

20th Anniversary Conference of the KPFE:
**Research Partnership on Extractive Industries – Contextualising Knowledge
and Shaping Policies**

Welcome Address 27 August 2014

Mauro Dell'Ambrogio
State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the 20th anniversary conference of the Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries. A big thank to the organisers for their efforts.

Let me say a few words from the point of view of the Swiss research policy.

The tasks of our policy is to foster excellent research in Switzerland. This research helps us to become more prosperous through innovations, but also helps us to cope with the problems of our time in the domains of health, environment, social welfare and maybe even about how to better resolve international conflicts and prevent war.

Excellent research – as a means to generate knowledge – cannot be done in Switzerland alone and exclusively with Swiss researchers. We need to get excellent scientists to do research in Switzerland, but also to partner up with other research teams in the world. However, the conditions to best achieve this second goal vary from one context to another. Finding and cooperating with partners is a different task in North-America or Europe than in Sub-Sahara Africa or in South-East Asia. In these regions, we cannot expect to find partners with the same financial means, the same infrastructure or with the same linkages to the “global” world. Still, we are convinced most of today’s international problems have important roots in these more distant regions. They need to be included to find sustainable solutions. And some of the most promising international young scholars live in such regions.

The Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries was aware of it already twenty years ago. A dozen scientists from all kinds of disciplines and from all types of research institutions teamed up in order to promote good conditions for partnerships with researchers from what we used to call “the Global South” in those days. They developed principles and important guidelines, which are all based on

years of experience. The KFPE also lobbied successfully for large research programs focusing on issues of water, health, sanitation, food, soil, conflict and resources.

In 2013, the “North-South – Research Partnership for Mitigating Syndromes of Global Change” NCCR, which had run for 12 years, came to an end. The SNSF provided around 39 million Swiss francs in support of this project. Research was conducted under the management of the leading house at the University of Bern.

The interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment at the University of Bern and the “International Graduate School North-South” are spin-offs of the North-South NCCR; the investment made in the NCCR has long-term effects!

As part of the launch of eight new NCCRs in 2013, a promising research programme at the University of Neuchâtel was approved at the end of last year. “The Migration-Mobility Nexus” will consider current changes in migration and their consequences for society. One goal is to understand the changing relationships between state, economy and society and to consider migration and mobility from a broad perspective.

Looking at the future, I am convinced that the know-how developed by the KFPE in handling research partnerships could also be beneficial to other fields.

The topic of today’s conference provides an excellent example. The value chain of extractive industries typically includes countries from starkly different levels of socio-economic development. All these countries have major stakes in this branch of the economy, as do enterprises and all kinds of involved political and civil society actors. You will see in today’s conference how adequately constituted and functioning research groups from different disciplines and geographic origins can contribute to highly relevant knowledge to policy-making and to the design of win-win-solutions to further improve the governance of these industries.

It is essential for such research teams to include scientists from the countries in which these resources are extracted. They will achieve more comprehensive results, which will help publics in the North and in the South to better understand not only the challenges but also possible ways of enhancing the benefits for all involved.

I congratulate all people involved in this activities. Let further develop innovative ways to contribute both to excellence in science and to a better handling of global problems.

Es gilt das gesprochene Wort - Check against delivery