

**THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON SYNERGIES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING UNDER INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS ADDRESSING CHEMICALS AND WASTE MANAGEMENT**

30 March – 2 April 2004

Opening Remarks of Dr. Franz Perrez, Head of Section Global Affairs;  
Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape

Good morning,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you on behalf of the Swiss Government here in Geneva.

For Switzerland, international chemicals and waste policy is an important priority. One reason is, of course, that Switzerland has a major chemicals industry and is at the same time one of the world's top research places in the field, both with regard to public, university and private research.

But Switzerland is not only the host of important private action with regard to chemicals and waste management. Most international institutions relevant for international chemical and waste policy making are located in Geneva. To name a few: UNEP Chemicals, the Interim Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention (PIC), the Stockholm Convention (POPs), the Basel Convention, the World Health Organization, the International Labour Organization, the Intergovernmental Forum on the Chemical Safety (IFCS), the Aarhus Convention, the World Trade Organization, and last but not least, UNITAR. As host country, Switzerland tries to offer the best possible conditions for the work of these important organizations and processes. One example of Switzerland's efforts in this regard is this new building in which we are meeting today and which has just been finished in order to meet the increasing demand for working space and facilities of international organizations. I think this meeting is the first in this new building, and I hope that we will not detect too many "birth problems."

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, chemicals and wastes create important benefits and challenges that are not limited to one country but cross borders. Thus, activities in one country easily have an impact on other countries. Therefore, these challenges can often be addressed effectively only at the international level. For a small country like Switzerland, international cooperation is therefore very important. Workshops like this one are important and constructive elements of such cooperation. I would therefore thank UNITAR for its timely and most helpful initiative.

But let me welcome you not only in the name of Switzerland as an important actor with regard to chemicals industry and research, as a host country of the most important relevant international institutions and processes, and as a small country with a high interest in internationally cooperative approaches to address the challenges posed by chemicals and wastes. Let me also personally welcome you whole-heartedly in the name of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, of Franz Stoessel of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, of State Secretary Philippe Roch, and of course, in our name.