

**Beijing+25 Regional Review Meeting for the UNECE Region  
(Geneva, 29-30 October 2019)**

**Talking points for the opening address by the Co-chairperson**

**Ms. Pascale Baeriswyl, State Secretary, Federal Department of  
Foreign Affairs, Switzerland,**

Excellencies, Executive Secretary, distinguished delegates,  
ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to all of you!

- It is my great pleasure and honour to co-chair this important review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the UNECE region.
- The Fourth World Conference in Beijing in 1995 adopted one of the most impressive blueprints for advancing women's rights. Freedom from all forms of violence; freedom from sexual exploitation, economic rights; access to sexual and reproductive health, justice and peace for all; and equal participation in politics and decision-making are among the key areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action.

- We have made a great amount of progress in the last 25 years, but no country can claim that gender equality has been fully achieved. While women's living conditions are as diverse as our region, they face the same key challenges related to gender equality: Women in the UNECE region continue to be employed at lower rates than men, especially when with small children, suffer from occupational segregation and a persistent gender pay gap, do more domestic and care work than men and remain under-represented in leadership positions in the economy, politics and government, media and culture – to name just a few. And violence against women and girls, unfortunately, continues to exist in all countries and segments of society, often to a very large extent.
- Addressing these challenges is not an easy task. It will require the political will and the joint efforts of all states and stakeholders. We need to better design and implement effective economic and social policies to close existing and emerging gender gaps in the labour market and in entrepreneurship. We need to engage the public and private sectors to ensure equal opportunities for women and men of all ages, including equal pay for work of equal value. We need to address the underlying causes of violence against women and the omnipresent gender

stereotypes. We need to invest in prevention measures of this harmful worldwide phenomena of violence against women.

- Switzerland has different instruments that have proven effective in fighting pay discrimination: These are the self-test tool Logib, which companies with at least 100 employees have to apply to find out whether they meet equal pay requirements; we also conduct controls on equal pay in public procurement and we have put in place a charter for equal pay in the public sector. I am proud that we increased women's representation in our National Council in the recent elections about 10% resulting in a proportion of 42%.
- Switzerland is also strongly committed to fight all forms of violence against women. It not only causes great human suffering and lifelong health problems for survivors, but also results in high costs for society as a whole.
- In 2018 we have ratified the Istanbul Convention with the aim to intensify our efforts against this scourge.

- Gender Equality and Women's Rights also remain a priority in Switzerland's foreign policy. We incorporate this issue in both our bilateral and multilateral work.
- The Beijing Declaration famously stated and as it is printed in billions of T-shirt worldwide, women's rights are human rights. The respect and promotion of those are undoubtedly fundamental in order to build a sustainable, peaceful and inclusive world.
- But women's rights are also a development issue: It is very crucial that we have not only a stand-alone gender equality goal but also many women's rights-related targets in other goals in the 2030 Agenda. And let me be very clear on this: If we don't achieve goal 5, no other goal will be achieved by 2030.
- Over the next two days, we will have the opportunity to take stock and exchange views and practices on how to address all the mentioned and still existing challenges: How to end violence against women, how to ensure that education is enabling women and girls to meet the demands of the labour market, (including those of the digital transformation); how to find the financial resources for gender equality measures in a world and time of limited resources.

- Gender equality, is a significant accelerator to transform the lives of women and men worldwide. Our region is no exception, and I invite you all to share your experiences and views on the various factors, from new partnerships to shifts in mentality, attitudes and behaviours, that can prompt the desired sustainable transformation.
- Now, I would like to give you some information about the organization and procedures of the forthcoming two days.
- The Regional Review Meeting will conduct most of its work in an interactive way in the form of panel discussions. The detailed provisional programme of the meeting with the composition of all panels is available on the meeting website.
- Brief presentations from panellists at each of the sessions will aim at starting a broad interactive discussion within the framework of the topics of each session.
- Reading out prepared statements is strongly discouraged. All interventions from the floor should be brief and concise. Longer statements on the topics of the meeting can be

forwarded to the secretariat who will post them on the meeting website.

- Side events are being organized in the mornings and during lunch time on both days of the meeting. Information about these side events is available on the meeting website. Due to the current liquidity crisis of the United Nations, side events taking place in the mornings unfortunately had to be shortened as no meetings are serviced in the Palais des Nations before 9 a.m.
- Today at 18h30, right after the end of the first day, a reception is hosted by Switzerland in the building of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) across the Place des Nations. The venue had to be moved also due to the UN's liquidity crisis, which currently does not allow receptions to be held in the Palais in the evening. As a result, the number of participants at the reception has to be limited, and participation is therefore upon invitation only.
- To conclude, I wish us all courage and optimism for this continuous work, interesting and insightful discussions along these two days and a very successful conference.
- Thank you