

Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining
20 Years of Successful Development

Château de Coppet, December 6, 2018

Barbara Haering, President of the Council of Foundation

1 Preparing for a Birthday Party

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends

Already preparing for a birthday party is an excitement and a treat in itself.

- Looking for a festive venue
- Inviting family and friends
- Choosing the perfect birthday present

So let me first of all thank the team that prepared this event. You brought us all together here in the Château de Coppet. Thus, recalling the place where the first meeting of the Council of Foundation of the GICHD took place on October 28, 1998.

And actually there is somebody here tonight with us, who can share personal memories of that first meeting with us: It's Ambassador Theodor Winkler, who was more than the first secretary of the Council of Foundation. Teddy, thank you for your important initiative, for all your support through aught these years and thank you for bringing the GICHD, DECAF and GCSP finally together in the Maison de la Paix.

2 Baptism

Once upon a time, fairies used to present their best wishes to a newborn child. Going through the minutes of that first meeting of the Council, we still can identify the wishes of fairies present at that time.

Switzerland hopped for the center to contribute to making mine action more effective and more efficient, thus adding value to humanitarian demining.

Cambodia, Austria, the UK, Norway, Canada, the US, Germany, the Netherlands and UNMAS supported the initiative of Switzerland and underlined

- **the need** to share information and best practice in mine action and to further develop the Information Management System IMSA. They also stressed
- **the importance** of a close cooperation of the Center with UNMAS and other UN Agencies implementing the Convention and addressing needs on the ground and avoiding duplications. And they shared

- **the perspective** of donor countries, mine affected countries and the center working hand in hand and jointly strengthening humanitarian demining.

3 Growing up

However, the fact, that these wishes came true during the last twenty years is not due to some miracles performed by fairies or magicians. We owe the success story of the GICHD to the commitment of directors, coworkers, council members, donors and partners.

Thus, we are happy to welcome the present as well as two former directors of the center celebrating this birthday with us – so may I ask you to stand up:

- Ambassador Stefan Nellen, you were director of the Center from 2004 to 2008
- Ambassador Stefan Husy, director from 2008 to 2014 and
- Ambassador Stefano Toscano, director since 2014

Together with the Ambassadors Francois Godet and Martin Dahinden you showed and still are showing a tremendous commitment and engagement for the mission of Humanitarian Demining and for the Center.

But let me also ask all current and former co-workers present here tonight to stand up as well. What a bunch! Our sincere thanks to all of you for working so hard, for contributing to the fruitful development of the Center and for making it what it is today – the global competence center, addressing risks from landmines, from other explosive remnants of war and from ammunition.

Others experts, donors and politicians have contributed to the history of the Center as well. Thus, let me particularly mention our Honorary President Cornelio Sommaruga as one of the great masterminds behind the GICHD. Due to a minor accident, he is unfortunately not mobile enough to join us this evening. Our profound thanks and our wishes for a full and fast recovery will be sent to him with this card, which I kindly ask you to sign.

4 Birthday Presents

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen: Let me finally unwrap two main presents offered to the center for its 20th birthday.

The first present is our new strategy. Three weeks ago, the Council of Foundation launched the Centers strategy for the next four years. Having built up a robust result-based management system during the last years we are now able to move from addressing dangers to reducing risks from landmines, other explosive remnants of war and ammunition – and thus maximizing outcome and impact of our contribution to humanitarian demining and human security. In addition, gender and diversity will not only be a working principle but one of the core objectives for the years to come. Our thanks

go to all of you who supported this forward-looking strategy. It's a strategy of growth, addressing the changing working environment of mine action.

The second present is your enduring support. In the name of the Council of Foundation and of the whole team let me thank all of you for your continuous support – as experts, as donors, as partners. Mine action is a unique community bringing together the commitment of states to end and to prevent suffering from anti-personnel mines – supported by international organizations, civil society and technical expertise. Together we shall maintain this strength – inspired by the objective set by Maputo Action Plan your years ago: To get the job done by 2025 at latest.

Thank you - and now: Let's celebrate!