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President of the Confederation Karin Keller-Sutter  
Head of the Federal Department of Finance (FDF)

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Director General SRG SSR  
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**Draft bill for relief package 2027 - Consultation  
SRG statement**

Dear Madam President of the Confederation, dear Mrs. Keller-Sutter,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (hereinafter "SRG") refers to the opening of the consultation procedure from 29 January 2025 and comments as follows.

SRG limits its statement to the relief measure aiming at *waiving contribution to the international offering from SRG SSR*, according to art. 2.2 of the explanatory report on the opening of the consultation procedure.

SRG rejects the Federal Council's proposal to waive the contribution to SRG's international offering from 2027. SRG is of the view that the argumentation falls short of the mark. SRG's international offering differs from the rest of the Swiss media offering and has an impact on Switzerland's global presence and on its relations with Swiss citizens abroad. In view of the increasingly difficult global political developments, it is of great interest for a democratic constitutional state to continue to promote a high-quality, independent and strong international information service and to receive financial support from the Confederation. Otherwise the international offering will lose its legitimacy.

**Services provided by SRG's international offering**

In addition to its journalistic services for Switzerland, SRG offers an information service abroad, which is governed by a separate agreement with the Confederation. Half of this service is financed through federal funds and the other half through the SRG budget (approx. CHF 19 million each). It comprises the international ten-language internet platform SWI swissinfo.ch, the Italian-language website tvsvizzera.it and the cooperation with the international TV broadcasters TV5MONDE and 3sat. The core of the mandate is to promote closer links between the Swiss abroad and Switzerland, as well as Switzerland's presence and understanding of its concerns abroad.

**Global reach of individual components of SRG's international offering**

SRG's international offering provides economically and politically independent, high-quality reporting on Switzerland, making it a reliable source of information internationally. This is particularly important in an era of strategically targeted disinformation and "fake news". Accordingly, demand for this service is very high and increases particularly in times of crisis. SRG also

produces content specifically for its international offering in order to strengthen understanding of Switzerland.

SRG's international offering is heavily used abroad - both by Swiss living abroad and by foreigners interested in Switzerland: the SWI swissinfo.ch offering ensures Switzerland's international presence in ten languages and connects 813,000 Swiss abroad with their homeland. In 2023, the SWI swissinfo.ch online portal recorded a total of 45 million visits, compared to 63 million during the coronavirus crisis. The service is cited in 50-80 international foreign media outlets every week. Via the joint distribution platform of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), SWI swissinfo.ch achieves additional visibility on the platforms of other European public media broadcasters (22.3 million article ads; 500,000 visits per year).

TV5MONDE, the international public service of the French-speaking countries and regions (including France, Switzerland, Canada, Quebec, the Fédération Wallonie-Brussels and Monaco), reached 437 million households in more than 200 countries worldwide in 2023. RTS content, which accounts for over 10% of broadcasting time in 2024, and the online platform TV5MONDEplus, which receives over 40 million visits per month, increase Switzerland's global visibility. In this context, the daily broadcast of a Swiss daily news programme and other Swiss news magazines is a unique opportunity to provide an insight into Switzerland's priorities, challenges and agendas.

The German-language TV channel 3sat, a joint program of ARD, ZDF, ORF and SRG, reaches over 5 million people every day. The weekday culture and knowledge magazines with exclusively produced content are the most effective platforms in German-speaking countries for Swiss culture and the Swiss scientific landscape. SRG also produces documentaries specifically for 3sat on relevant social issues such as migration policy, neutrality, banking, etc. These contents support the important aim of conveying an image of Switzerland that is far removed from clichés and prejudices. SRG films on 3sat reach over one million people. The SRF programmes "10vor10" and "Rundschau" are also watched by more than one million people every month on 3sat.

### **Relevance of the international offering for the Swiss abroad**

Through SRG's international offering the approximately 813,000 Swiss abroad get connected with their homeland. The international service offers classification, orientation and overview, enables opinions to be formed and facilitates the exercise of political rights. The mandate abroad strengthens the connection between the Swiss abroad and their homeland through daily news, reports on their concerns and constructive discussions with people in Switzerland.

### **Further weakening of Switzerland as a media center by waiving the federal contribution**

The SRG's international public service offering differs fundamentally from other media offerings in numerous aspects, e.g. in terms of topics covered, contextualization, distribution channels and, in particular, languages. There is no commercial alternative because such an offer is not profitable on the market. The international media market is highly fragmented and the battle for attention has intensified in recent years with the emergence of new third-party platforms. The international audience is very heterogeneous and cannot be sold as a customer segment on the Swiss market.

The same applies to cooperation with the international TV broadcasters TV5MONDE and 3sat. It is not clear which comparable channels provide an equal Swiss cultural and information offering for an international audience. It can be assumed that halving the international offering would not be compensated for by private providers.

## **International visibility for Swiss cultural production and the Swiss economy**

SRG's international offering enables the production and distribution of a wide range of cultural content, films and documentaries that convey a picture of Switzerland's cultural and linguistic diversity to an international audience. This helps to positively shape Switzerland's international image and correct misunderstandings and clichés about Switzerland. In the cultural sector in particular (museums, theater, concerts, etc.), Swiss institutions are given an international platform thanks to SRG's international offering. The distribution of Swiss works on international channels increases the reach and thus also the commercial income (rights) of the domestic audiovisual industry. The offerings also contribute to the representation of Swiss linguistic minorities abroad (in particular Tvsvizzera.it for Italian and TV5MONDE for French-speaking Switzerland).

Abolishing the federal contribution to the international information offering would reduce Switzerland's international visibility and also its economic opportunities. For Switzerland, which is strongly networked in the world and generates a large part of its overall economic value abroad (employment, prosperity), an independent and therefore credible media presence is crucial in order to communicate with the world.

## **Financial participation of the Confederation in SRG's international offering**

The Confederation's participation in the financing of SRG's international offering is enshrined in art. 28 RTVA. The 2003 dispatch on the total revision of the RTVA emphasizes that neither exclusive financing via fees nor commercial fundraising is possible, as the international offering is strongly influenced by foreign policy concerns. During the 2005 parliamentary debates on this provision, Parliament (as well as the Federal Council) agreed that the Confederation must contribute to the financing of SRG's international offering. Incidentally, this is also in line with international practice: journalistic offerings with a similar purpose to SRG's international offering are usually even fully financed by the state.

From the SRG's point of view, therefore, financing the SRG's international offering exclusively without federal subsidy will not be an option in future either. It must also be borne in mind that SRG will have to cut its budget considerably in the coming years and will review its offerings as part of a company-wide strategy process.

## **Summary and conclusion**

SRG's international offering is a specific public service offering. Without federal subsidy, the foreign mandate would lose its legitimacy. Alternative, commercially oriented media would not be able to compensate for this service.

1. The SRG's international service enables the 813,000 Swiss abroad to form an opinion and makes it easier for them to exercise their political rights in votes and elections.
2. Halving the international offering would weaken Switzerland's media position and jeopardize an established, high-quality media offering. It would have a negative impact on journalism in Switzerland and beyond.
3. Switzerland would lose its power of interpretation in international reporting on its own country: foreign coverage makes an important contribution to the global perception of our country and Swiss values such as democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

4. Halving the number of foreign offerings would significantly reduce the international visibility of Swiss cultural production. These offerings are also important for the representation of Swiss languages abroad.
5. With its international offering, SRG fulfils a task that the Confederation is not permitted to take on itself due to the independence of radio and television. Federal financing by means of subsidies is central to this.

In view of the above, SRG SSR rejects the Federal Council's proposal to waive the federal subsidy for the international offering from 2027.

We would like to thank you, Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, for your attention and for assessing and considering our concerns.

Kind regards,

Jean-Michel Cina  
Chairman of the SRG Board

Susanne Wille  
Director General