



## **Welcome remarks by the Swiss Federal Councilor Albert Rösti during the opening of the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the IPCC**

**Check against delivery**

Excellencies,

António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations,

Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Inger Andersen,

Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization, Petteri Taalas

President of the 28th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Sultan Al Jaber

Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, Simon Stiell

Professor Hoesung Lee, IPCC Chair,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The morning sun blazes down on the majestic crowns of the three-thousand-meter peaks. Suddenly, the sound of a loud bang echoes across the lake. Anxious tourists look toward the clouds of dust rising above the mountain flank.

Distinguished delegates, by traveling to this conference you have already had the chance to experience the stunning beauty of the landscape around Interlaken, here in the heart of the Swiss Alps.

The example I shared with you at the beginning, originates from rockfalls and landslides around Lake Oeschinen - just a few steps outside this very conference building. The thawing permafrost has been making mountain slopes unstable, threatening people and infrastructure.

Hidden in the Alps, you can discover the backbone of our energy supply. It is hydropower. It has been reliably supplying Switzerland with climate-friendly energy for over 100 years. Hydropower ideally complements solar energy, which supplies us with renewable energy in summer. Water and sun are Switzerland's clean energy dream team.



Our country is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including the melting of glaciers, or extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, and floods. It is estimated that up to 8 percent of Swiss territory is now unstable due to changes in thawing permafrost. These have far-reaching consequences, affecting agriculture, infrastructure, health, and ecosystems.

Climate change is a global concern, but its impacts are felt locally, in our own communities and daily lives. Farmers must adapt to new growing conditions, while communities face increased risks from extreme weather events. Switzerland came to the understanding that the common man should be at the heart of our consideration. As a result, we have now a long tradition in investing in preventive measures to protect our people from avalanches, floods, or landslides.

The secret of success of Swiss politics is its direct democracy. Here, people have the last word at the ballot. Our experience is: A people-centred approach ensures the benefits and costs involved in the transformation are distributed fairly. This is essential to the success of transformations at the pace and scale required to deliver global ambition for climate change mitigation.

The outcomes of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change help us, the policy-makers, to take informed decisions on addressing climate change. Science and knowledge must play a central role in shaping our policy-making, guiding us as we work to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

In 2000, former Swiss Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi was accompanying former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on a joint hike in the very same area in the Swiss Alps where we are sitting today. If Mr. Annan were to hike through the same valley again these days, he would hardly recognize the surroundings at the back of the valley. After the once in 100-years storm in 2011, the valley was devastated. It now looks completely different. The tourist resort of Kandersteg close by, where I grew up, remained virtually unscathed. Thanks to the measures taken by Switzerland after an earlier flood, the one of 2005.

These examples show us that in our policies we need to prioritize a safe future. It is our duty to protect our livelihood and our very lives.

At the end of the day, it's a mix of measures and approaches we need to take to address climate change. In order to do so we must engage with all stakeholders.

Business, academia and civil society can help to develop innovative, sustainable, and economically viable solutions.

By wishing you all success, all eyes are now on the outcomes of this conference. You will bring about policy relevant information. Your results will be benefiting not only the international community but the local population, such as those people living here, in the heart of the Alps.

Thank you.