

Launching event for the Capacity Building Project on Low Carbon and Climate Resilient City Development in India (CapaCITIES)

Esteemed Mayors, District Collectors, Commissioners and other representatives from the cities of Coimbatore, Rajkot, Siliguri and Udaipur; Esteemed representatives from the Government of Rajasthan and the Government of India; Dear guests, colleagues and friends;

It is a great pleasure for me to be back in Udaipur after more than twenty years to attend today's launching event of the CapaCITIES project. I am accompanied today by my colleagues Ms. Mirjam Macchi from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC as well as Mr. Daniel Ziegerer and Mr. Shirish Sinha from the Swiss Cooperation Office at the Embassy.

On the way from the airport I have seen that the city has developed quite a bit since I last visited. At the same time I noted that the streets have become more congested. So I already got a glimpse of the challenges that the citizens and the city planners are facing so that Udaipur remains an attractive destination for tourism and for living.

As you will be aware, Switzerland and India have had close bilateral relations ever since India's independence. We are soon approaching 70 years of Swiss-Indian friendship, which we will be commemorating with a series of special events, starting with a visit of Swiss President Doris Leuthard to India at the end of August this year.

Today, Switzerland and India are working together in many fields such as economy, trade, research, culture and also policy issues. For more than fifty years, Switzerland has also supported India's development through a dedicated international cooperation programme. The focus of the cooperation programme has evolved over time. Global issues of common concern - such

as climate change, food security or water availability – have gained more attention. The current Indo-Swiss cooperation programme aims in particular at partnering for a climate compatible development. It addresses both the effects and the causes of climate change.

The ongoing cooperation projects address, on the one hand, issues related to energy consumption and renewable energy. Swiss and Indian experts are for example working together in order to find solutions for reducing the energy consumption of new buildings. Another project is assisting small and medium enterprises in the foundry sector to improve their energy efficiency. Yet another project is bringing together Indian and Swiss researchers in developing a new cement type which emits significantly less CO₂ during its production.

Some ongoing projects are, on the other hand, assisting people and institutions in India to better deal with the impacts of climate change. Switzerland is a mountainous country, as you will be aware through Bollywood movies. Therefore, one of the projects has a geographical focus on adaptation to climate change in the Indian Himalayas. Through another project, Switzerland provides technical assistance to select Indian states for implementing their State Action Plans on Climate Change. The CapaCITIES project, which we are officially launching today, is the latest project supported through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation to join the family.

I am pleased that through this project we will be partnering with the cities of Coimbatore, Rajkot, Siliguri and Udaipur for a low carbon and climate resilient city development. I thank the authorities of the city of Udaipur – the honorable Mayor, the District Collector and the Municipal Commissioner – for hosting us today. I would also like to thank the representatives of the other partner cities, the Government of Rajasthan, the Ministry of Urban Development and the National Institute for Urban Affairs for having joined us for this occasion.

Growing urbanization is a worldwide trend. It is estimated that in Asia alone, 1.2 billion people will be migrating from rural areas to cities over the next decades. An astounding 400 million of them will do so in India. Not only the mega cities, but also tier 2 and tier 3 cities all over India will therefore be

facing this challenge. They need to prepare and take it into account in their city planning and development. On top of this, climate change is making things even more challenging. For all we know, increasing average temperatures, changing weather patterns, more extreme weather events and increasing water scarcity will be some of the likely climate change impacts on cities. Cities will thus be the hotspots of India's sustainable development.

Not surprisingly, the issue of city development is very high on India's political agenda. While programmes for sustainable city development already existed, the Government's Smart City Mission has certainly given a lot of new impetus. There is no doubt that only a livable city is a smart city. The Mission states that the core infrastructure for a Smart City encompasses adequate water and electricity supply, effective sanitation and solid waste management, affordable housing, efficient urban mobility and public transport as well as environmental sustainability. These are some of the issues on which the CapaCITIES project will be providing support to our four partner cities.

Switzerland has got quite a lot to offer in these fields. You might be aware that Swiss cities regularly come on top of international rankings. The city of Zürich was for example ranked first in the 2016 Arcadis Sustainable Cities Index. In the Mercer Quality of Living Survey that was just released earlier this week, three Swiss cities are in the top ten: Zürich is ranked second, Geneva eighth and Basel tenth. These independent international surveys confirm that we must have done something right in the way we developed our cities in Switzerland. And it is precisely this kind of experience and expertise that we would like to share with our partner cities through the CapaCITIES project.

In order to be able to do so, we have recruited a consortium of institutions which will implement the project on our behalf. The three partners of the Implementing Agency – South Pole, ICLEI and econcept – combine many years of experience in assisting sustainable city development in Switzerland, India and across the world. They will also be working with a network of partner organizations to bring in additional sectoral expertise as required. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the representatives of the CapaCITIES Implementing Agency for their work in the preparation of this event.

Today we can already reap the first fruits of their labour. It is my understanding that first measures in the fields of transport and waste management are ready to be initiated. E-rickshaws were purchased under the CapaCITIES project and will be handed over to the Municipal Corporation today. These e-rickshaws will hopefully lead the way to a much broader shift towards electric mobility and public transport in Udaipur. Also, work on pioneering the segregation of waste at the household level is about to be initiated under the CapaCITIES project. We will be learning more about both these activities in the next presentations. Thanks to the experts from Switzerland and India for the expertise that they have already provided on these matters. We look forward to working closely with you over the next years.

Under the CapaCITIES project, technical assistance will be made available in specific sectors such as buildings, waste, transport and water. The project will also contribute to further build capacities for research and city planning. While these are all very pertinent issues, I truly hope that our partnership with the four cities of Coimbatore, Rajkot, Siliguri and Udaipur will go much beyond these specific sectors. I hope that we will for example also be having joint cultural events and that we can jointly develop our economic ties. Today will thus hopefully be remembered as the beginning of a long and fruitful partnership.

It is a privilege to be present here today. I look forward to learning about the progress under the CapaCITIES project and to meet you again soon at an event in Delhi, Udaipur or one of the other partner cities. Thank you.