



Bern, 31 October 2016

## **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 combined fourth/fifth state report to the Committee**

In occasion of the 65<sup>th</sup> session of the CEDAW Committee to be held in Geneva (24 Oct – 18 Nov 2016)

#### **Oral Statement by Mr. Pierre-André Wagner, Vice-President of the FCWI, and Ms. Claudia Weilenmann, Secretariat 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 **5 specific issues**. In our written statement you will find more detailed information and some additional issues.

#### **1. Political participation / Media presence of female candidates prior to elections**

Even after the last federal elections held in October 2015, women are still underrepresented in parliament. As we all know, media presence is an important factor for electoral success. Two weeks ago, we published a new study which analyses how often and on what topics candidates of both sexes expressed themselves, and how often they were mentioned in the media in the last 4 weeks of the election campaign.

The results show a mixed picture, with both progress and stagnation. On the positive side, the analysed Swiss media practically no longer use gender stereotypes for the presentation of candidates. This is in contrast with the findings of previous studies. Some role-specific tendencies imply though that the old patterns have not been fully overcome. On the negative side, however, in 2015, female candidates were still clearly underrepresented both in print and electronic media across all linguistic regions. Although their chances of being elected have increased over the past years, their media presence is stagnating at just below 25 %. This means a discrepancy of about 10 % compared to female candidates' share on electoral lists, which is 35%.

<i>The FCWI demands</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>measures to increase the number of women in politics, in particular by promoting more balanced media reporting and better representation on party lists</li> </ul>

## **2. Reconciling work and family life / Paid parental leave**

The conditions for combining work and family life in Switzerland are unsatisfactory. Paid parental leave – meaning a leave in addition to maternity leave and not only for fathers, but for both parents – is not yet regulated in law. An improvement is not in sight; only in April of this year, parliament even refused a paid father's leave of two weeks. A parliamentary initiative calling for 14 weeks of paid parental leave has been rejected by the preparing commission, it is though still pending in the plenary session of parliament. We are convinced that a progressive model of parental leave will help to end role-stereotyping in the labour market and in families. Therefore, in addition to the 14-week maternity leave awarded right after childbirth,

<i>The FCWI demands:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>legislation for paid parental leave of at least 24 weeks, a fair proportion of which must be reserved for the father</li> </ul>

## **3. Employment / Management positions in business**

The FCWI notes that all efforts to move companies to increase the share of women on their boards of directors and management bodies on a voluntary basis have remained unsuccessful. Switzerland is below the European average in terms of the number of women in management positions. The FCWI therefore requests that, in the forthcoming modernisation of company law, gender quotas in the private sector become compulsory.

<i>The FCWI demands:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>legislation with effective control mechanisms and sanctions that can be applied when target quotas are not met</li> </ul>

#### **4. Social security / Discrimination in the invalidity assessment for part-time employees**

Part-time employees suffer huge disadvantages when invalidity insurance is assessed. Those affected are almost exclusively women. Until now, the FCWI has unsuccessfully campaigned for the necessary legislative measures. The Swiss Government claimed that addressing this discrimination would cost CHF 35-40 million, which was too expensive in times of tight budgets. Although it has announced amendments to the next legislative revision, the FCWI insists on the prompt introduction of more concrete measures.

<i>The FCWI demands:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• legal measures to eliminate discrimination against part-time employees – principally women – in invalidity insurance</li></ul>



#### **5. Marriage and family life / Sharing of income deficit in the event of separation or divorce**

In the new provisions, parliament has neither set a minimum level of child maintenance nor tackled the issue of income deficit following separation or divorce. This matter still needs to be addressed urgently. In 2008, the Swiss Federal Supreme Court confirmed the need for a non-discriminatory solution. After a separation or divorce, it is usually the woman and mother who will be the maintenance-creditor and therefore bears the entire deficit. She has to ask for social assistance, if there is not enough income for two households. Primarily responsible for child-care and unpaid care work, women's earnings are usually lower than men's and precarious situations more likely. The FCWI does not share the government's viewpoint that the legislative coordination of maintenance contributions pertains to the competence of the cantons.

<i>The FCWI demands:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a gender-equitable regulation of the economic consequences of separation or divorce in terms of maintenance and child support, in particular that any income deficit should be borne by both partners</li><li>• the reconsideration of a minimum level of child maintenance</li><li>• the partial revision of child maintenance law in respect of the above two points</li></ul>



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