



Bern, 3 October 2022

Statement by the Swiss Federal Commission for Women's Issues FCWI to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Concerning Switzerland's sixth state report to the Committee

On the occasion of the 83rd session of the CEDAW Committee to be held in Geneva (10 – 28 October 2022)

Oral Statement by Mr. Christian Bruchez, Vice-President of the FCWI

Distinguished Ms. Chairperson, Distinguished members of the Committee,

We are honoured to be able to present the statement of the FCWI and to share with you some current reflections regarding the implementation of CEDAW in Switzerland. We would like to thank you for making this meeting possible. We highly appreciate the Committee's persistent work, which strongly supports our activities in Switzerland.

We would like to draw your attention to **3 specific issues**. In our written statement you will find more detailed information and some additional issues.

1 Providing sufficient financial resources for a national human rights institution (NHRI)

To date, Switzerland has no national human rights institution which complies with the Paris Principles. A temporary pilot project named the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights (SCHR) ended its activities in 2022 after a 10-year period. According to a parliamentary decision, an NHRI should finally be created over the course of 2023. However, the scarce financial resources earmarked for this institution are not at all sufficient to fulfil the mandate and the Paris Principles. Yet adequate funding is crucial and should be self-evident for Switzerland as a country which places great emphasis on human rights on an international scale.

The FCWI's demands:

The financial resources intended for the NHRI must be increased significantly so that they do justice to the fundamental importance of this institution and enable it to address the issue of gender equality as one of its priorities.

2 Shaping digitalisation in a gender-equitable way

The State Report lacks information on the gender-specific impact of ongoing digitalisation. This issue is also overlooked in the Federal Council's "Digital Switzerland" and "Equality 2030" strategies.

The FCWI focuses on gender-equitable digitalisation in the current legislation. In doing so, both the negative and positive effects must be taken into account: it is crucial to prevent technological change from exacerbating existing inequalities; instead we must strive to deliberately seize digital opportunities to reduce inequalities.

The first major achievements of our commitment are already visible: in September 2022, our Commission joined the advisory board of the working group to further develop the "Digital Switzerland" strategy, and a motion calling for gender targets in the digitalisation strategy was submitted to the Parliament. The discussion in the Second Chamber is still pending. We now need commitments, since women must be able to participate equally in shaping digital change.

The FCWI's demands:

- Regulations which use algorithms and artificial intelligence to ensure that they have no discriminatory effects.
- Use digitalisation to promote a balance between a career and family life. The positive impact of new ways of working (e.g. remote working) should be promoted and the negative impact prevented (e.g. socially securing platform economies).
- Increase the proportion of women in digital infrastructure professions to 50% by 2030.

3 Gender-specific effects of the Covid-19 pandemic

Switzerland generally coped well with the Covid-19 crisis thanks to numerous government measures. However, some lessons remain to be learned from a gender perspective. After all, the measures – and this goes for both the restrictions and the support measures – affected men and women differently. The FCWI examined this in more detail in a study focusing on gainful employment. This study revealed that Covid measures accentuated the existing inequalities between women and men. School and daycare closures affected mothers more than fathers in that they reduced the amount they worked and played a more active role in childcare. The obligation to work from home often intensified work-family balance conflicts. It is striking that people in socially weaker positions were affected the most. For example, low-wage earners (2/3 of whom are women) often suffered drops in income; employees in private households were not eligible for state aid, and micro-enterprises operating in typically female sectors benefited less from support measures than larger companies. Lessons must be learned from this in view of future crises.

The FCWI's demands:

- Crisis measures must be designed in a gender-equitable way by involving gender experts right from the start.
- Publicly funded childcare facilities must be expanded and kept running during crises.
- Gender-specific data must be collected and analysed systematically (some of this data was missing for the study).
- Existing inequalities and cases of discrimination of women in the workplace must be redressed in “good times”. After all, greater equality makes society more resilient overall.

We thank you for your attention. Please feel free to ask any questions you like.