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Der Bundesrat
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Wellington, 08.08.2023 - Ansprache von Bundesrat Ignazio Cassis, Vorsteher des Eidgenössischen Departements für auswärtige Angelegenheiten (EDA), anlässlich einer Diskussion an der Universität von Wellington - es gilt das gesprochene Wort

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour to visit your university today.

The university is a hotbed of science and research.

It produces the knowledge and insights that are indispensable for the common advancement of humanity for peace, justice and welfare.

Beyond that, there is a profound need for global cooperation – in science as well as in politics.

Bilateral relations between New Zealand and Switzerland

This year, Aotearoa New Zealand, the land of the long white cloud, and Switzerland, the land of the long white mountain range, are celebrating sixty years of diplomatic relations.

New Zealand is an outstanding partner for Switzerland and we share many core values such as democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech.

And of course the academic freedom that is necessary for research.

Both our countries have high standards in science and innovation.

Scholarships for doctoral or post-doctoral research stays at Swiss universities are available.

There is also an agreement between our two countries that allows young professionals to deepen their professional and language skills.

However, I am convinced that both countries could benefit even more from increased cooperation and exchange in the areas of scientific research, innovation, and vocational education and training.

To focus on science and innovation, but also on business, trade and foreign policy, New Zealand initiated in 2012 the Small Advanced Economies Initiative (SAEI).

This initiative, which unites seven countries including Switzerland, aims to promote cooperation and exchange between countries with similar challenges and opportunities and serves as 'laboratories' for innovative policy solutions.

Science diplomacy in the service of the global community

The coming together of science and international politics is commonly described as science diplomacy.

We need to enable the international community to anticipate developments in science and technology in order to harness their benefits for the common good and frame the more problematic aspects they present.

We all ask ourselves questions about the future but we know that we cannot predict the future.

All the more reason to shape it and make it possible.

But how?

Today, we can observe the interaction between two parallel developments:

The convergence of sciences on the one hand, and the accelerating pace of technological development on the other.

Neuroscience, bioscience, nanoscience and information science are converging, opening up an as yet unimagined field of scientific activity and discovery:

A rapid succession of technological revolutions whose future impact we struggle to comprehend.

You know the keywords: quantum revolution, artificial intelligence, human augmentation, geo-engineering.

Do we have any idea of what these developments will bring?

Certainly not the full picture!

We sense that something is happening, driven by human genius that will change human nature, societies, and the planet.

And it will also change global governance, by which I mean the way humanity organises itself, how it comes together to cultivate the global commons.

We all depend on an international system that works; that is inclusive and equitable; that is capable of identifying challenges and opportunities; and that can harness science and technology for the benefit of all.

But the international community will have no agency if it is not able to anticipate science and technology breakthroughs, to imagine their potential impact, and to develop timely responses.

The geopolitical situation makes this endeavour all the more difficult, because the strategic interests of powers and their competition is strongly driven by science and technology.

Therefore we must find an approach through which we can ring-fence the use of science and technology for the common good and make it accessible for all.

To this end, the Swiss government has established the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator Foundation – or *GESDA for short* – with the mandate to develop and implement an appropriate methodology.

This can be summarised in three terms:

1. Anticipation 2. Acceleration 3. Translation

GESDA: anticipation

The foundation compiles, on a yearly basis, the GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar, which provides an overview of scientific trends and developments that can be anticipated over the

next five, ten and twenty-five years.

It also includes a synthesis of the global public debate on these developments.

The radar is innovative in two respects:

- It offers the international community a first comprehensive overview of scientific and technological future analysis; and
- It marks a paradigm shift for diplomacy: instead of starting out with specific, existing challenges and then trying to get to grips with them as well as possible, diplomatic actors are empowered to anticipate developments and to adapt to them in good time.

GESDA: acceleration

Based on the findings of the Geneva Science Breakthrough Radar, informed international action can be accelerated.

This discussion is broad-based and includes all relevant stakeholders and interest groups – the scientific community, diplomatic and political actors, business and philanthropy, civil society organisations and citizens around the world.

Discussions are being conducted across a variety of fields, addressing issues such as advanced artificial intelligence, the quantum revolution, neuro-rights, decarbonisation, digital empowerment, and the norms and principles of scientific activity.

GESDA: translation

GESDA acts as an honest broker.

It provides the scientific input, curates the conversation and ensures that it involves all stakeholders that will be affected by the anticipated developments, for good or ill.

In this way, insights and ideas can mature and solutions can be developed that can be seized upon by the international community.

GESDA has no intention nor mandate to act as a new international organisation.

It is no substitute for existing institutions and states as legitimate actors of international governance. Rather, it is up to those bodies to take up the possible solutions that emerge from the anticipation and acceleration process I have described, and to translate them through conventional processes.

A first concrete result of this methodology is the initiative for an Open Quantum Institute (OQI).

Quantum computers will have a transformative impact on our society and our planet.

We must ensure that everyone has a part to play in this journey, and that the transformative impact of this technology is directed towards humanity's most pressing challenges.

Through the creation of the Open Quantum Institute, the most diverse groups and geographical regions will have the opportunity to use quantum technologies so they can best tackle the challenges they face directly.

The Open Quantum Institute has been developed by GESDA and the participating stakeholders in a three-year process and now the Council of CERN is considering to host it and operate it.

Daring to innovate

Ladies and Gentlemen

What Switzerland is seeking to do here with GESDA is something new.

It is therefore also a difficult undertaking.

Combining anticipation – which looks far ahead – with action – which must take effect immediately – is a challenge in itself.

But I have yet to see a better proposal as to how international governance can use smart science diplomacy to equip itself for the challenges of the coming era.

With the Open Quantum Institute we already see a first concrete achievement.

I would like to invite you, students of the Victoria University of Wellington, as well as everyone interested in international affairs, to join us on the path of anticipatory science diplomacy and contribute your expertise and insights.

Because the world is depending on all of you:

On your commitment, your ingenuity and your courage to break new ground, to take the plunge and let new solutions emerge from what may initially seem like crazy ideas.

I would like to close with a quote from Hermann Hesse:

The Nobel laureate for literature, who spent many years in my village of Montagnola in the Italian-speaking part of Switzerland, once said:

"To achieve the possible, we must attempt the impossible – again and again".

I look forward to the contribution of all of you to a sustainable, peaceful world.

Thank you.

Adresse für Rückfragen

Kommunikation EDA
Bundeshaus West
CH-3003 Bern
Tel. Medienstelle: +41 58 460 55 55
E-Mail: kommunikation@eda.admin.ch
Twitter: @EDA_DFAE

Herausgeber

Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten
<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home.html>

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