

American Swiss Foundation, November 13, 2012

Remarks by Ambassador Donald S. Beyer

Meine Damen und Herren. Liebe Freunde. Distinguished Guests. Guten Abend. Thank you so much for participating in this essential Swiss-American adventure! I appreciated the wise words of Foreign Minister Burkhalter, and look forward to years of his strong leadership for a safer world.

The Foreign Minister is just back from Laos, Myanmar, Indonesia, and Thailand. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has set the world's record for countries visited, but I am sure Minister Burkhalter will break this record soon!

Susan Elbow, our Deputy Chief of Mission, Megan, and I try to be all over this unique country every week. We work hard at the Obama diplomatic mandate, to listen, learn, and lead. And the single most common concern we hear about is the ongoing negotiations between the US Department of Justice and the Swiss government over American tax cheaters. OK, fine. It is totally human to focus on what hurts, not what feels good. One toothache will destroy an otherwise perfect day.

But – in the wake of the US Presidential election, it is time for us, once again, to think big! There is so much in the Swiss-American relationship to celebrate. Enormous foreign direct investment, in each direction. Excellent trading partners. 700 US companies here, 600-plus Swiss companies in the US. The American Swiss Foundation. Close diplomatic partnerships in Iran and Cuba, with Georgia and Russia, with Turkey and Armenia. Coordinated development activities in many so-called third world countries. Almost 500,000 annual Swiss visitors to the US – and Americans all over the Berner Oberland and the Wallis every summer and winter. The idea of 13 States sprung from 13 cantons, and the Swiss Verfassung from the US Constitution. We even share the legendary ambassador, Faith Whittlesey, as much a Swiss national treasure as an American one.

The most important things we celebrate, however, are our values. Freedom. Democracy. The rule of law. Human rights. Innovation. Science. Leadership. Our strong sense of independence. Christa Markwalder. Together we are so much more than just FATCA or Bankgeheimnis.

The older I get, the smaller the world seems to be. Even without Facebook and Twitter, we are all closely connected. Our degrees of separation are 3, or 2, or even 1.

So here is our challenge, our call to action: Let us use the friendship and partnership of our Sister Republics to address the most critical problems in the world today: from Mali to Syria, from Iran to North Korea, from malaria to AIDS to cholera, from Al Qaeda to Hezbollah.

In September, Megan and I attended the opening of the new Swiss SuperComputer Center in Lugano. I asked if it were now the most powerful supercomputer in the world? The director replied, well, we are partnered with the supercomputer in Oak Ridge Tennessee, and **together** we are the most powerful in the universe!

I like this idea. Young Leaders from Switzerland and Young Leaders from the USA – together, the most powerful force for good in the universe.

Go forth and multiply – and make the world a better place.