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Ladies and Gentlemen, having come to this great city thirty three years ago for my first job outside Switzerland, I am a passionate believer in the benefits of the strong ties between our two countries. Over the centuries, our Sister Republics have established strong national identities as a foundation for success. Two very distinct identities, but with shared values at their core.

Values like our belief in democratic principles, as enshrined in our common constitutional and federalist frameworks. And a fundamental respect for human dignity and the inherent potential of every citizen. But more than that, we have each created and promoted a spirit of openness as our pathway to success. An openness characterized by our shared belief in free markets, international trade and the virtues of competition. And an openness that welcomes and benefits from the involvement of others. No wonder I felt so comfortable here all those years ago.

And with such ties, no wonder the American Swiss Foundation – and the Young Leaders Program in particular – has remained so strong over the years. The Young Leaders Program celebrates our relationship with its shared values and common approach, while allowing participants to learn from their differences. By combining these outlooks, we empower Young Leaders to achieve success in our open societies.

Our Young Leaders are a great source of pride to Zurich. Because Zurich's success is the success of our Sister Republics' approach.

Our proud Swiss identity, with a reputation for technical excellence and innovation, has stood at the heart of our business for over 140 years.

And the Swiss tradition of openness has allowed us to evolve into a truly global organization. Today, we employ around 55,000 people, serving customers in more than 170 countries and territories around the globe. Equally, it was American openness that saw Zurich's U.S. branch established in 1912. By 1920, you were our largest market and have remained so ever since. The same spirit of openness saw our first chairman of the Board, John Syz, live and work in America for 20 years.

And just as your open approach provides Zurich with so much opportunity and talent, so Zurich has benefitted American Society over the years.

By insuring iconic infrastructure projects like the Madison Square Garden, investing in your communities and even providing some early career experience for one of New York's most famous politicians – Franklin Delano Roosevelt. But the benefit Switzerland has experienced from its openness goes far wider than Zurich. We were a trading route in Roman times and thanks to our geography we have always been actively engaged in commerce with those emerging states along the Rhine or over the Alps. Today, the Swiss economy earns every second Swiss franc abroad.

With no mineral resources, Switzerland has been absolutely dependent on the strengths of its people – hardworking, innovative and highly educated. Helped by a political stability that reflects the solidity of the country's institutional foundation and has fostered entrepreneurship. But it is our openness that has brought these strengths to bear, enabling access to markets and trade with countries around the world.

That's why it is so important that we address the mistrust that is building in Switzerland over our openness and global engagement. It's a mistrust amongst many elements of Swiss society. To be more precise, a mistrust of external influence and control. In many ways, Switzerland is a victim of its own success. It passed through the recent global economic turmoil with a high degree of resilience: growth has been stable, unemployment low.

This leaves many keen to defend Swiss autonomy and independence, wondering what is to be gained from allowing others to dictate our choices. Because while our economy may benefit from openness,

not everyone in society has felt that benefit in the same way, or even at all. This has cracked confidence and led to a series of people's initiatives aimed at slowing the pace of global integration.

We as leaders need to acknowledge that trust and confidence has been lost for a reason and that in many cases it's the decisions we have made that has eroded that trust. To overcome mistrust, we must do more to ensure that all sections of our society feel the benefits of an open Swiss economy. So to safeguard Switzerland's economy for the future, we need both our spirit of openness and our proud Swiss identity. But this will only be possible if our actions can maintain the trust of our society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, with this in mind, there are three areas where I believe Swiss leaders should focus. Alongside this, I am advocating three actions we should take to maximize the benefits of engaging with the evolving world order. The first area of focus is around the role Switzerland wishes to play in the world going forward.

For the reasons I have stated, our goal should be clear – preserving Switzerland's role as a destination for international trade and global partners. So a first action will be to place the Swiss-EU relationship on a solid footing and framework as a priority.

It will involve some tough discussions – particularly after February's vote on limiting access to the Swiss labor market and the EU/US advance on trans-Atlantic free trade. But retaining our openness must be considered non-negotiable.

The second focus must be upon adapting those of our strengths which have lost some of their luster in an evolving world order. This includes a need to redefine our financial center's role as a global hub. Accounting for more than 10% of GDP, Switzerland's financial center makes a significant contribution to the nation's economy, employing some 200,000 people. It is built around strengths inherent in the Swiss identity: longstanding expertise, an educated workforce, political stability, and a world class regulatory structure. We need to focus on these strengths while maintaining cooperation with the global community. That means evolving beyond bank secrecy as a hallmark of the Swiss financial system.

So as a second action – we must develop in its place a new unique service proposition that defines Switzerland in the eyes of the financial world. One that is rooted in the skills of our people. One that

builds on our tradition of global engagement. And one that brings real tangible value to all our stakeholders, including those forces in society that are least comfortable with a flattening world.

Change will not come easily for Switzerland, but it is vital for our economic future.

The final area of focus must be on finding ways to better champion those Swiss strengths that remain absolutely in-step with our evolving world order. In particular, and as a third action, we must champion the innovative nature of our Swiss education system. This “dual-track” system of vocational and professional “on the job training” is key to Swiss competitiveness. Two thirds of our young people enroll in it after compulsory education.

By creating a strong link between employee education and employer needs, it has proven to be effective against youth unemployment. At the same time, the system stimulates lifelong learning and allows permeability to continue with higher education at university level. Given its success, there is increasing attention from others in response to their own youth unemployment issues. Switzerland should welcome this with great pride as a leading global player.

I say this as someone who started vocational training as a commercial bank employee. As a teenager, I worked hands-on and learned the various aspects of the business. And with hard work, continuing education and work experience abroad I had the chance to develop my career in a way that my early schoolteachers might not have imagined. An education rooted in Swiss identity, strengthened by exposure to an open global community.

Ladies and Gentlemen, like Switzerland, the United States is also facing a defining moment in its relationship with the world. Combat fatigue and the prospect of American energy independence are fueling calls for the U.S. to reduce its involvement in global affairs. And just as in Switzerland, there has been a sharp decline in trust in public institutions and corporations, particularly in the financial services sector.

The results are more similar still – mounting pressure for protectionist measures and localized regulatory enforcement. As we have seen many times in the past, such measures, if played out, are likely to have a chilling effect on investment, trade and global stability. It is imperative that all of us, whether as business leaders or as young leaders, heed the lessons of the American Swiss Foundation and stand firm against this tendency towards insularism and isolation.

Reassessing one's global identity is a long term process and the Foundation's Young Leaders program plays an important role on both sides of the Atlantic. To be successful, we will need the support of our societies, so it is imperative that we act in a manner that engenders trust. One of the strongest lessons that I have learned as a leader is that your own behavior has to be beyond reproach. Leadership requires followers and you cannot expect people to follow you if you do not live up to the values and standards that you are asking them to adhere to.

Leadership also requires the trust of a broad community of other stakeholders, and that trust must be earned through integrity, transparency and care. Credibility is everything. Above all, as leaders we must not seek to choose between preserving our national identity and our openness. We must learn the lessons of our past and uphold both. That approach is at the core of my three focus areas and actions for Swiss leaders and it must be at the core of the USA's future pathway.

It's the approach at the core of the Young Leaders Program. It's the approach that gave Zurich the tools to succeed. And it's the approach that binds our Sister Republics of Switzerland and the United States together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Young Leaders, friends and business partners wherever your challenges lie, I hope it's an approach that inspires you to success.