

Closing event of the Year of Swiss Innovation in India, 2015-16

New Delhi, 11.11.2016

Distinguished guests, dear sponsors and friends. Welcome to the Swiss residence. I am happy to receive you here to celebrate with you the Year of Swiss Innovation in India for the last time. I came to India just two months ago. This means that today I am a kind of lucky free rider, profiting from all the work accomplished by our team over the last two years, well before my arrival. I am excited to have this opportunity and look forward to meeting tonight so many of our valued partners from all over 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, many of whom are present tonight, have been promoting Switzerland's strengths in research & development, entrepreneurship and innovation.

The Year of Swiss Innovation in India was launched in March 2015 on the occasion of the landing of **Solar Impulse** in Ahmedabad and Varanasi on its way around the world. This Swiss project achieved the first circumnavigation of the earth by an airplane using only solar power, demonstrating the potential of clean energy for the transport sector. Solar Impulse was developed by Swiss pilots and inventors Bertrand Piccard and André Borschberg, in collaboration with the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL) and private sponsors.

The **goal of the Year of Swiss Innovation** was not simply to showcase Switzerland's achievements, but to strengthen business collaborations, investments and exchange of know-how between India and Switzerland. In this context, we organized more than **50 events** all over India, which were well reported by the media, read about and watched throughout the country. We covered topics such as renewable energy, green buildings, smart cities, architecture and design, skill development, virtual reality, gaming,

intellectual property, health innovations and mobility. Over the last three days, we were present at the **Urban Mobility India Conference in Gujarat** and organized a Swiss session dedicated to smart mobility. We'll be able to listen to the urban mobility experts, who have joined us tonight in Delhi, in a couple of minutes.

Switzerland strongly favors public transport. We are world champions in tunnel construction and total kilometers of train travel. One strong highlight during the Year of Swiss Innovation in India was the inauguration of the **Gotthard Base Tunnel** this summer, completed after 17 years of construction and warmly celebrated here at the Embassy as well as the General Consulates in Bangalore and Mumbai. With its length of more than 57km, it is the world's longest and deepest railway tunnel. It runs through the Swiss Alps and thanks to it, 325 trains per day will connect the north and south of Europe in the near future. On the basis of this event, collaboration in tunnel technology research between India and Switzerland is being launched.

Switzerland is much more than the beautiful landscapes 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 7th 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 in relation to GDP.

Indian government initiatives, such as "**Digital India**" or "**Smart Cities**", show that India wants to adapt and improve its infrastructure and urban mobility system. India can offer millions of smart minds, a booming IT-sector and considerable investment potential. I join the Swiss companies present here today in seeing this as a promising constellation for even stronger collaboration in the future.

The feedback on the Year of Swiss Innovation in India was positive. Participants were happy to contribute to the events and to exchange ideas. New networks were established

in different sectors, like railways, renewable energy and culture, to name just a few. For some of the participants, new business opportunities opened up.

This Closing Celebration aims at connecting all the people who were part of this initiative and to share their experiences. We also want to **thank** warmly the 32 companies – our valued sponsors – who supported us with their financial engagement and their pioneering spirit. Without their commitment, we would never have gone that far.

Tonight, a chapter closes. But of course, we're already thinking of opening a new one. The official Swiss network in India will continue to promote Swiss innovation in the **future**. The upcoming 70th anniversary of the Indian-Swiss Friendship Treaty in 2018 will play a role in our next big projects. Our teams will remain engaged, creative and on the lookout for promising opportunities. To our valued Indian partners and our indispensable sponsors I say: we will be back. Many thanks to all of you for being here tonight. I look forward to a stimulating and fun evening.