



Thomas Zeltner

Senior Fellow, Global Health Centre

Position at the Institute

Chairperson of the Advisory Board

Profile

Thomas Zeltner, former Secretary of Health of Switzerland and Director-General of the Swiss National Health Authority (1991-2009), has a long history as an innovative and progressive leader in public health.

He currently serves as Special Envoy of the World Health Organization (WHO) on WHO's engagement with non-States actors. In this capacity he advises the Director General of WHO Margaret Chan in critical areas of the current reform of this UN agency (how to cooperate with NGO's, philanthropic organizations, academia and the private sector without compromising WHO's integrity; how to better align WHO's priorities with the resources available to finance them).

He is a member of the board of Interacademy Medical Panel (iamp) and of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. Since 1992, he has been Professor of Public Health at the University of Berne and is a Visiting Scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health (Boston).

He is Co-Founder of the Global Patient Safety Forum, member of Advisory Board of the European Patient Safety Foundation and Assistant Editor of the Journal of Patient Safety. He is also member of the Global Agenda Council on Digital Health of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

As Secretary of State for Health, Zeltner regularly represented Switzerland at the World Health Assemblies (1991-2009). He was a member and Vice-President of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization (1999-2002) and chaired many committees, such as the open ended intergovernmental group to review the working methods of the Executive Board (2001-03) and the committee on multinational tobacco companies and their attempt to undermine tobacco control activities of the World Health Organization (2000). He was instrumental in establishing and implementing a common Health Foreign Policy between the Swiss Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Health (2006).

As Director-General of the Federal Office of Public Health of Switzerland he was a key actor in Swiss health policy. He has presided over changes to transform the regulated market model of the Swiss health care sector into a more value and consumer driven health care system. The Swiss model of health care, which guarantees access to a comprehensive benefit package to all residents, is gaining increased international interest and attention.

Thomas Zeltner is born in Bern (Switzerland) in 1947. He graduated with an MD and a Master's degree in Law from the University of Bern. He is a 2010 Fellow of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative.