

*Inauguration speech by the Swiss Ambassador to the UN,  
H.E. Blaise Godet, 10 September 2007  
Opening of the WWSF Exposition at the UN*

**Women's creativity in Rural Life**

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

I usually avoid starting an intervention by quoting figures, but they are sometimes more eloquent than thousands of words and I think that, in this particular context, they are very much needed in order to be fully aware of the achievement of these women you can see on the pictures surrounding us.

Of the world's 1,3 billion poor people, nearly 70% are women and 500 million women live below the poverty line in rural areas.

Of the world's nearly one billion illiterate adults, two-thirds are women. Two-thirds of the 130 million children worldwide who are not in school are girls.

Rural women produce more than 60% of all food grown in developing countries. These terrible figures and facts demonstrate the courage and energy shown by the 14 winners of the Prize for Women's creativity in rural life 2007, in the same manner as the hundreds of women who received this prize previously for their contribution towards improving the quality of life, protecting the environment, transmitting knowledge, as well as for their commitment to human rights and peace.

Switzerland is very much committed to the promotion of the right of women, the right to education, as well as human rights education. In that regard my country shall table a resolution on Human Rights Education with Morocco during this 6th session of the Human Rights Council. We are convinced that the improvement of the rights and living conditions of women and girls, for instance by allowing them to benefit from school education, will benefit to all of us. Indeed, women, and in particular rural women, play a key role in development and socio-economic progress.

In this longstanding struggle towards improving women's rights, which will unfortunately still last for decades, women, and especially women in rural areas, need benchmarks, models, and examples to follow and further, they need incentives to continue the struggle. This prize created by the Women's World Summit Foundation in 1994 represents an essential contribution on this path. It enables us to be aware of the real situation of half a billion of women in the world and gives them an opportunity to be proud of their daily work and contribution to the wellbeing of their family and society.

As a man who had the exceptional chance to be born in an economically developed country, I would like to tell you that these women deserve our full admiration for their commitment and courage. Thank you.