

# Geneva Policy Outlook

## Strategic and Operational Framework, 2023-2026

Prepared by the Geneva Graduate Institute

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### Introduction

**The Geneva Policy Outlook is an integrated initiative to shape and accelerate the adaptation of International Geneva as a global hub in a rapidly changing world.** By combining community building and strategic knowledge management, it drives critical reflections on pathways for change and nurtures coalition building around key issues or specific negotiations. This document sets out the **strategic and operational framework of the Geneva Policy Outlook for the four-year period from 2023 to 2026.**

This proposal can build on the **achievements of the pilot phase** of the Geneva Policy Outlook in 2022. Six strategic gatherings nurtured a community of about 50 senior policy makers and thinkers from International Geneva and beyond, and a new digital publication – the [Geneva Policy Outlook 2023](#) – featured 18 thinking pieces on issue to watch this year and on key negotiations in English, French and German. These strategic gatherings and publications have delivered a **proof of concept** about how this initiative places its finger on the pulse of Geneva’s global policy space and generates and shares insights on upcoming strategic and operational trends relevant for professionals working on global affairs in Geneva and beyond. This is why the current proposal suggests a multi-year commitment to assure a foundation to establish the Geneva Policy Outlook as an annual flagship publication over the next 4 years.

The *Geneva Policy Outlook* is an initiative of the Geneva Graduate Institute in partnership with the Republic and State of Geneva, the City of Geneva, and the *Fondation pour Genève*.

### 1. Strategic context

**The Geneva Policy Outlook recognizes a sense of urgency to adapt Geneva as a global hub.** The war in Ukraine has rattled the foundations of the multilateral order; climate impact is becoming ever more real and has overwhelmed many authorities and societies; new technologies and cyber space will shape future systemic risks; and many political constituencies organize transnationally in many different ways and are shaping more hybrid forms of interaction and organization. At the same time ‘old’ challenges of nuclear weapons, systemic exclusion, environmental degradation and poverty, remain as relevant as ever. The confluence of all of these factors result in an era of radical uncertainty.

**In the face of this strategic outlook, Geneva requires an invigoration of its policy spaces.** Geneva has many strategic spaces focused on specific themes – from human rights to public health to disarmament, and many more – including formal negotiations spaces or informal

platforms for exchange.<sup>1</sup> However, an ever more complex world requires much stronger crosscutting linkages. Given Geneva's actor and issue density, it is well positioned as a global hub to facilitate such linkages, especially focused on shaping multilateral and multi-stakeholder negotiations and problem solving in the face of time pressures to deliver results faster. The Geneva Policy Outlook focuses, therefore, on community building and analysis at the strategic level – which means at a level above any particular thematic silo.

**Historically, Geneva has developed because it was able to adapt to changing worlds in its 150 year-long history as a global hub.** A sketch of this history sees humanitarianism develop in response to the horrors of warfare in the 19th century. Likewise, Geneva saw the League of Nations develop and then the United Nations system – as a means to uphold a rule-based order between states. After the Cold War, Geneva became the capital of private diplomacy and its practice of discreet dialogue and negotiation to remove specific political obstacles to peace.

**Today, the world is living another era of massive systemic change, and the need to adapt becomes more urgent.** Federal, cantonal and municipal authorities clearly understand the need to act, despite the fact that the representation in International Geneva is generally positive.<sup>2</sup> Switzerland's Host State Dispatch 2020-2023 recognised the need to complement the traditional focus on 'hardware' – buildings and infrastructure – with new focus on the 'software' emphasizing "the intellectual and immaterial potential of International Geneva by breaking silo thinking and making better use of the city's special wealth - the unique concentration of international institutions in such a small territory".<sup>3</sup> **This 'software' represents a source of entrepreneurial energy to shape Geneva's future, and this is what frames the operations environments of the Geneva Policy Outlook.**

## 2. Strategic framework

In the face of this strategic landscape, **the Geneva Policy Outlook has the purpose to shape and accelerate the adaptation of International Geneva as a global hub in a rapidly changing world.** As an initiative, it focuses on four overarching questions that guide all its activities:

- **What is going on?** The Geneva Policy Outlook gives us a chance to have an overview of all significant initiatives within all sectors of International Geneva. This overview is a prerequisite if we want to be able to show what is significant, what is not – and for whom – what are the main challenges ahead, where are the potential synergies, where are the redundancies?
- **How does the world change?** For whom does it change? And what factors or actors shape it?
- **What can be done?** What concrete actions are necessary to respond to change? What timing speed and scale is necessary to design realistic responses? What partnerships are needed?
- **What is the role of Geneva?** How should International Geneva adapt to change? What can it contribute to understanding change and responding to action needs?

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<sup>1</sup> The Geneva Graduate Institute structures its own engagement in international Geneva along a 'long list' of 23 different issue areas.

<sup>2</sup> See data on formal representations at <https://www.geneve-int.ch/facts-figures>.

<sup>3</sup> Swiss Confederation (2019) *Botschaft zu den Massnahmen zur Stärkung der Rolle der Schweiz als Gaststaat 2020-2023* Bern: Swiss Confederation, p.2336.

In order to deliver on its purpose, the Geneva Policy Outlook maintains activities to keep the finger on the pulse on Geneva’s policy space and upcoming global trends and issues, and to help better understand dynamics of multilateral negotiations or institutional reform processes. These activities include:

- **Community building of senior policy makers and thinkers** from International Geneva and other global hubs to identify upcoming issues;
- **Strategic convening**, including activities such as breakfast, lunch or dinner meetings featuring speakers from Geneva or other global hubs on key emerging global trends or issues; and
- **Publications** that feature key issues to watch and analysis on key negotiations and reform processes happening in Geneva, as well as smaller publications bursts on specific topics distributed over the year – all publicised online at [www.genevapolicyoutlook.ch](http://www.genevapolicyoutlook.ch).

These three activities constitute a **knowledge management cycle** that distils key observations from events to feed the planning of the GPO publications and further discussions and actions by the community.

### 3. Overview of activities and outputs 2023-2026

Activities will be advanced through an annual management cycle from March to February that include strategic convening and publication outputs, as described in the strategic framework above and detailed in the section 4. Table 1 provides an overview of activities and outputs from 2023 to 2026. In terms of management activities, the Geneva Policy Outlook emphasises the co-creation spirit of this initiative. This is why representatives from the partners are coming together three times a year to stake stock of activities and to share potential opportunities for synergies.

Table 1: Overview of activities and outputs 2023-2026

	2023	2024	2025	2026
<b>1. Community building</b>				
Senior policy makers and thinkers from Geneva	50	75	75	100
Global friends group	10	15	20	25
<b>2. Strategic convening</b>				
Breakfasts	6	6	6	6
Lunches	5	5	5	5
Dinners	3	3	3	3
Launch events (Geneva, Bern and Davos)	3	3	3	3
<b>3. Publications</b>				
Geneva Policy Outlook (every January, 15-18 articles in EN, FR, DE)	GPO24	GPO25	GPO26	GPO27
Editorial (in EN, FR, DE)	1	1	1	1
<b>4. Management</b>				
Partner meetings (Spring, Summer, Winter)	3	3	3	3
Team meetings (bi-weekly)	25	25	25	25