



29-31 July 2025 Geneva, Switzerland

World Conference of Speakers of Parliament



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#6WCSP

Speech by Ms. Maja Riniker President of the National Council of Switzerland, President of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

Inaugural session of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

Madam Tulia Ackson, Présidente de l'UIP,
Madam Valovaya, Directrice générale de l'Office des Nations Unies à Genève,
Monsieur Chungong, Secrétaire général de l'UIP,
Monsieur Rattray, Chef de Cabinet du Secrétaire général des Nations Unies,
Monsieur Douglas, Messenger de la Paix des Nations Unies,
Mesdames et Messieurs les Présidents de Parlement,
Chers collègues,

Avant de vous présenter les résultats du Sommet des femmes présidentes, je souhaiterais tout d'abord vous dire **ô combien** c'est un **honneur**, au nom de la **Suisse**, du **Canton** et de la **Ville de Genève**, de **célébrer aujourd'hui un jalon majeur dans la vie du Palais des Nations** : la réouverture de sa Salle des Assemblées restaurée. Ce lieu n'est pas seulement un emblème de la vocation internationale de Genève ; **il incarne notre engagement collectif envers l'avenir du multilatéralisme**.

Depuis 2014, la **Suisse** et les **autorités genevoises soutiennent le Plan stratégique patrimonial** (*Strategic Heritage Plan*) par un prêt sans intérêt et diverses facilités. Mais ce projet **dépasse nos frontières** : il appartient à l'ensemble des États Membres, comme en témoigne le soutien répété de l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies.

Le **Plan stratégique pour le patrimoine** est plus qu'un simple projet de rénovation. Il s'agit d'un **engagement** – pris par la **Suisse** et par la **communauté internationale** – à préserver l'**architecture** même du **dialogue, de la diplomatie et de la paix**. Il garantit que le Palais des Nations ne restera pas un monument du passé, mais un **espace vivant dédié à la coopération mondiale pour les décennies à venir**.

La Salle des Assemblées porte, à elle seule, **une charge symbolique universelle**. C'est ici que se croisent les voix des États, de la société civile et des institutions multilatérales. **Sa renaissance est un geste fort** : dans un monde marqué par la fragmentation, nous choisissons de régénérer les lieux où se construit le **consensus**.

Pour la Suisse, ce moment réaffirme notre rôle d'état hôte et de partenaire de l'ONU à Genève, ainsi que notre conviction constante : le **multilatéralisme**, quoique mis à l'épreuve, **demeure indispensable**.

Nous vous **remercions chaleureusement** pour votre **soutien** au plan stratégique du patrimoine, à **l'ONU à Genève** et aux **valeurs** qui nous rassemblent. Nous nous réjouissons de poursuivre notre collaboration sur tous ces fronts à l'avenir.

Chères et chers collègues, c'est dans cet **esprit de coopération** et d'engagement commun que s'est tenue, hier, la **15^e édition du Sommet des femmes présidentes de parlement**.

We met at a moment that is both challenging and promising. This year marks thirty years since the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for gender equality** and women's empowerment and twenty-five years since the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. These **milestones** remind us how much progress has been achieved so far but also how **urgent it is to accelerate our action for gender equality** to become a lived reality by all women and girls, for the good of the whole of society.

Our discussions yesterday reflected a **deep concern about the state of our world**. Many people feel disillusioned and distrustful of institutions. Polarization and hostility are eroding cohesion, and violent conflicts continue to devastate entire communities. Women and girls bear a disproportionate share of these crises. And yet, their voices and leadership continue to be kept away from the decision-making tables where solutions are shaped.

We also **acknowledged** that politics and international relations are still influenced by outdated patriarchal norms that foster exclusion and adversarial approaches. **This must change**, because gender equality is not just a matter of fairness, it is a matter of common sense. **When women participate equally** in decision-making, peace agreements last longer, democratic institutions are stronger, and **societies are more resilient**.

From this perspective, **our message is clear**: as leaders of our parliaments and as members of the international community, **we must act with urgency and purpose**.

We have highlighted four key areas of action that I invite you to also take:

One, we need to rebuild trust in democracy by ensuring that our parliaments are inclusive and gender-sensitive institutions. This means making sure women can participate fully and safely. This also means tackling harmful stereotypes and outdated norms and putting an end to all forms of violence and harassment against women in politics. This also means engaging young people—especially young women—so that politics becomes a space where their leadership is welcome.

Two, we must put gender equality at the very center of peace and security, now. Conflicts disproportionately affecting women and girls, gender-based violence used as a weapon of war have to stop. Women must be in peace negotiations and peace processes equally with men. We must ensure they are not only present but empowered, supported and resourced to take decisions at every stage of diplomacy, conflict prevention, negotiations, and post-conflict recovery. We must also ensure that international humanitarian law is upheld and that the consequences of conflict are addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

Three, we must confront challenges such as climate change and technological advancements through a gender-responsive lens. Women in leadership in climate negotiations, STEMs and boards of tech companies and gender-responsive policies in these fields are the way to go.

Four, we must make gender parity the new norm. Women's representation in parliaments has doubled in the past thirty years, and the number of women Speakers has grown significantly, but the objective is parity, and that objective is still far from reality. Gender parity is fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of our democracies. That is why we all joined the IPU's "Achieving gender equality, action by action" campaign and I invite all of you to also join that campaign and take the transformative actions it calls for.

These are not abstract commitments. They are concrete steps we must take as Speakers of Parliament: embedding gender equality in peace, climate change and technology; guaranteeing women's equal participation in human security, peacebuilding, and diplomacy as well as in climate action, science and technology; strengthening our resolve, laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls; and transforming our institutions into gender-sensitive ones that embody gender equality and deliver it to society.

The outcome of our Summit is **both a reflection of shared concerns** and a call to action.

Inclusive, gender-responsive leadership is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. **It is our strongest foundation for peace, security, and sustainable development.**

To move forward, we need more than symbolic gestures. We need men as partners for gender equality to accelerate action and work together toward full parity in participation and leadership.

As leaders of our parliaments and as members of the international community, we have the influence and **responsibility** to drive change.

Let's take action together to turn promises into progress and **shape a future rooted in equality, dignity, and peace for all.**

Thank you.