



Check against delivery

“OSCE Gender Equality Review Conference”

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the OSCE gender action plan
10-11 July 2014, Neuer Saal, Hofburg, Vienna

Address by Ambassador Michael Gerber

1. Introductory remarks

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues.

On behalf of the Swiss Chairmanship and of Mr Didier Burkhalter, Chairperson-in-Office, and at the same time Swiss president and Foreign Minister, I am honoured to welcome you all in Vienna for the first Gender Equality Review Conference of the OSCE.

First of all, allow me to quickly introduce myself: I am Michael Gerber, I am Switzerland's Special Envoy for Global Sustainable Development, which currently means that I represent Switzerland in the negotiations on the so-called “Post-2015 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

2. OSCE/ gender

As you know, **2014** marks the **10th anniversary of the OSCE gender action plan** and it is a unique opportunity for country representatives, OSCE structures and cooperation partners (actually all of us!) to discuss the **progress achieved during the last 10 years**, as well as what remains to be done in the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

In the **joint work plan** for our consecutive Chairmanships 2014-2015, we, **Switzerland and Serbia**, have expressed our strong commitment to work on i) enhancing gender mainstreaming and ii) the implementation of all gender-related commitments. Together with the institu-

tions, we have embarked in a process of reflection since the beginning of the year on two topics:

- 1) how to improve the **implementation of the existing commitments** 10 year after the adoption of the Gender Action plan
- 2) how to better **mainstream gender in the organization** so that there is an impact on policies and programmes that advance gender equality.

This conference shall actively contribute to this process. We expect **concrete outcomes** that will enable the OSCE participating States and OSCE institutions to enhance their efforts and records in terms of achieving gender equality.

1) Focusing on implementation of OSCE commitments and 2) strengthening the dialogue with civil society, are both **Swiss OSCE chairmanship priorities**. I thank you, all the participants from the 57 participating States and the representatives of the civil society that have responded positively to our invitation and are here with us today and tomorrow to **take stock of our progress** in gender equality since 2004, to discuss the **challenges** and to plan the **future** to better advance gender equality.

3. Switzerland's engagement in women's rights

Please let me seize this opportunity to say few words about **Switzerland's commitment** on gender equality and women's rights.

Gender equality and women's rights are a **priority** in Switzerland's foreign policy, including development cooperation, because we are convinced that persistent **gender inequalities and discrimination of women and girls** are not only a **human rights violation** but also a major **obstacle to sustainable development and economic growth**.

At the multilateral level, Switzerland engages and negotiates gender equality and women's rights in various **UN bodies** in Geneva, New York, Geneva as well as here in Vienna. We are also a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

At the bilateral level, gender equality and women's rights are a constant topic in **human rights dialogues and political consultations** between Switzerland and other States. The **Swiss Development Cooperation** has for many years been working with and financially contributing to UN Agencies and non-governmental organizations and projects in the area of women's rights and gender equality in various countries. Moreover, gender equality is a **cross-cutting issue** in all our development activities.

4. Gender Equality in post-2015

Allow me to refer again to the **Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda**. With this agenda the international community currently works on the definition of a new global framework for sustainable development – striving for real **transformation** and a real **paradigm change** in international cooperation. What is it all about?

i) **Global goals** are being defined which integrate all three dimensions of Sustainable Development (Environment, social and economic development) in a balanced way.

ii) **Goals will be universal**, meaning all countries shall contribute to their achievement.

This is in fact a paradigm change compared to **Millennium Development Goals** which mainly focussed on social development in poor contexts, and which were defined by donor countries for recipient countries.

Switzerland strongly advocates a **stand-alone goal** on Gender Equality and the empowerment of women and girls in this new framework.

And, since Gender Equality is a cross-cutting issue, it shall at the same time be reflected in **specific targets in all other goals**.

MDG 3 on gender equality gave already great visibility to women's rights and some positive steps have been taken in the right direction. However, this MDG was much **too narrow** and many important issues were missing such as: i) multiple forms of discrimination, ii) gender based violence, iii) unpaid care work, iv) early marriage, v) female genital mutilation, vi) sexual violence against women in conflict, or vii) women's full and equal participation and leadership.

Therefore Switzerland actively promotes the **integration of all these important issues** in this new agenda post-2015.

5. Women peace and security

As to the **Women, Peace and Security Agenda**, which is also a topic in this conference, Switzerland has developed a national action plan for the implementation of **Security Council Resolution 1325**. At the national level, Switzerland **denounces all forms of violence** such as domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, all of which occur also in Switzerland. Our parliament has put into force in 2012 **two criminal standards** that recognize female genital mutilation and forced marriage as crimes. Our government launched a 5-year programme to curb the phenomenon of forced marriages.

6. Conclusion – what remains to be done

I am convinced that Switzerland, together with other member states and civil society organisations, needs to **continue its engagement** in the field of women's human rights in our long and stony way to a gender-equal world. I consider this conference as one little step and one important contribution to make this **vision** come true.

I thank you all very much for being **part of this common effort**.

And I now wish you all very fruitful and constructive deliberations and a successful conference.