

# **SWITZERLAND**

Bern, 14 May 2004

## **Beijing + 10: Responses of Switzerland to the Questionnaire to Governments on Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly (2000)**

Ladies, gentlemen,

We submit herewith the responses of Switzerland to the questionnaire that you sent us.

In order not to repeat the information already contained in other documents, we would draw your attention to the attached annexes:

- Annex 1: National Plan of Action for "Equality between Women and Men", 1999.
- Annex 2: Report of the Federal Council on implementation of the Swiss Plan of Action for "Equality between Women and Men" (2002), which contains a two-page summary.
- Annex 3: Third statistical report, "Towards equality?", on the status of women and men in Switzerland (2003).
- Annex 4/4 bis: "Towards equality?" brochures 1998/2004.

Switzerland submitted its first and second reports on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in January 2003. The bulk of the data contained therein is still current, and we would refer you to those reports. The responses to the questionnaire provide a brief summary of the principal accomplishments, plus information supplementary to what you already have. We are of course at your disposal for any further information.

With warmest regards,

Federal Office for Gender Equality

Claudia Bloem

Annexes cited.

## **Responses to the Questionnaire**

### **Part One**

#### **Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment**

The last 10 years have seen a clear improvement in the normative and structural framework for achieving equality between the sexes in Switzerland. The political determination of Switzerland to implement the measures called for in the Beijing Platform for Action and those of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly can be seen in the adoption of a national plan of action, legislative reforms, the ratification of international human rights instruments, the reinforcement of institutional mechanisms, the introduction of specialized units, financial assistance, public campaigns, regular statistical reports, and the preparation of gender mainstreaming methodologies.

After progressing during the 1990s, the situation of women in Switzerland seems to have been marking time in the new millennium. While formal equality has been virtually achieved, challenges remain in putting that equality into practice, especially in the fields of higher education, employment, the distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work, and political participation (see annexes 4 and 4bis). Efforts to combat the social insecurity that afflicts primarily single mothers, large families, and retired women are often frustrated by the country's federal structure. The great effort made in the last decade to conduct a systematic and coordinated campaign against domestic violence has yet to show results. Finally, the notion of gender mainstreaming is not yet sufficiently understood, and practice varies widely, depending on those responsible for implementing it (see annex 2).

Developing a culture of equality is a long-term undertaking that requires changing mentalities and enlisting all the players concerned, men in particular. This effort could be seriously jeopardized by the severe budget cutbacks announced by the Confederation and several cantons, by the widely held view among the Swiss public that gender equality has already been achieved, and by the consequent falloff in political support for institutional mechanisms to promote equality.

Gender equality is also a key consideration of Switzerland's development cooperation strategy (DDC). Over the past decade numerous initiatives to promote equality between men and women have been launched in most of the countries where the DDC is active. Seizing upon these opportunities, development partners have pursued a series of strategies to incorporate the gender perspective more thoroughly into policies and programmes and to amend planning methods and procedures accordingly.

Among the achievements since 1995, we would highlight the following (see also Part Two of the questionnaire):

- Formal equality. With the exception of cantonal and communal domicile rights and the family name, legal discrimination has been progressively abolished.
- Adoption of a law on employment equity (1996).

- Ratification of CEDAW (1997): in January 2003, Switzerland submitted its first and second reports.
- Old-age and survivors' insurance: adoption of a system of individual pensions and bonuses for child upbringing and care (1997).
- Adoption of a national plan of action for "Equality between Women and Men" (1999), which has been partially implemented (see annex 2).
- Revisions to divorce law, introducing the sharing of old-age insurance rights (2000).
- Introduction at the federal level of a "Gender Health" Unit (2001).
- The decriminalization of abortion (2002)
- Introduction of "Equal Opportunities" programmes in the universities and specialized professional schools (*Hautes Ecoles*) (2000-2003/2004-2007).
- Institutionalization of the campaign to combat violence against women, with establishment of the Federal Office on Violence (2003) and the Coordination Unit to combat human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants (2003).
- On the 7 April 2004, Switzerland withdrew its reservation to article 7b of the CEDAW. That reservation referred to Swiss legislation that prohibits women from military involvement beyond self-defence.
- The Federal Council has undertaken the task of preparing a report examining the consequences that ratification of the 6 November 1999 optional protocol to the CEDAW would imply for our country. The draft report will be submitted to consultation with the cantons and with civil society during the course of 2004, and will be presented to Parliament.

### Development cooperation

Gender equality has been treated as a crosscutting theme in DDC activities since 1990. In 1993, DDC adopted its first policy in this regard. Awareness of this issue and the skills to address it have grown steadily within the DDC and its partner institutions, and gender equality now receives more attention in their approaches and instruments. In line with this trend, the new 2003 policy seeks to integrate gender issues more thoroughly into all DDC activities.

### Human rights

Swiss human rights policy attaches particular importance to defending the fundamental rights of women. In November 2002 the Federal Council provided Parliament with a detailed account of its activities to promote gender equality domestically and internationally (Report on Implementation of the Swiss Plan of Action for "Equality between Women and Men"). The DFAE (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs) has made violence against women and trafficking in girls and women a focal point of its policy and operations.

Switzerland participated in the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21<sup>st</sup> century" in New York City from 5 to 10 June 2000, where it sought to ensure that all measures adopted respected the rules of international law and the achievements of earlier world conferences (on women, population, the World Summit on Social Development). It gave particular emphasis to protecting women's reproductive rights (respect for their sexuality and access to health services, to contraceptive

methods, and to sex education), criminalization of violence against women, and measures to improve their situation at times of armed conflict. Through its generous contribution to financing the European preparatory meeting for the conference (Geneva, January 2000), it allowed women from countries in transition to share their experience and to receive political support.

At the annual sessions of the General Assembly, in the UN Human Rights Commission and in the Commission on the Status of Women, Switzerland has negotiated and supported resolutions and efforts to promote women's rights, to give them access to land and property ownership, to eliminate the many forms of violence against women, to combat trafficking in women, and to include the gender-specific approach in all UN activities. In 2003, it took a strong stand at the General Assembly for adopting a new resolution condemning domestic violence and calling for a study on the subject of violence against women.

At Switzerland's initiative, 20 female ministers of foreign affairs and female government representatives met in Geneva on 15 March 2004 to consider a common action plan for combating violence against women more effectively. A declaration was adopted at that meeting.

At the General Assembly (2003) and in the specialized agencies (High Commissioner for Refugees, International Organization for Migration), Switzerland has drawn attention to the increasing number of female migrants, a trend that will require migration policies to recognize the specific vulnerability of women (trafficking). It participated actively in drafting a letter on this matter from female ministers of foreign affairs to the UN Secretary-General.

Within the OSCE and in the context of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, Switzerland has been among the states that have made the greatest political and financial commitments to protecting the victims of human trafficking (for further details, see Chapter 9.2).

### Gender mainstreaming

The DFAE is currently reviewing present and planned programmes and projects to ensure that the gender dimension is integrated into efforts to promote peace and human rights. Policy Division IV (DP IV) established a "Gender Focal Point" in 2004, and intends to increase the proportion of women deployed in its peacekeeping missions.

Among the remaining challenges, we may mention the following priorities (see also Part Four of the Questionnaire):

#### At the national level:

- Eliminate stereotyping in selection for training and employment.
- Adopt paid maternity leave at the federal level.
- Achieve wage parity and combat poverty.
- Introduce mechanisms to promote reconciliation of family and working life at all levels for men and women.
- Increase the proportion of women in senior positions in the economy, in research, and in politics.

- Combat the trafficking of women and girls more effectively.
- Ensure that budget cuts are not made at the expense of women, particularly in employment and social insurance.
- Sensitize men to the benefits of gender equality.

#### In development cooperation:

- Increase the proportion of women in senior positions in Switzerland and in cooperation offices abroad.
- Recognize the key role of women in food security and their important contribution to family incomes in the poorest countries, and work to make this contribution more visible.
- Promote women's access to credit, and support female entrepreneurs.
- Consider women's needs in infrastructure projects such as water supply and transportation.
- Step up activities relating to FGM (female genital mutilation) and sex trafficking.
- Introduce "gender budgeting" in Switzerland and in the cooperation offices.

#### Human rights

- Involve women more closely in the civilian peace operations.
- Increase the proportion of women in the diplomatic and consular services and in peacekeeping missions.
- Step up efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly in terms of prevention, reintegration and training.

## **Part Two**

### **Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the 23rd special session of the General assembly (2000)**

#### **A. Women and poverty**

Unemployment rates are higher for women than for men (in 2003: 4.5% for women vs. 3.8% for men). Among part-time workers in 2002, 11% of women and only 2% of men were classified as "working poor" i.e. earning a monthly net income of 3000 francs or less. Single mothers and retired women are among the most vulnerable population groups. In 2002, 11.3% of women between the ages of 20 and 59 were living in poverty (i.e. below the poverty threshold established by the Swiss Conference of Social Action Institutions, CSIAS). For men, the percentage was 7.7%.

#### Broader access for women to economic resources: strategic objective A2

Promoting training for women and eliminating occupational discrimination have been key aspects of measures taken in recent years to improve women's access to economic resources (see point 2 and 6 below).

Social insurance is another issue. A major step forward was the 10th revision of the federal law on old-age and survivors' insurance in 1997. The system of pensions for married couples has been replaced by a system of individual pensions that are not dependent on civil status. Moreover, the tasks of child upbringing and care are now treated as "imputed income" for calculating pensions. The first revision to the occupational insurance law (supplementary coverage for old-age and survivors' risks) now guarantees a minimum income of 18,900 francs per year (effective 1 Jan 2005). This innovation allows low-income people, most of whom are women, to extend their social security entitlements.

Poverty reduction measures are primarily the responsibility of the cantons, and they betray great discrepancies. This is particularly true for family allowances and alimony enforcement services. Taking one canton (Ticino) as its model, the federal parliament is now considering a draft bill to introduce supplementary services for needy families.

#### Development cooperation

The DDC stresses women's participation in defining macroeconomic policies and seeks to ensure that the effects of such policies are examined from the gender perspective. It insists that health and education investments must be safeguarded, and that access to land and water (Freshwater Year!) be guaranteed. It strives to make more visible women's contribution to food security and to family incomes in the poorest countries. It promotes women's access to credit and supports female entrepreneurs. It also takes women's needs into account in planning infrastructure projects, such as water supply and transportation.

## **B Education and training of women**

Women have benefited greatly from expanded access to training over the last decade. The proportion of women who have not pursued education beyond compulsory schooling has declined from one-third in the 55-to-64 age group to one-sixth in the 25-to-34 age group. Since 1995 more women than men have obtained a secondary education certificate (*certificat de maturité*) (in 2002, 56% of such certificates went to women). The proportion of women who have completed some form of higher education has nearly doubled, from 12% to 22%. Great discrepancies persist, however, in the choice of profession or field of study.

### **Improving women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education: strategic objective B3**

Ambitious information and awareness campaigns have been launched to encourage girls and young people to diversify their occupational choices. On two occasions, in 1997 and 1999, the federal parliament voted a special appropriation to expand the number of apprenticeship training spaces, with the express objective of promoting gender equality. Those funds have given rise to regional projects targeted at young women with lower education levels and at the integration of immigrant women ([www.16plus.ch](http://www.16plus.ch)). Through the financial assistance it provides under the Equality Act, the Confederation has also supported projects to provide occupational training to young female immigrants.

At the university level, the Equal Opportunities Programme 2000/2003, with its budget of 16 million francs, has sponsored measures for the advancement of women, mentoring, and childcare facilities. Between 1996 and 2002, the percentage of women in the student body rose from 43% to 47.4%; in middle-ranking academic posts, from 26% to 45.1%; and in professorial posts, from 6% to 9.2%. On the other hand, the choice of education field is still dominated by stereotypes.

Similar programmes exist for the Specialized Professional Schools (*Hautes Ecoles Spécialisées*, HES) and the Federal Polytechnic Schools. In the case of the HES, the number of female students pursuing typically "masculine" training programmes rose from 6.5% in 1997 to 10 percent in 2003. New funding for these programmes has been earmarked for the period 2004/2007. Since 2001, the National Scientific Research Fund has abolished the age limit on fellowships for young researchers, in the hopes of encouraging more women to embrace a scientific career.

### **Development cooperation**

Equal access for women and men to education is an important element of the DDC strategy to 2010. Through its support for various institutions and partners in countries where it is active, Switzerland has helped to create greater awareness of gender and education issues, with respect both to women's and girls access to education and training, and to promoting education that takes their specific needs into account. Many of the partners that DDC chooses to support in the basic education and literacy fields make gender issues a key concern of their programmes. This is particularly true in countries where DDC programmes have a major education component (for example in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso and Chad).

## **C. Women and health**

Access to health care, information and services, increasing resources for women's health: strategic objectives C1 and C5.

In 2001, the Federal Public Health Office (OFSP) created the "Gender Health" unit. Its mandate is to implement the various strategic objectives of the national plan of action, including that of improving women's access to health care, to information and services. The Gender Health unit has one full-time position and a budget of around 220,000 francs, which is not enough for it to carry out all its tasks.

Strengthening preventive programmes, and initiatives to address sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS: strategic objectives C2 and C3

1999: RU 486/Mifegyne is made available by prescription at hospitals or medical centres. 2002: one measure in the national action plan calls for decriminalizing abortion. In July 2002, the people adopted a new regulation, known as the *régime des délais* or abortion time limits: interruption of pregnancy is permitted during the first 12 weeks, and the physician is expected to advise the patient on her various possible alternatives.

Between 1994 and 1998, the Federal Public Health Office conducted a national programme of action on "Women's Health and AIDS Prevention", involving a public awareness campaign and a practical guide on new forms of intervention.

HIV/AIDS counselling services have established a national quality assessment. A similar initiative will be developed in the field of counselling and reproductive health, since equal access to and equal provision of services is not available in every part of the country. Professional education programmes for counselling experts in family-planning and sexual education are offered in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Similar programmes are yet to be established in the other regions of the country. With regard to migrants as one important target group, there are already, and will be in future, many efforts to make information available in the migrants' respective languages, and to provide translation during medical examinations.

Switzerland still does not have paid maternity leave. A new proposal will be put to popular referendum in September 2004, calling for paid leave (80% of latest earnings) of 14 weeks for women in paid employment.

Promoting research and disseminating information: strategic objective C4

The Gender Health Unit is identifying gaps in the research, publishing information materials, and helping with networking among the various players concerned with the health of women and men. In 2003, it organized a meeting to constitute a research network on gender health, and published a study on the availability of sexual and reproductive health consultations. In 2004, the Gender Health Unit will publish a study on health costs, broken down by sex, in collaboration with the Federal Statistics Office.

## **D. Violence against women**

A study conducted in 1997 found that in Switzerland one woman in five is the victim of physical or sexual violence at the hands of her partner; two in five suffer psychological violence. A new study is about to be published. There are still no official figures on the number of victims of human trafficking in Switzerland.

### Domestic violence: strategic objectives D1/D2

One achievement of the last decade has been to undertake a coordinated effort against domestic violence, starting at the canton level, followed by the federal level. In 1997, the Swiss Conference of Female Delegates for Equality launched the first national campaign against conjugal violence. Today, most of the cantons have domestic violence programmes covering various activities, from training of medical personnel to sensitizing the immigrant population and programmes for aggressors.

The 1999 national plan of action called for establishment of a federal coordination office on violence against women. That office became operational in May 2003, with 2.5 full-time positions and an annual budget of 250,000 francs. During the past year, the office promoted networking among people concerned with domestic violence, in particular men's organizations; it commissioned studies, for example on new cantonal legislation for removing the aggressor from the conjugal home; and it organized public campaigns and published information materials.

In 2002, the cantonal justice and police authorities launched a campaign against domestic violence with a view to training the police forces and sensitizing the public, including the immigrant population. In April 2004 new criminal provisions came into force allowing for automatic prosecution of acts of conjugal violence, including rape. A civil law provision to allow civil judges to remove the aggressor from the family home and to issue other measures to protect the victim is currently under examination by the federal parliament.

All these measures have helped to sensitize public opinion and to show that the public authorities are aware of their responsibility, and that they no longer regard family violence as simply a private affair, but rather as a crime. It is still too soon to assess the impact, but we may say that there have been a growing number of police interventions, and cases are being monitored more closely.

### Trafficking in women: strategic objectives D3

Combating human trafficking, particularly in women and children, is a priority of Swiss policy. In 2001, an interdepartmental working group submitted a report on this problem and formulated a series of recommendations. As a result of that report, the Coordination Unit against the Trafficking of Persons and Smuggling of Migrants (French acronym SCOTT) was established in January 2003 within the Federal Office of Police. All the other units concerned with the problem of human trafficking at the federal and canton level are represented in that unit. The SCOTT is developing strategies and measures for prevention and suppression and for the protection of

victims. A key question that the SCOTT is currently addressing has to do with allowing trafficking victims to stay in Switzerland. Under the aegis of the SCOTT, the existing possibilities of granting refuge under Swiss law are being clarified. This question is moreover expressly addressed in the new federal law on foreigners, currently under debate in parliament.

Switzerland is a signatory to recent international conventions for combating the scourge of human trafficking, in particular the supplementary protocol to the Vienna Convention on Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. These two international instruments are in the process of ratification.

Switzerland condemns human trafficking as a grave violation of human rights. In its chapter on migration policy, the external policy report for 2000 stresses the challenge posed by human trafficking, and especially trafficking in women. In 2003, in its "Directives for external measures to prevent human trafficking and to protect its victims", the DFAE set out specific measures on which Switzerland's commitment to combating human trafficking is focused.

That commitment gives special attention to protecting victims, who are primarily women and children. The directives constitute an instrument for Swiss representatives abroad and in the coordination offices to concentrate their efforts in priority areas.

Multilaterally, Switzerland is actively engaged in the competent organizations of the United Nations, in the OSCE, in the Council of Europe, and in the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe. In operational terms, the Policy Directorate and the DDC support anti-trafficking projects abroad.

The DFAE sensitizes its diplomatic and consular personnel and its field experts to the problem of trafficking before they are posted abroad.

#### **E. Women and armed conflict**

The gender aspects of the DFAE's peacekeeping policy are guided by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on "Women, Peace and Security" of 2000. Since joining the UN, Switzerland has been a member of the informal "Group of Friends of Resolution 1325".

Switzerland contributes through various means, at both the operational and the policy level, to implementing Security Council Resolution 1325. It supports specific projects and organizations abroad that are working to protect women and children in situations of conflict and to involve women more closely in peace-building operations. In this context, mention should be made of Switzerland's commitment to respect international humanitarian law, and in particular the Geneva Convention of 1949 and its additional protocols of 1977.

Specialists appointed to the Swiss pool of experts for civilian peace operations receive ongoing training that sensitizes them to the role of women in peace-building operations.

## **F. Women and the economy**

While a steadily growing proportion of women between the ages of 15 and 64 years are economically active (74% in 2003), more than half of them are part-time workers. From 1994 to 1998, the wage gap between the sexes narrowed progressively, from 24% to 21% in the private economy and from 13% to 10% in public administration. From 1998 to 2002, however, the gap showed little change. Women still carry the major burden of domestic and family chores (averaging 31 hours per week, compared to 17 hours for men).

### Employment discrimination: strategic objective F5

An important step in combating employment discrimination was adoption of the 1996 Equality Act (LEg), which prohibits all forms of employment discrimination, including sexual harassment. To date, the Federal Tribunal has handed down 32 decisions, the greatest number dealing with pay equity, followed by sexual harassment. A number of decisions have also been rendered at the canton level, and documentation on them is being prepared for posting on the Internet. Considering the existing salary differentials, the number of cases that are reaching the courts is still low. The law is currently being evaluated, and a report is expected for 2006. A national office on sexual harassment is also planned.

### Women's economic independence: strategic objectives F1-F3

The Equality Act also establishes the legal basis for financial assistance to projects and consultation services for achieving equality in working life. The web site [www.topbox.ch](http://www.topbox.ch) gives an idea of the variety of activities supported, which range from helping women return to employment, to the reconciliation of working and family life, and the employment integration of immigrant women. Since 1996, 274 applications have been accepted. The budget earmarked for these projects rose from 1.6 million francs in 1996 to 4.15 million francs in 2003. Among those projects we may highlight the national campaign for "fair play at work" (2003), which is targeted at fathers and at businesses and encourages flexible working hours as well as part-time work. A qualitative assessment of projects supported (2000) shows that recipients are making good use of the proceeds: two-thirds of the projects could not have been mounted without federal assistance. Grants under the LEg are clearly a pillar of Swiss policy for gender equality. The number of businesses that have implemented family-friendly arrangements is growing, and employers' associations are now more aware of women's contribution to the national economy. Also noteworthy was the federal parliament's approval, in 2002, of a financial incentive to expand the availability of childcare and preschool facilities in support of efforts by the cantons, employers and private organizations. The Federal Council intends to propose renewing that incentive, together with other measures to promote reconciliation between working and family life (school hours).

### Development cooperation

Switzerland gives particular importance to the place of women in the economy, in three principal respects. The first concerns microfinance projects where women often play the driving role, and where the impact on women's lives in terms of their reproductive and productive roles is

important. Then too, at a more general level, the contextual analyses of partner countries take into account the effects of certain macroeconomic policies from a gender perspective. Privatization is a good example. Finally, it is planned to introduce "gender budgeting" as a programme planning tool.

### **G. Women in power and decision-making**

Between 1995 and 2003, the number of women in the National Council (the lower house) rose from 21.5% to 26.0%, and in the Council of States (the upper house) from 17.0% to 23.9%. A similar but much weaker trend can be seen in the cantonal parliaments, where women today hold 24.2% of the seats (22.0% in 1995). Women are also more strongly represented in the communal parliaments. During the same period, the number of women in the Federal Council showed virtually no change: one of the seven members in 1995 was a woman; two in 2000; and then one again in 2004. In the cantonal governments, the percentage of women rose from 11.4% in 1995 to 21.5% at the beginning of 2004. Five cantons are still headed by all-male governments.

#### **Equal access to and full participation in power structures: strategic objective G1**

Attempts to introduce quotas at the federal and cantonal level have been turned down by parliament or by referendum, or blocked by the courts. It is thus essentially up to the political parties to take action. We would note however that a government brochure was distributed to voters during the last elections, drawing the attention of citizens to the under-representation of women.

The media are playing an increasingly important role in the political arena. The Swiss Radio and Television Corp. and the Federal Commission on Women's Issues sponsored a study on how candidates were treated by radio and television in the run-up to the 1999 federal elections. It showed that female candidates were given less airtime, and that the imbalance was greater on TV than radio. In light of these results, the Commission prepared recommendations to the media professionals and posted a workshop to sensitize them. A new study has been commissioned to examine the space given to female candidates in the media, including the written press, for the 2003 federal elections.

Finally, the Commission on Women's Issues, in cooperation with the Swiss Council for Youth Activities, launched a mentoring project in 2000, under which more than 20 young women a year get to share the experience and know-how of a professional female politician. This project, designed to increase the proportion of women in policymaking bodies, received the "Young active citizens" award from the Council of Europe.

Since 2001, the DP IV has been supporting projects of the Gender Task Force under the Pact for Stability in South-Eastern Europe. In the fall of 2002, a project was launched to encourage networking and activism among female parliamentarians from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro. These women have thus been able to play a more targeted and effective role in the legislative assemblies, exchange views nationally and internationally, and find common solutions. The main issues have to do with female trafficking, illegal migration,

and corruption. This project is a follow-up to previous projects on empowerment and on women in politics.

## **H. Human rights of women**

Switzerland ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1997. It presented its first and second reports to the Committee in January 2003. The Committee's recommendations, which were widely distributed among the cantons, parliamentarians and NGOs, are now under discussion by the federal departments concerned. On 29 April 2004, Switzerland withdrew its reservation to article 7b, in light of the army reform that came into effect in January 2004 putting men and women on an equal footing in all functions. A report dealing with ratification of the CEDAW Protocol is now being prepared for transmission to the cantons and to all stakeholders.

### Ensuring non-discrimination: strategic objective I2

Since the constitutional article on equality of the sexes came into force in 1981, illegal discrimination has been gradually eliminated (see our CEDAW report). A formal approach to equality led parliament to suppress the few "privileges" that women enjoyed, such as lower retirement age and the prohibition on night-time and Sunday work.

Legal discrimination still persists with respect to cantonal and communal domicile and the family name, which are generally those of the husband. The federal parliament has debated this issue repeatedly in recent years but without success, and the matter is again on the agenda, on the basis of a new parliamentary intervention.

### International level

Protecting women's rights is a priority of Switzerland's foreign policy on human rights. Through the Swiss embassies, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and nongovernmental organizations in Switzerland and abroad, the DP IV monitors the situation of women closely in all countries, and takes steps to intervene in cases of severe violations of women's rights.

## **I. Women and the media**

Few steps have been taken in this area, the main one being the studies sponsored by the Federal Commission on Women's Issues (see point 7, Women in power and decision-making).

The Federal Radio and Television Act, now under review, stipulates that broadcasts must respect human dignity, they must be non-discriminatory, and they must not endanger public morals, nor trivialize or glorify violence.

## **J. The girl child**

Switzerland ratified the International Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1997 and presented its first report in 2002. It has also ratified the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2000). Since 1 April 2002, the possession of hard-core pornography, particularly that showing children, is a criminal offence.

### **The Millennium Development Goals**

Of the seven UN development goals for the millennium, practically all give a central place to the status of women. In the development field, Switzerland contributes in many ways and instances to the pursuit of these goals:

- Reducing poverty is the general objective of its cooperation.
- It attempts systematically to promote gender-balanced development and to foster women's empowerment.
- As part of this goal, it seeks to promote girls' access to education.
- Most of the health programmes it supports try to promote a comprehensive approach to sexual and reproductive health, in order to improve maternal health and to reduce infant mortality.
- Combating HIV/AIDS has also become an important theme of Swiss cooperation in the last 10 years, under a crosscutting, multisectoral policy approach.
- Switzerland is supporting several programmes to combat malaria and other tropical diseases.
- Finally, Swiss cooperation recognizes the preeminent role of women in achieving sustainable development, and it helps through numerous projects to make them active players in this field.

Switzerland participates in discussions on pursuit of the millennium goals and has joined forces with other partners in a number of initiatives worldwide. It attaches particular importance to multilateral efforts in all aspects relating to the status of women, in particular their access to credit, sexual and reproductive health, human rights, and combating violence.

In its peace and security policy, Switzerland seeks to involve women more closely in civilian peace operations, consistent with the democratic principle of equality between men and women, and the goal of achieving a lasting peace.

### **Swiss support to international organizations and funds**

As an active member of the governing boards of UN funds and programmes, and a major contributor, Switzerland supports their efforts at gender mainstreaming. It thus makes an annual contribution of about 850,000 Swiss francs to UNIFEM. It also makes annual contributions to UNICEF (United Nations Children's Emergency Fund) and to FNUAP (United Nations Population Fund), which together with UNIFEM are the three UN bodies most closely involved in this field. Switzerland also provides political and financial support to the Office of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women.



### Part three Institutional development

#### The Federal Commission for Women's Issues

In 1976, the Federal Council set up the first national institution dealing with gender equality, the Federal Commission for Women's Issues ([www.comfem.ch](http://www.comfem.ch)). This extra-parliamentary standing body is composed of men and women delegates from women's associations, trade unions and employers' organizations, and scientific circles, as well as other specialists. It analyzes the status of women in Switzerland and formulates recommendations for promoting equal opportunity between women and men. In addition to preparing guidelines, it participates in gender-equity-related projects and campaigns.

Themes that the Commission has addressed in recent years have had to do with women's participation in political and public life, questions of social policy and social insurance, and violence against women. Its current priorities include:

- Supporting the mentoring programme called " From Woman to Woman", sponsored by the Swiss Council for Youth Activities (see part two of the questionnaire).
- The campaign for the September 2004 referendum on the introduction of federal paid maternity leave.
- A study and publication on measures to combat poverty in Switzerland.
- Two studies on the representation and profile of women in the media, in the run-up to the 2003 federal elections.

The Commission has an annual budget of around 175,000 Swiss francs. Its secretariat, which employs three women staffers occupying a total of 1.7 positions, is administratively attached to the Federal Office for Gender Equality.

#### The Federal Office for Gender Equality

Established in 1988 and attached to the Federal Department of The Interior, the Federal Office for Gender Equality (BFEG) ([www.equality-office.ch](http://www.equality-office.ch)) is mandated by the Federal Council to promote equality in all walks of life and to work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination, direct or indirect. The 1995 Equality Act provides the Office with a legal basis by defining its mandate with regard, in particular, to the following tasks (article 16 LEg):

- To inform the population; to advise private individuals and the authorities.
- To undertake studies and issue recommendations addressed to the authorities and to private individuals.
- To participate, when the occasion arises, in projects of national interest.
- To participate in the drafting of rules to be enacted by the Confederation insofar as these are relevant to the attainment of equality.
- To deal with requests for financial assistance in connection with programmes and advisory services for encouraging gender equality in employment.

In pursuit of its mission, the BFEG today has 12.4 positions (7.4 in 1995), including the Federal Commission for Women's Issues and the Antiviolence Office. It has a budget of around 5.2 million Swiss francs (not counting personnel costs). By comparison with 1995, the budget has doubled. This increase is due primarily to the appropriation voted each year for financial assistance under the Equality Act.

In recent years, the BFEG has worked primarily on the following issues: equality of employment opportunities and pay; the situation of girl apprentices; equality in law; violence against women; reconciling family and working life; and gender mainstreaming. Among its current priorities are the national "Fair play at home" and "Fair play at work" campaigns ([www.fairplay-at-home.ch](http://www.fairplay-at-home.ch)), an assessment of the Equality Act, and coordinating activities to combat violence.

The Federal Equality Office has been the driving force in preparing the national plan of action for "Equality between Women and Men", which was approved by the Federal Council in 1999. A total of 287 measures have been decided, in collaboration with an interdepartmental working group. NGOs, in particular the Swiss Post-Beijing Coordination NGO ([www.postbeijing.ch](http://www.postbeijing.ch)), a group of women's organizations committed to gender equality, were also involved. This working group prepared as well a report on implementation of the national plan of action by the federal authorities, which was approved by the Federal Council at the end of 2002 (Annex 2). The Coordination NGO prepared an alternative report.

After broad consultation with the cantons and with nongovernmental organizations, the BFEG was also given responsibility for preparing the first and second reports on implementation of the CEDAW (2001). This responsibility will now be assumed by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The report on the national plan of action and the CEDAW report were submitted to parliament and discussed in October 2003. Debates resulted in a parliamentary initiative inviting the Federal Council to include in its 2004/2007 legislation programme a series of gender equality targets. In February 2004, the Federal Council adopted its 2003/2007 strategy, in which it undertook to promote women in education, to adapt its policy on occupational equality in light of the evaluation of the Equality Act, and to examine measures for reconciling family and working life, such as renewing the incentive fund for childcare facilities, and regulating school hours.

The BFEG has also sparked thinking within the Federal Government on gender mainstreaming and will shortly be publishing a brochure and a guide for the use of all staff members.

#### The Federal Coordinating Committee on Family Issues

Created in 1995, this Committee consists of research experts and representatives of organizations. It proposes family policy measures and provides opinions on draft bills that affect families. Its current priorities include preparing recommendations on antipoverty measures for families, and measures to reconcile family and working life.

#### Swiss Conference of Delegates for Gender Equality

Many cantons and several major cities have set up offices to deal with gender equality questions. Twenty-five such offices at the Confederation, canton and city level are grouped in the Swiss Conference of Delegates for Gender Equality, which supports, coordinates, designs and carries out activities of national or regional scope. In 1997 it launched the first national campaign to "Stop Spousal Violence". It is particularly committed to a project to do away with stereotypes in the vocational choices of girls and boys ([www.16plus.ch](http://www.16plus.ch)).

### Statistics

The Federal Statistics Act of 1992 gives the Federal Statistical Office (OFS) the task of providing representative information on the situation and trends of the Swiss population, the economy, society, and the environment, for use in assessing implementation of the constitutional principle of gender equality. Since 1993 the OFS has published three reports entitled "Towards Equality?", the latest of which appeared in 2003 (Annex 3). In addition, the OFS publishes and regularly updates its main gender equality indicators, both on the Internet and in the form of brochures targeted at a wide audience (1998 and 2004). The OFS works closely with the Federal Office for Gender Equality.

### The Cooperation and Development Directorate

The Directorate has a "Gender" unit within its Governance section

Capacity-building (several courses per year and involvement in programme development and monitoring) has played a key role in preparing the DDC's staff and its partners to integrate gender relations into their work. The DDC has opted for a flexible approach whereby the cooperation offices prepare their own strategies or instruments to fit the local context, while the central directorate is available for support as needed. The DDC applies its policy of promoting equality between men and women (2003) both to its bilateral and multilateral cooperation and to humanitarian aid. That policy draws upon the DDC's experience and contributes to its overall purposes.

In 2003, the DDC developed a manual for "promoting equality between men and women". In that manual, the gender perspective is treated above all as a crosscutting theme to be integrated into all stages of the planning and realization of development projects. The DDC has also developed a plan of action within the organization for implementing the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee and the national plan of action.

## **Part four** **Main challenges and actions to address them**

### General

The major challenges for coming years relate to gender mainstreaming, winning the commitment of senior staff (and especially men) in favour of equality, and developing feasible institutional mechanisms. The planned federal, cantonal and communal budgetary restraints may pose obstacles to meeting the challenges.

### Specific fields

- Education and training

The task now is to increase the proportion of women in teaching, research and management functions and to establish equal opportunity as a quality criterion, subject to monitoring. The "Equal Opportunity" programmes for 2004/2007, for example, call for doubling the number of female professors in the universities. Other programmes are designed to overcome the stereotyping of career choices for girls and boys.

- Pay equity

The evaluation of the Equality Act (2006 report) will lay the basis for a policy to meet the needs of persons who suffer discrimination.

- Reconciliation of work and family responsibilities

Efforts to date will be pursued further in order to find a solution to the problem of making school hours compatible with working hours, and increasing the availability of childcare services. The Federal Council will have to examine measures to this end.

- Domestic violence

A national conference among all stakeholders concerned with combating violence is planned for September 2004. Its purpose will be to assess the current situation and to identify the further measures needed.

- Trafficking

Switzerland will pursue its commitment to combat violence against women, and trafficking in particular. It will continue to promote women's participation in formulating policies and taking decisions, and will involve them more closely in peacemaking operations. Two major challenges to be addressed are, on one hand, to sensitize the authorities who may have to deal with the phenomenon, and on the other hand to foster cooperation between the authorities and NGOs that specialize in helping victims. To make up for the authorities' lack of information, the SCOTT is working to develop a training course for combating human trafficking. In terms of cooperation

between the authorities and NGOs, the SCOTT is providing technical support to the cantonal roundtables that have been set up to work out cooperation agreements between the authorities and the NGOs.

- Development cooperation

Dialogue between the DDC and its Swiss and local partners for defining common values in the gender approach; integrating the gender approach into the criteria for selecting Swiss partners; preparing indicators at the national and institutional levels; integrating gender relations into contracts. The lack of comparative data for the sexes remains an obstacle.