

## **Geberit Company Event, November 15, 2019**

### **Welcome address by Ambassador Dr. Andreas Baum**

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Dear Mr. Abubaker Koya, Managing Director of Geberit India

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

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It gives me great pleasure to welcome you tonight to the Swiss Embassy. It is an honor that Geberit has chosen this location to felicitate you as industry leaders, having made a significant contribution to Swiss-Indian business relations, and to have you all here.

The Embassy has a special and deep relationship with Geberit and especially with its Managing Director, Mr. Koya.

This is reflected in many common projects. Please allow me to outline some of them.

- First of all, Geberit is a long time sponsor of the biennial initiatives of the Swiss Embassy. Not only is Geberit a bronze sponsor of the current cycle Swiss it!, it sponsored already the previous SIF70 cycle. Thank you very much for that.
- Geberit also participated in the first ever Swiss business trip to Bhutan last June. A delegation of 17 Swiss companies visited

the Kingdom of Bhutan for almost one week and explored business opportunities. Geberit not only participated, but is also working on a concrete follow-up. Only last week a delegation from the Construction Development Corporation of Bhutan visited Geberit in Bangalore and was informed about best practices in plumbing.

- Last but not least, Geberit is also a very active member of the Swiss-Indian Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Koya serves as the President of its chapter in South India. In this function, he organized an official fact finding mission to Kerala in September, which brought many new insights into one of India's most prosperous States.

Besides of all these activities, Geberit is also doing very good business. In 2018, the Geberit Group increased its turnover by almost 6 percent, to 3.1 billion Swiss francs. And India is a growth market with a very promising outlook.

The Embassy works every day to make a contribution so that companies like Geberit can succeed in India. Our focus lies on the best possible framework and legal conditions for companies to do business.

Let me briefly outline two important projects we are working on.

To conclude a Free Trade Agreement with India is a priority. Negotiations between the EFTA-member States and India, started already in 2008, are ongoing, but there are still some obstacles to overcome. Now that the elections in India are behind us, we are confident that the next round of negotiations will take place soon. Another priority is the conclusion of a new Bilateral Investment Protection Treaty, which became necessary after India terminated almost all such treaties in 2017. Three rounds of negotiations have already taken place, a fourth round is planned to take place soon.

This year was marked by a very busy bilateral diplomatic calendar between India and Switzerland. In September, President Kovind was in Berne for a State visit. Two Memoranda of Understanding on technical cooperation on climate change and on the renewal of Hindi language Chair at the University of Lausanne, as well as a Letter of Intent on the establishment of a bilateral Science and Innovation Alliance were signed during the visit.

In October, Federal Councillor Sommaruga, the Swiss Minister for environment, transport, energy and communication, visited India. Besides political discussions in Delhi with her counterparts from the Railway, Power and Civil Aviation Ministries, she visited Bangalore and Coimbatore. Federal Councillor Sommaruga was accompanied by private companies from the Swiss railway and cleantech sectors.

Her visit therefore focused on these two sectors, as well as on smart cities and climate change.

In September, the first exchange of data under the new Agreement on the Automatic Exchange of Information in Tax Matters took place.

This week Swiss State Secretary Daniela Stoffel, responsible for international financial issues, visited Delhi. She met with her counterparts from the Ministry of Finance to discuss ways to further enhance bilateral collaboration in the field of Finance and Tax.

To conclude, let me give you an outlook of the business related activities of the Embassy in the coming months.

On December 13, we will conduct the second Swiss Business Roundtable here at the Residence. This event gives Swiss companies operating in India the opportunity to discuss issues and challenges they face. These are then prepared, together with the Embassy, in view of a Roundtable organized by Invest India, during which companies can interact with Indian high level Government officials. On December 13, just after the Roundtable, we will host SICC for its traditional Leadership Lecture.

In February next year, the Embassy will organize a second event on the topic of “Culture for Innovation”. Corporate cultures are very

crucial for the capacity of a company to innovate. Geberit as a company with a long tradition, strong value base and convincing leadership style, will definitely make important inputs for this topic. I know Geberit will be on board for this event and for many more common undertakings.

But before that, I look forward to tonight's event, which promises several highlights, from digital disruption to bicycling.

I wish you all a very nice evening.