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Opening Speech

Innovation is more than a new idea

Research Fair - Results and Innovations
from Transnational Research Partnerships

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Innovation is a leitmotiv of today's Research Fair.

Innovation is more than a new idea.

The famous Austrian-American Economist Joseph Schumpeter was perhaps the first to emphasize the role of the evolutionary process of innovation in the economy. His well-known trilogy divides the process of technological change into three consecutive phases: invention, innovation, and diffusion. The first stage, the invention process, is about the generation of new ideas. The second stage is the innovation process encompassing the development of new ideas into products and processes. And the third stage is the diffusion process, in which the new products and processes spread across the potential market. In other words: only the invention that becomes an innovation and is eventually spread is significant. Schumpeter's concept is still valid and useful to check new ideas and approaches.

Today we are not here to engage in an abstract, academic debate on concepts, taxonomies, and theories of innovation and system change. The starting point will be concrete examples of innovations.

Tackling urgent issues in an innovative and creative way

In light of the global challenges we need answers, solutions, tools and guidelines that work in a globalized, complex, and interrelated world and that support the transformation process towards a global sustainable and inclusive development.

Inclusive development is a key priority for emerging and developing countries: A majority of the world's poor now live in middle-income countries. And social disparities are often much greater in developing countries and emerging economies.

How can we tackle – within and across countries – *increasing inequalities in* living conditions, *in* access to basic services and goods, *in* economic, cultural and social capital, *in* security and *in* opportunities and perspectives for employment and income? And at the same time how can societal well-being and prosperity for all be fostered in an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable way? That's the fundamental challenge we face.

It's urgent to deal with global and systemic problems in an integrated way. It's time to step back and look at the big picture, to anticipate future trends, to pose the problems in new and creative ways, and to connect seemingly unrelated or incompatible issues.

Working in silos makes us dead-enders. Partnerships, alliances, and collaboration across disciplines, across sectors, and borders are needed to develop smart, viable, and sustainable solutions that work at multiple levels from local to global and vice-versa.

Research makes a difference in addressing urgent developmental problems together with international organizations, governments, the private sector, and civil society.

I am very pleased that this Research Fair offers a platform for exchanging success stories and good practice and for discussing new ideas.

What do we mean by innovation for development?

A culture of innovation and creativity must challenge the business-as-usual mentality.

Innovation is about the introduction of new or improved products, processes, and methods.

It is not only about technological innovation, but also about social and political innovation. Importantly, for us – in international cooperation – innovation is not a goal in itself but a means to achieving the transition to development pathways that are more sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms.

Innovation for development needs to address inclusion.

Innovation can help improve the living conditions of the poor by providing innovative goods and services that become accessible to a larger population. Some innovations could support the integration of marginalized groups into circuits of economic activities. A good example is the mobile phone. It can enable groups 'at the bottom of the pyramid' and excluded from the formal sector to have access to the formal economy.

Hence, innovation for development needs to address questions such as:

- How can innovation be mobilized to improve the living conditions of the poor?
- What types of innovation are inclusive and how does inclusiveness work?
In particular, what measures need to be taken to integrate more women and minorities in innovative activities as a means to reduce poverty and global risks?
- Or which framework conditions could favor inclusive innovations in emerging and developing countries to embark on climate-friendly development paths?

Research matters for transformational change

For innovation to occur research is critical at all levels of the innovation process (i.e. invention, innovation and diffusion).

Substantial research efforts are needed for transformational change.

The SDC has supported – for many years – transnational research partnership programs. These partnerships have been an effective way for generating development-relevant results, elaborating adequate solutions to development problems in poor countries, and last but not least for strengthening research competencies.

The Research Fair gives us a flavor of the manifold relevant research results and innovations generated over time. Based on concrete cases it will be interesting to explore and discuss what worked, for whom, how, where, why, and under which conditions and assumptions. What lessons can we learn from these examples for future endeavors, for potential replication and scaling up?

Research is and remains important. The SDC invests approximately 50 million Swiss Francs in research. This includes contributions to international organizations and programs but also commissioned research.

For innovation to occur there needs to be a favorable environment for creativity and experiments.

I believe that the new r4d Program, the *Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development*, provides space and time for invention and innovation engaging – over a period of 6 years – researchers from Switzerland, Africa, Asia, and Latin America on highly relevant issues related to global sustainable development.

Both are critical: The scientific quality and the development relevance of results; the idea and knowledge creation and the communication and application. That's why SDC and the Swiss National Science Foundation have joined forces to develop and implement the partnership-

oriented r4d Program, and that's why we will invest 72 million Swiss francs in this program over the next 10 years.

We expect that new knowledge, innovative approaches and integrated solutions will be developed, validated, and applied targeting first and foremost the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized. This calls not only for interdisciplinary cooperation and transnational research partnerships, but it also implies the anticipation of future trends, working with scenarios of change, and the continuous involvement of the relevant constituencies.

Sometimes one hears that research does not provide tangible results or that researchers are trapped in the ivory tower. – I believe that this research fair proves them wrong.

It is a great privilege and pleasure to have so many committed researchers from different institutions and disciplines assembled here to share and discuss their research with us. The broad range of innovative findings will provide an excellent intellectual stimulation.

A fair is a good place for interacting and networking. Let's learn from one another. Let's inspire one another.