Views of Switzerland on regarding efforts and ongoing needs related to victim assistance and environmental assessment and remediation, in response to the request of the UN Secretary-General contained in Note Verbale ODA/2024-00018/LONW

Switzerland voted in favor of UNGA resolution 78/240 entitled "Addressing the legacy of nuclear weapons: providing victim assistance and environmental remediation to Member States affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons" and welcomes that the effects of nuclear weapon on people and the environment have recently received greater attention by the international community.

Switzerland notes that knowledge of medical, social, economic, and cultural impact of the use or testing of nuclear weapons on local populations, including available and additional support needed, is still relatively limited. The understanding of the current status of radioactive contamination (and decontamination) and the scope for remediation measures is in need of updating.

Similarly, potential needs or requests for international support should be identified based on sound scientific analysis, ensuring sensitivity to age and gender disparities, as nuclear weapons disproportionately impact women and children, particularly girls. In this regard, Switzerland welcomes greater transparency and information exchange in this area to ensure that the provision of assistance is tailored to meet needs effectively.

Switzerland supports that States are to provide victim assistance and environmental remediation to individuals and areas under their jurisdiction or control affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons, which is a legal obligation for States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), and as an observer at the TPNW, Switzerland is following the relevant international discussions. In this context, Switzerland underlines also that resolution 78/240 recognizes that the responsibility to address the harms resulting from a detonation of using or testing a nuclear weapon or any other nuclear explosive device lies, respectively, with the Member States that have done so. It further acknowledges a shared responsibility by the entire international community in addressing nuclear legacies.

Switzerland sees multiple ways to take this issue forward, in view of fostering international cooperation, offering the opportunity for the international community to provide tangible support to those suffering from the consequences of nuclear weapons use and testing. To be successful, such international collaboration requires buy-in from the relevant stakeholders. Therefore, Switzerland deems it crucial to advance the issue in a manner that garners as much political, technical, and material support as possible for effective and sustainable implementation of victim assistance and environmental remediation.