

Salutation

Good evening and my warmest welcome to everybody

Looking around me I feel as if I am living on another planet. In my professional life I am used to experiencing the underrepresentation of women. So, for once to attend an event where professional women are not a minority, is very special and a great pleasure for me.

Basel, the home town of our Swiss BPW, is certainly well known to all of you as a vibrant cultural capital with a huge selection of museums, theaters and galleries. You as business and professional women are also well aware, that Basel is a prime financial center, a major industrial center for the chemical and pharmaceutical industry, nanotechnology and engineering as well as a prime location for trade fairs and exhibitions.

What is less known is the most significant contribution of Basel to the promotion of women's equal rights. Basel-city was the first German speaking canton in 1966 to give women the right to vote. You may think that this was quite late. Well, that is true on an international level, but not for Switzerland. In my country women were allowed to vote on a federal level only in 1971. The pioneering role of Basel to promote gender equality and equal opportunities is going on until today. In February this year the voters of the canton Basel-city accepted as the first canton, the introduction of a 30% women boardroom target for companies with close government links.

With this background, the twinning of the BPW Clubs of Nicosia and Basel offers certainly a very fruitful base for exchanging experiences and mutual co-operation. I congratulate you for your decision to twin and wish you many rewarding joint activities, new friendships and every success in promoting equal opportunities for women and developing their professional and leadership potential. Thank you very much for your invitation to this important event, bon appetite, en Guetä.