This publication is part of the Think Piece Series Let’s Talk about Women’s Rights: 20 Years After the Beijing Platform for Action. In this series, leading feminist thinkers discuss achievements in the field of women’s rights and gender equality; identify the challenges faced in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action; and consider ways of moving forward. They offer both critical insights and highlight opportunities for realizing women’s rights after 2015. Please share your thoughts on this article in the comments space below.

"The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are as relevant today as they were 20 years ago." Despite being one of the world’s wealthiest countries and most modern economies, Switzerland’s achievements in gender equality remain an elusive challenge. Past maternal leave, legal equality and an increase in women’s educational attainment are some of the milestones achieved since 1995, when the country was one of 183 states to adopt the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women. The promise of gender equality may be nearly achieved, much remains to be done to achieve gender equality in practice. Rigid gender stereotypes, wage discrimination, women's heavy care burden, segregation in the workplace, violence against women, under-representation of women in political and economic decision-making, and structural obstacles to reconciling family duties with employment still stand in the way of gender equality. In order to realize gender equality, government, employers, politicians and civil society all need to take concrete and coordinated actions. These range from changes in the educational sector, in the labor market and in the social security system to an active foreign policy that promotes women's human rights.

Flurina Derungs is head of Transdisciplinary Research at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (ICGD) at the University of Bern. Ursula Keller is the Senior Gender Policy Advisor of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) / Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

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**THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION**

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by 183 states in 1995, was the result of a participatory and consensus-driven process and was considered a major step forward in formally recognizing the importance of implementing the UN’s fourth world conference on women held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) is a visionary, broad and pioneering platform that contains objectives in 12 critical areas of concern and guides the activities of states, international, regional and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Platform for Action has become a reference point for promoting gender equality and women’s human rights.

The purpose of the Beijing Platform for Action is to promote gender equality and human rights for women and girls and to achieve a balanced distribution of economic and social power between men and women. The Platform for Action is designed to foster a participatory and interactive process of national implementation and follow-up and to engage governments, international, regional and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in prioritizing actions to achieve the Platform's goals. The Platform for Action has become a reference point for promoting gender equality and women’s human rights.

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Flurina Derungs and Ursula Keller

9 March 2015

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Swiss data and statistics cited in this article can be found on the website of the Federal Office for Statistics.

Information on the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on Beijing+20, together with information on the Regional Review Meetings and the national and regional review reports on Beijing+20, can be found on the CSW website.

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This article reflects the views of the author(s) and does not necessarily represent those of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.