

## Welcome Address - Urban Mobility India Conference

Gandhinagar, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016

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Dear Urban Mobility experts, distinguished guests. I'm happy to be with you for the launch of the Swiss Session at the 9<sup>th</sup> Urban Mobility India conference. I arrived in India two months ago only and this is actually my first business trip outside of Delhi and the **first time** I visit Gujarat.

Before talking more specifically about Switzerland's role in urban mobility innovation, I would like to say a few words about our current initiative - **the Year of Swiss Innovation in India**. Since early last year, the Embassy in Delhi, swissnex India, the Swiss Business Hub in Mumbai, our two General Consulates in Mumbai and Bangalore as well as the offices of Swiss Tourism and the Swiss Cultural Foundation Pro Helvetia, supported by a strong sponsoring commitment from private companies, have been promoting Swiss innovation in all its forms. Our presence here today is the last of many activities before we end the year of Swiss innovation with a closing celebration in Delhi tomorrow night. During this year, we set up seminars, exhibitions, performances and conferences, which have been organized together with Indian partners, always promoting Switzerland as a hub for innovation.

Switzerland is more than the beautiful landscape shown in Bollywood movies. It can offer a lot to the world when it comes to innovation. The fact that Switzerland tops the World Economic Forum Global Competitive index for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year and that it ranks number one in the Global Innovation Index in 2016 shows that Switzerland is an **innovation powerhouse**. Even more important than rankings is the fact that Switzerland is among the countries with the highest expenditures on research and development (R&D) in relation to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Let me give you some examples of recent innovative **Swiss projects** in the mobility sector. First) The **Gotthard Base Tunnel**, which was inaugurated earlier this year, is, with its length of more than 57km, the world's longest and deepest railway tunnel. It runs

through the Swiss Alps and is an important connection between the north and south of Europe. Second) After over 15 years of planning, a new **cross city link** was opened in Zurich one year ago. The biggest agglomeration area of Switzerland is now better connected to its suburbs and the rest of the country, thanks to a 10km structure created underneath existing buildings, railway tracks and rivers. The finalization of this project adds to a long list of improvements and upgrades for national long-distance and commuter trains which were required by a growing population with increasing mobility needs. Third) **Self-driving vehicles** and the electrification of public transport are a topic for research and discussion all over the globe. In the Swiss city of Sion, one of the first self-driving public bus projects has been initiated. Fourth) The development of **IT-Applications** which facilitate urban transport, for example car-sharing applications, easy ticketing apps for public transport, apps that lead you to free parking slots or intelligent traffic lights are also happening in Switzerland. Fifth and last) This year, the first circumnavigation of the earth by an airplane using only solar power was completed. The successful realization of this Swiss project called **Solar Impulse** shows the potential of clean energy for the transport sector. The passage of Solar Impulse in India, landing here in Ahmedabad and later in Varanasi, was one of our highlights in 2015. Thousands of Indians visited the solar plane in its hangar.

Indian government initiatives, such as “Digital India” or “Smart Cities”, show that India wants to adapt and improve its urban mobility system. **What can Switzerland offer to India** in this field? We have today with us Indian and Swiss urban mobility experts who will talk about their projects and experiences. Of course the reality is not the same for Indian and Swiss policy makers when it comes to urban mobility solutions and they may not be replicated one to one in the Indian context. Nevertheless, we should have a look at Swiss solutions and how they could be adapted to meet the requirements of Indian cities. Swiss cities are smaller than Indian ones. However, because of its relative small size and its dense settlement, you can see Switzerland as one urban area which connects more than 8 million people. Furthermore, Switzerland is a country that strongly favors public transport. We are world champions in tunnel construction and total kilometers of train travel. Implementing big infrastructure projects requires know-how

from the government side as well as private companies. I see many possible fields of cooperation, not only because India plans to invest heavily in urban mobility infrastructure, but also because this country has a booming IT- industry which could further strengthen this Swiss-Indian cooperation.

This **Swiss Session** aims at facilitating the exchange of ideas in the context of urban mobility between Switzerland and India. For the following presentations and discussions, the Embassy and its partners have brought together Swiss and Indian mobility experts. They are representatives of private enterprises, Swiss universities, industry associations and public authorities in charge of public transport. They will be happy to share with you their experiences about how to tackle mobility issues with smart IT-solutions, infrastructural projects, technical innovations and smart policies. I wish to thank all participants and look forward to a stimulating day.