This plan must comply with the prescriptions outlined in the model protection plan, which explains the principles of prevention by giving examples of suggested measures.

The Swiss Mission reminds permanent missions and international organisations, that as well as benefiting from privileges and immunities, they must respect and comply with the legislation of the Host Country. In view of the health situation and the decisions taken by the Swiss Federal Council, it is expected that permanent missions and international organisations strictly comply with the rules and protective measures defined in Ordinance 2 Covid-19 and in this verbal note. The Swiss Mission invites them to implement all necessary measures in order to fulfil current requirements.

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to assure the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other International Organisations, the Permanent Missions to the World Trade Organisation, the Permanent Representations to the Conference on Disarmament, the Observer Offices in Geneva, as well as the International Organisations based in Switzerland, of the assurances of its highest consideration.

Enclosure: ment.

Geneva, 29 May 2020

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7 State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), standard protection plan for museums, libraries and archives (in the Swiss official languages): https://backtowork.easygov.swiss/fr/plan-de-protection-modele/