



Welcome Reception for the European Meeting of ICSU Members, 25. October 2007

Dear members of the International Council for Science, dear members of the Swiss Academies of Sciences, dear guests

It is a great honor and privilege for Switzerland to host the European Meeting of the International Council for Science for the first time since the Council constituted its activities in 1931. For this reason in particular, I sincerely regret not being able to represent the Federal department of the Interior and the State Secretariat for Education and Research personally.

I hope that you agree that Swiss scientists have gained a high reputation in many fields and I am proud that Swiss science is cited in important reviews and rankings. The Swiss government is permanently engaged in improving the basis for this success by securing sustainability in funding, improving quality and increasing competitiveness.

This month both chambers of Parliament concluded the debates of the bill on education, research and innovation for the years 2008-2011 and they decided a financial support of 21 billion Swiss francs. The Swiss Confederation will increase the investment in science, technology and innovation in the next years by 6% per year, supporting vocational education and training, the Universities of Basic and Applied Sciences, the Federal Institutes of Technology and its research centers, the organisations funding research and innovation as well as international cooperation.

Let me share with you some aspects of the science policy of the Federal Council, its guidelines and goals regarding education, research and innovation:

Firstly, based on the acceptance by the people of an amendment of the Swiss Constitution in 2006 the process of the reorganization of the Swiss educational system was initiated. The aim of this amendment is a strengthening and better coordination of the activities between the Cantons and the Swiss Confederation in the education field. A new "Framework law on financing and coordination of higher education", which is currently deliberated, will enter in force in 2012. It will support the aim of making Switzerland a science based society. The vi-

sion is to form a globally known and acknowledged "Swiss University", a strategic cooperation and coherent network of the Federal Institutes of Technology and the Cantonal universities across all areas of higher education.

Secondly, the Swiss Confederation emphasizes competitive research promotion. Switzerland finances increasingly the Innovation Promotion Agency CTI which supports application-oriented research and promotes the transfer of innovative ideas from universities to business. Switzerland as well finances increasingly the Swiss National Science Foundation, our most important institution for funding basic research, research cooperation in the National Centers of Competence in Research as well as international research cooperation. The two funding agencies are absolutely essential in fostering the next generation of researchers, in securing of the top position of Switzerland in the international research community as well as in promoting the successful development of Switzerland as a center of "creative thought".

Thirdly, we know that Switzerland has to participate in well shaped international networks and depends on well developed partnerships with institutions of other countries to be successful. Switzerland's international science and research policy has been and will continue use the opportunities in Europe. We however also want to increase our collaborations outside Europe, not only in Northern America where we have a long tradition but also and specifically in India, China, Russia and South Africa.

In these international networks as well as in supporting and advising the Swiss Government in science policy questions the now 'unified' Swiss Academies representing a network of more than 100'000 scientific experts are important partners for us.

- In the areas of foresight and of communication of scientifically and socially relevant developments the Academies address emerging questions, critically assess the needs in research and education and provide scientific expertise to offices of the Confederation and public institutions.
- By their commitment for ethical responsibility in the acquisition and in the practical application of scientific findings the Academies develop guidelines for the different aspects in scientific practice and in the responsible conduct of research. The critical self-reflection within all research areas and disciplines by the Academies is essential for the further development of science and to obtain acceptance in today's society.
- In the area of fostering the dialogue between science and society in partnership and mutual understanding, the Academies have been given the task to further improve coordinated activities in the interpretation and communication of new scientific developments.

At the same time the Academies have to maintain a certain distance from science to be able to critically assess changes and dangers of scientific developments.

I'm convinced that the Academies are on their way to fulfill the high expectations the Government and the Society has in them. Consolidating international relationships is an important way to go forward. Indeed, your current meeting in Berne is a forum that can be used to discuss these tasks and challenges.

In this sense, I wish you a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in the city of Berne. Thank you for your attention.

State Secretariat for Education and Research

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'C. Kleiber'.

Charles Kleiber
Secretary of State