

International Coffee Council
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**Statement by H.E. Mr Ivo Germann, Head
of Switzerland's Foreign Economic Affairs
Directorate, on behalf of H.E. Mr
Alexandre Fasel, State Secretary,
Switzerland, made at the opening
ceremony of the 142nd Session of the
Council**

Your Excellency, Mr Chair,

Honourable Minister of Trade of the Republic of Cameroon,

Ms Nogueira, Executive Director of the International Coffee Organization,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you to Geneva for the already 142nd Session of the International Coffee Council.

On behalf of the Swiss Government, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all delegations representing the coffee-producing and coffee-importing – and consuming, for that matter – countries gathered here today.

It is a great honour for me to deliver these opening remarks. I'm pleased to step in at short notice, I must say, on behalf of the State Secretary who was called to parliament and is regrettably unable to join us today. But if somebody has another important obligation, it is a chance for somebody else to step in – and that's me today.

So, I can convey to you the message that Switzerland is particularly pleased to host this session. Coffee may be cultivated thousands of kilometres away from Geneva, but the decisions and partnerships that shape its future concern all of us.

Coffee connects producers and consumers, farmers and traders, businesses and governments, rural communities and global markets. It is therefore much more than a commodity. It is a global value chain – and an important illustration of the opportunities, but also the vulnerabilities, created by our economic interdependence.

The International Coffee Organization has a unique role in this context.

As the only intergovernmental organization dedicated exclusively to coffee, the ICO provides a platform where exporting and importing Members can meet on an equal footing, exchange information, develop common approaches and strengthen cooperation across the coffee value chain.

At a time when international cooperation is facing considerable pressure, institutions such as the ICO are essential. They remind us that dialogue is not an end in itself. Dialogue is a practical instrument for finding common ground, building transparency and developing solutions to shared challenges.

Excellencies, delegates and observers,

Switzerland has been a member of the International Coffee Organization since 1964. Over the years, we have sought to contribute constructively to the Organization and to international cooperation in the coffee sector.

Switzerland is also deeply connected to the international coffee economy. More than half of the world's green coffee trade is handled by Swiss-based companies making Switzerland the world's largest coffee trading hub. And we are a centre for a broad range of financial, scientific and civil-society institutions engaged with questions of sustainability and responsible business. Our country is also home to important and highly innovative actors in processing, roasting, coffee machinery – and we're going to hear of them later on in the programme.

Just think about the groundbreaking idea of capsuling coffee. That was invented in Switzerland.

Sustainability is central to the future of coffee. The resilience of the sector depends on the ability of coffee-growing communities to respond to climate change, economic volatility and changing market conditions. It also depends on responsible investment, innovation and effective cooperation between public authorities, the private sector, civil society and the producers themselves.

Switzerland is committed to contributing to these efforts:

In 2024, Switzerland launched the Swiss Sustainable Coffee Platform, bringing together stakeholders from government, the coffee industry, civil society and academia. The platform reflects our conviction that sustainable solutions are most effective when they are developed through cooperation across the entire value chain.

And Geneva is a natural place for such cooperation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Geneva has a long-standing tradition as a place where the international community comes together to address shared challenges.

The presence here of 45 international organizations, specialized agencies, governments, the private sector, academia and civil society creates a unique environment for dialogue and cooperation across a wide range of issues relevant to the coffee sector. Geneva is an uncontested global trade hub, with organizations such as the WTO, the UNCTAD or the ITC. It is also an international hub when it comes to implementing the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs as well as a platform for negotiations on new technologies. In June next year, the Geneva AI Summit promises to be a milestone for international artificial intelligence governance and multilateral cooperation.

We are therefore particularly pleased to welcome the International Coffee Council to Geneva for this in-person session.

In a spirit of transparency and partnership, allow me to reiterate here that Switzerland, with all its expertise, stands ready to welcome and host the ICO here in Geneva, should Member States wish so. Preparatory work has already been undertaken, and the required institutional, legal and logistical arrangements can be activated swiftly, should the Council consider relocating.

Opting for Geneva would mean:

- benefitting from Switzerland as a leading global hub for coffee trade;
- joining the coffee innovation ecosystem and having the opportunity to cooperate with major roasting, processing and coffee machinery companies;
- building on Switzerland's longstanding experience as sustainability frontrunner in coffee – and not only in coffee, also in other commodities;
- settling into a true coffee culture where each inhabitant consumes an average of 9 kg of coffee a year.

So, we have the experience, the ecosystem and the readiness to host the Organization and to support it in its important mandate.

For today, however, our focus is on the work before us and on ensuring a successful 142nd Session of the International Coffee Council.

Excellencies, delegates and observers,

The coffee sector is facing a period of profound transformation.

Climate change is affecting production conditions. Farmers and producing communities are confronted with economic and environmental pressures. Markets are evolving. Consumers are increasingly attentive to sustainability, traceability and quality.

None of these issues and challenges can be addressed by one country, one region or one part of the value chain alone.

They require cooperation.

They require reliable data and evidence.

They require dialogue between producing and consuming countries.

And they require partnerships that translate international discussions into tangible benefits for the people whose livelihoods depend on coffee.

This is why Switzerland attaches importance to the work of the ICO and to the successful implementation of the 2022 International Coffee Agreement.

Let this session be an occasion not only to take decisions, but also to deepen trust, identify areas of common interest and strengthen the partnerships that will be needed for the future of the coffee sector.

I would like to thank the ICO Secretariat, Executive Director Vanúsia Nogueira and her team for their cooperation in preparing this session. I also wish to thank all Member States, private sector representatives and partners for their commitment to making this meeting a success.

We hope that you will experience Geneva not only as a host city, but as a place where dialogue can lead to cooperation, and where cooperation can lead to practical solutions.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and, now, constructive exchanges. And a most pleasant stay here in Switzerland and in Geneva.

Thank you very much and, with that, I hand back to the Chair.