



28 July 2025 **Geneva, Switzerland**

# Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament



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## Opening Remarks for Ms. Maja Riniker, President of the National Council of Switzerland, President of the Summit

### 15<sup>th</sup> Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

*“Leading for inclusive and lasting peace”*

Monday, 28 July 2025

Madam President of the IPU,

Madame Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva,

Mr. Secretary General of the IPU,

Esteemed colleagues speakers and presidents of parliament,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege as President of the Swiss National Council, to **welcome** you all to Geneva, the city of multilateral dialogue and international cooperation, **for the 15th IPU-Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament.**

Gathering here today comes as the **culmination of months of collaborative preparation among women leaders of parliament from different regions of the world.** Allow me to acknowledge the tremendous work accomplished by the members of **Preparatory Committee** of the Summit and express my sincere gratitude to each and every one of them and of course to the **IPU, particularly President Ackson** whose leadership and commitment have inspired our collective efforts all the way.

Dear colleagues Speakers and Presidents of parliament here today, I am thrilled to **welcome** you to this 15<sup>th</sup> edition of your Summit, I am truly honored to host it jointly with the IPU and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming and taking part in this important gathering.

This Summit holds a very special significance for us because peace, the central focus of our discussions, is at the very core of **Swiss policy and values**.

And this Summit comes at a time when advancing and sustaining peace is not only **important** – it is also **urgent**. Around the world, we witness too many conflicts, rising tensions, heightened global uncertainty, but also a troubling erosion of democratic values. Given this context, we, as women leaders, are compelled to tackle these challenges with a bold agenda that unites inclusive governance, gender equality, and sustainable peace.

Our determination and vision are more important than ever because **it is women and girls who suffer the most from conflict and instability**: they face gender-based violence, displacement, discrimination, and exclusion. We witness mothers, powerless, as their children die. We see daughters, traumatized for the rest of their lives, crying over dead bodies. We know that girls are being sold as brides and that rape continues to be used as a weapon of war. We read that women and girls refugees cannot access food and medical care.

And it certainly does not help, that women still remain underrepresented where the critical decisions are made.

Women are **left out** of negotiations and peace processes that are supposed to deliver solutions. But let me say this loud and clear: Peace cannot last if it is built without women. Inclusion is a matter of fairness, but it is also a matter of efficiency for lasting peace. There can be no lasting peace without women at the table. Not as observers. Not as beneficiaries. But as full, equal, and respected decision-makers.

Dear colleagues, distinguished guests,

Switzerland's commitment to a just and peaceful international order is deeply rooted in our history. From the Geneva Conventions to the discreet mediation rooms of today, our humanitarian tradition demonstrates that principled, law-guided dialogue has the power to defuse even the most intractable of conflicts. We are therefore convinced that **inclusive negotiation** is not only possible, but indispensable for building enduring peace that benefits all.

However, progress, although genuine, is never the final word. Significant strides have been made in Switzerland: our Country is currently led by a female President, and women now hold 38.5 per cent of the seats in the Federal Parliament. But parity still lies ahead. Only 28.5% of management positions are held by women, and although these figures have increased over the last ten years, they are still far from equal representation. Barriers persist, especially for young women — people under thirty make up barely four per cent of parliamentarians — and in strategic areas such as diplomacy, technology, climate action and peacebuilding.

But my parliament is working on many issues that address themes related to inclusivity, both in political life and in society as a whole. The parliament deals with topics such as women's financial empowerment, the lack of women in scientific fields, the implementation of equal pay, and many others.

Nevertheless, moments of inspiration remind us why this effort matters. When Switzerland secured its **first non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council** in the 2022 election Pascale Baeriswyl, our Ambassador to the UN carried our flag. This historic milestone signaled the vital role that women can and must play in shaping peace and security at the highest level.

Yet, too often, women remain excluded from peace processes and critical decisions. This exclusion undermines the legitimacy and the effectiveness of outcomes. In the meantime, violence against women is alarmingly on the rise. Employed strategically in conflict zones, but also streamed to our homes through digital platforms. These

realities highlight the urgency of integrating robust gender-responsive mechanisms into our policies. The persistent negative norms of masculinity perpetuating exclusion and adversarial politics remain obstacles we must **actively dismantle**.

This year is women's milestone year: with **30 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and 25 years of the Women, Peace and Security agenda**, it is time to reach the transformative results we aim for.

At this summit, our collective leadership can and must chart the pathways forward. As we start the **Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament tomorrow**, we have an opportunity—and an obligation—to embed inclusivity and gender perspectives into the heart of its deliberations. This means advocating for equal participation and leadership among men and women and ensuring that any structural and social barriers do not block women's influence over the agenda across peacebuilding, sustainability, innovation, and human rights.

This is why our discussions today will consider the profound impact of **climate change**, which exacerbates gender inequalities, disproportionately affecting women and girls, particularly in fragile contexts, and which challenges lasting peace.

Similarly, we must embrace our responsibility to guide the development and governance of **digital technologies**. Inclusive leadership in digital transformation and communications tools as well as in artificial intelligence is essential to prevent gender-based bias, safeguard the rights, freedom, and dignity of women and girls online, and ensure that the positive potential of these advancements leave no woman and no girl behind.

One key area of progress in women's leadership that we need to see is the reach of **parity in political participation and leadership**. While we acknowledge progress in women's parliamentary leadership over the past 30 years, I regret that only 20% of the world parliaments are led by women. At this level too, parity should be our goal, front and center.

Dear colleagues, distinguished guests,

I invite you to turn our shared concerns into concrete commitments for action. Let us chart a course where leadership and inclusion go together. And let us bring women and girls, in all their diversity, at the heart of peace and progress.

Thank you.