



Media Release

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“We must exploit the huge potential for sustainable solutions now”.

What would it cost to create a genuinely sustainable Switzerland? At the international level, what is our responsibility as a country to ensure that the objectives of the UN Agenda 2030 are achieved? More than 250 participants from politics, business, science, think-tanks and civil society debated these issues at a conference to launch the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Switzerland. In his speech, Bertrand Piccard emphasised that “we should not just be talking about the cost of sustainable development but rather we should concentrate on the hidden opportunities that are currently untapped”.

Swiss politics, industry, science and society face a challenge. The Federal Council is required to submit a report by July 2018, indicating where and how Switzerland can deliver its contribution to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are the central plank of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Important to this process are dialogue and an exchange of knowledge with individual stakeholders and so in 2017, these organisations came together to form a broad alliance, the Swiss offshoot of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN).

At its launch on 15 February 2018, the co-chairs of SDSN Switzerland, Océane Dayer from Swiss Youth for Climate and Urs Wiesmann, Emeritus Professor of the University of Bern stressed the following: “Agenda 2030 undoubtedly represents a major challenge. However, it also offers numerous opportunities and incentives for business, research centres, politicians and civil society to come up with innovative solutions that trigger genuinely sustainable development”. We should be exploiting these opportunities now. One of the examples cited by Dyer was the legislation on the reduction in CO₂. “When it is renegotiated, the focus should be on the benefits that will result for all sectors”. Bertrand Piccard illustrated this with a reference to his flight around the world without using a single drop of fuel: “In principle, the technical solutions already exist: Instead of exploiting this huge potential without delay, creating modern jobs and investing in non-polluting systems, Switzerland remains unduly enmeshed in political blame games”.

Urs Wiesman also pointed out that Switzerland has a global responsibility: “In view of our own consumption and the associated use of resources abroad, SDSN Switzerland is calling for much greater coordination between internal and external strategies. That also means that conflicts of interest and the synergies between various sectoral policies must be reflected”. The Network, which currently has 18 institutional members will start work on its first projects this year, including a social lab for sustainable consumption and production.

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