

Statements from Oulu 2017 Observer Special Session: Observer States

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**SAO Plenary Meeting – Observer Special Session
Radisson Blu Hotel, Oulu, Finland, 26 October 2017**

Intervention by Switzerland

**Ambassador Stefan Flückiger
Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
Switzerland**

Dear Chair of the Arctic Council, Senior Arctic Officials, Permanent Participants, dear friends

My name is Stefan Flückiger, I am the Swiss Ambassador for Arctic activities.

We thank you, members of the Arctic Council, and Finland in particular, to invite Switzerland to Oulu. It is with much humbleness and with gratitude, but also with curiosity and pride that we are among you here for the first time.

They say about the Swiss: **They get up early, but they wake up late.**

We got up early: We have done research in the Arctic for a hundred years, the first west-to-east crossing of Greenland was accomplished by a Swiss team, curious, tenacious, and Switzerland and its science community are engaged in numerous ongoing projects in the Arctic.

But we wake up late: it took Switzerland a little longer than expected to officially become Observer to the Arctic Council, but the Fairbanks Arctic Council Ministerial in May of this year we succeeded.

However, with hindsight, this was a blessing. It gave us two additional years – which proved to be essential. Switzerland used the platform of the *Arctic Circle* in the fall of 2016 for a presentation of its Arctic activities, we were present at the *Arctic Frontiers* in Tromsø and the *Arctic: Territory of Dialogue* in Arkhangelsk, we were honored to be among the invitees in Washington for the 2016 White House Arctic Science Ministerial, and we reached out to the Indigenous peoples and their organizations.

After these two years, we hope that the Arctic Community is more aware and understands better that in the Alpine region we face the same challenges, that temperature is also rising twice as fast as on average, as in the Arctic, that biodiversity and the fauna are changing just as dramatically, that our Swiss scientific teams, for that very reason, have been conducting experiments for decades, that we are indeed - for the lack of a better word - the “Vertical Arctic Nation”. High latitudes and high altitudes face the same destiny.

We are often ranked the most innovative country in the world, with outstanding research facilities, with cutting-edge technology, with a newly established *Swiss Polar Institute* in 2016, we already participate in some of the WGs (AMAP, PAME, SDWG)¹. Over the past decade, Swiss researchers have participated in some fifty international Arctic projects with partners from all Arctic Council Member States.

For example, pollution monitoring in the Arctic is an area where Switzerland has been involved for a decade and cooperates internationally. Swiss researchers are following greenhouse gases from the Arctic to the Antarctic, focusing on hydrocarbons. This involves measurements in the Arctic, such as by the Zeppelin measuring station (Ny Ålesund) in Spitzbergen, and measurements by the Sphinx Observatory at the Jungfrauoch. It requires very precise measurements and elaborates computer simulations which describe the spread of such substances in the atmosphere. Switzerland is among the world leaders in these technologies.

One additional role that Switzerland assumes gladly and very readily is the role of host. Some of you may already know that in the coming summer, to be exact, from June 15-26 2018, one of the largest polar conferences will take place in Davos in the Swiss mountains, the rare joint SCAR/IASC conference, the last time was ten years ago, under the title: “Where the Poles Come Together”. We expect 1500-2000 scientists with expertise in both the Antarctic and the Arctic, from some 40 countries and 130 organizations.

In closing: let me tell you, Chair, that we, too, have been “overwhelmed” by what we learned has been accomplished these two days by the various WGs and Task Forces, by the sheer amount of work underway, by the diligence and the commitment .

All of this is just to say, that we are proud and that we are deeply grateful, that you accepted us as part of the Arctic family.

Thank you, on behalf of Switzerland.

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¹ Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG)