

# Message of the President

Dear Reader, on Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2018, a meeting took place at the Residence of the Ambassador of Norway in Bern to the title "The Arctic, Closer Than You Think – Switzerland Joins Nordic Countries in a Global Debate." The following day, the Swiss Ambassador Stefan Flückiger, Head of Sectoral Foreign Policies Division, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern, organized an excursion to the Jungfrauoch Research Station, whereby some Senior Arctic Officials and Ambassadors of the Republic of Finland, of the Kingdoms of Sweden and Norway participated. Already beforehand, these distinguished guests were informed by the Swiss Ambassador about the Station's role as follows: "Today, the Research Station Jungfrauoch is one of Europe's leading centres for environmental science." This visit has to be seen in the context, that in 2017 the Arctic Council (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, United States) granted Switzerland observer status. As an observer, Switzerland can now contribute expert knowledge to the Council at the level of working groups, particularly in the interdisciplinary area of climate change research. Thereby it has been stressed that polar research is very similar to high-altitude research in the Alps and that a number of Swiss institutes are internationally renowned for their high-calibre research on snow, the atmosphere, natural hazards, permafrost and mountain ecosystems. Swiss scientists have conducted research on glaciology in the Arctic for over a hundred years, making a substantial contribution to global climate research; in fact, Switzerland is known in this research community as the 'vertical Arctic nation'.

I like to emphasise that the visit was well received by the foreign Ambassadors and we took advantage of this opportunity to formally invite Institutions from these Nordic countries to strengthen the link to our International Foundation HFSJG. Thereby, we got strong support from Prof. Konrad Steffen, Director of the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape Research (WSL), who attended the excursion as well (the picture below shows the group of Ambassadors together with Stefan Flückiger and Konrad Steffen in front of the scientific exhibition at Jungfrauoch). As a first outcome of our discussions, we already set up planning for further collaborations and activities of HFSJG with the Institute for Atmospheric and Earth System Research (INAR) – University of Helsinki, headed by Prof. Markku Kulmala.



*The Picture shows the Ambassadors of Norway, Sweden, Finland together with Stefan Flückiger and Konrad Steffen.*

Networking in science and on the political agenda, this issue was frequently practised during the year while hosting many visitors at our two stations at Jungfrauoch and Gornergrat. Among all these valuable visits, I point out those from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF); we could host at our Stations the research

councils of the departments II, III and IV. These on-site contacts with representatives from the SNF are very important in the national political context.

During 2018 we started a new venture aiming at giving great credit to pioneers working at the Jungfrauoch Station in the early days of its existence. "Remember the past" was our guideline. With this idea in mind we submitted an application to the European Physical Society for being awarded the label of a EPS Historic Site. The EPS Jury evaluated our proposal positively and the planning for a celebration jointly with a corresponding Symposium during February 2019 could start. Analogously, we took the chance that the Swiss Academy of Science (SCNAT) awards a Chemical Landmark to a historic site in a chemical context. Similarly, our application was evaluated positively and the planning for this event, which takes place in April 2019, started as well. In the meantime, all the corresponding information for both events can be seen on the HFSJG web-site.

The VAO (virtual alpine observatory) group maintains its momentum also through the year 2018. In march, the 4th VAO symposium was successfully organized by the French group in Grenoble. A VAO board meeting gets scheduled for January 2019 in Bern and a discussion point will be to integrate our VAO group into a "European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation" (EGTC); this grouping shall intensify the existing cross-border cooperation among the research stations affiliated with the VAO, and make visible on a worldwide scale the VAO's research work as a significant contribution to climate research. Furthermore, the 5th VAO Symposium is on the agenda for February 2020 in Bern as well.

For our Gornergrat station, there is a good progress on the concept Stellarium Gornergrat, and the report from our Director will present it in more detail. I would like to thank for all the significant support we received from our partners, the Burgergemeinde Zermatt, the Gornergrat-Bahn and from the University of Bern with the partners of the University of Geneva.

Finally, I express my great respect to all researchers being active at our stations, be it at the Jungfrauoch or the Gornergrat station, for their formidable work they accomplished over the year; the detailed report from our Director will show it at best.

All over the year, I could also notice with great pleasure the dedicated work of our Director, Prof. Markus Leuenberger and his team, for fulfilling the mission assigned to our Foundation, be it for the Jungfrauoch or the Gornergrat station. On behalf of the Board of the Foundation HFSJG, I express my sincere thanks to all those who contributed to the progress and accomplishments during the year 2018; thereby, I am happy to join with our Director in giving acknowledgements to all our partners, team members and members of the Foundation.

Bern, April 2019

Silvio Decurtins