



Democracy, Human Rights, and International Geneva in the Pacific:

A symposium **bringing together** Swiss diplomats with Pacific academia and civil society

Switzerland's long-standing neutrality and its absence from major conflicts over the past two centuries, combined with a strong tradition of direct democracy and consensus-based governance, offer valuable insights for political development and constitutional reform worldwide.

At the same time, Switzerland plays an active role in multilateral cooperation. As a committed and reliable development partner to the Pacific region, it supports Pacific Island countries in establishing and maintaining a presence

in Geneva—home to the second-largest UN headquarters—thereby helping to strengthen Pacific voices within the United Nations and other international organizations.

On the occasion of the visit of the Swiss “Pacific” Ambassadors from Wellington, Canberra and Manila to Suva, this workshop at the University of the South Pacific will bring Swiss perspectives into dialogue with local academics, students, civil society, and regional actors.

Programme:

1. “Switzerland in the Pacific and the Value of International Geneva”, presentation by Barbara Gonzenbach, Swiss Pacific Envoy based in Canberra, followed by remarks by Luke Daunivalu, former Fijian Ambassador in Geneva.
2. “Democracy in Switzerland: Practices, Participation, and Democracy in our Foreign Policy”, presentation by Livia Meisser, Deputy Head of Mission in Manila.
3. Moderated Panel Discussion: “Democratic Integrity in Practice: The Swiss Experience and Pacific Pathways”, followed by Q&A. Panellists:
 - Viktor Vavricka, Swiss Ambassador in Wellington
 - Heike Alefsen, Regional Representative for the Pacific, OHCHR
 - Mosmi Bhim, Fiji National University
 - Vani Catanisiga, Fiji Council of Social Services

Moderated by **Lorenz Gonschor, University of the South Pacific**



Wednesday
06 May 2026
2pm-5pm



Postgraduate
Lecture Theatre
(L81), USP campus

▶ Refreshments will be provided



Online access via webex:

<https://uspfj.webex.com/uspfj/j.php?MTID=m53399b44e035f0d48efa53885ffbf119>

Meeting number: **2653 601 6734**
Meeting password: **q7mFJH7w2r9**