10:00-10:10h  Ralph Eichler, ETH Zurich: Welcome

Dear Ambassador Mauro Moruzzi and colleagues from the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation, colleagues from Swiss universities and research institutions, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome you today to this workshop on collaboration of Swiss researchers and research institutions. Mandated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) ETH Zurich has been the Leading House for the Swiss bilateral S&T collaboration with China since 2004 and with Japan and South Korea since 2008. In the current contract phase, which started this year we are exploring the potential for bilateral collaboration with additional countries as a new programme component. The objective of this expansion is to identify potential new strategic partners in the Asia-Pacific region as the currently most dynamic part of the world with respect to economic growth as well as financial investments in science and innovation.

We collaborate closely with the University of Zurich as Associated Leading House for China and Japan and with the University of Geneva as Associated Leading House for South Korea. You will notice that today colleagues from both universities will be the first ones to comment on the action plan and results of the survey.

The workshop today shall serve as a platform for exchange of experiences and mutual learning among Swiss researchers and research administrators, who have been involved in one way or another in collaborating with Asian and Pacific partners. It shall bring together experiences and opinions of different stakeholders to discuss the potential of selected countries for intensified collaboration. I am pleased that so many colleagues have followed our invitation.

ETH's principle experience in the region is based on our Future Cities Laboratory in Singapore, where we have the opportunity for diving deeply into the Asian culture and being exposed to other worldviews. ETH Zurich is also active in several international university alliances, such as the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU). These alliances include e.g. the National University of Singapore, Peking University, The University of Tokyo, or Shanghai Jiao Tong University. All international contacts of ETH researchers are internally accessible in its “International Knowledge Base (IKB)”.

The SERI mandate on bilateral research collaboration with partners in China, Japan and South Korea has improved and strengthened the awareness of and the cooperation with these countries. In addition, the SERI investment has strengthened the collaboration among the universities involved in these bilateral programmes, and is bearing fruit.

ETH is willingly investing its staff resources in making the most of the bilateral programmes, including the exploration of additional countries in the Asia-Pacific region. We see this activity as a logical expansion of the on-going well-functioning programmes. The current mandate by SERI is a great opportunity to systematically assess the potential of additional countries. The survey on existing partnerships, the results of which will be presented and discussed today, is a promising first step. I wish you a very fruitful interaction during the workshop and useful conclusions on which to build the next steps.