

# Switzerland: saving the climate or the bank? Their urgency and ours

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**“If the planet was a bank, it would have been saved a long time ago.” This slogan of the climate strike takes on its full meaning after the announcements of the Federal Council and the Swiss National Bank (SNB) to release 209 billion to save Crédit Suisse (CS) and ensure its purchase by UBS.**

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When it comes to Crédit Suisse, and not the future of humanity, there are suddenly extraordinary meetings of the Federal Council every day, special broadcasts every evening and a flexible use of laws and billions. That is the scandal. For years, CS has pursued profit at all costs, leading to corruption scandals, human rights abuses and the worsening climate crisis. Today, CS is being saved with public money. Or to put it more clearly: privatization of profits, socialization of losses.

## Crédit Suisse’s repeated scandals

CS has been in structural crisis for a long time because of the pursuit of profit at all costs, short-termism and lack of regulation. Over the past decade, scandals have followed one after the other. For the exploitation of a gigantic gas field, the bank plunged Mozambique into a public debt crisis. The hosting by CS of funds from disreputable clients, including dictators, has been confirmed by the “Swiss Secrets” investigation. CS and its major Saudi and Qatari shareholders, who today refuse to absorb the losses, have massively supported fracking, with catastrophic consequences around the world.

The crisis of CS demonstrates the functioning of the capitalist system, which saves banks rather than controlling them to ensure the welfare of the population. The only important parameter is the confidence of the markets, so as to continue making profits. And to reassure them, it is necessary to act quickly (before the opening of the stock exchanges on Monday morning!), which makes it impossible to exercise democracy, which takes time. The agreements reached during this crisis are not transparent. It is difficult to know their conditions, while the Swiss population becomes the guarantor of the risks generated by the takeover of CS.

## Crédit Suisse saved overnight... and with multi-billion dollars

Social injustice is clearly evident in this system where it is possible to save a bank, but impossible to finance the minimum old-age pension (AHV) without increasing the retirement age for women (from

64 to 65 on September 25 last year). So yes, when we know that the Swiss National Bank can lend 50 billion Swiss francs to CS overnight and that Switzerland is unable to find \$13 billion per year to finance carbon neutrality in 2050, we can find that staggering.

However, transitional solutions to improve this system exist. Lending conditions must be fully transparent and any assistance from the SNB and the Confederation must be conditional on socially just and climate-sustainable guidelines. In the medium term, the best way to effectively regulate private financial actors would be to abolish banking secrecy, as well as the many tax privileges granted to individuals and companies.

I am profoundly, from the bottom of my heart, disgusted with this system. The government should work to democratize banks like UBS by placing them under the control of public authorities, employees and citizens rather than saving Crédit Suisse with impunity.

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**P.S.**

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