

**Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George at the Gala Evening  
organized by Indian Association in Baden on November 3, 2018**

Good Evening Everybody; A happy Diwali to all.

Thank you for inviting me to address this Gala evening today, in this most beautiful part of Switzerland.

As a diplomat, one is happy to be in Switzerland, one of the most beautiful of the countries in the world. It is also one of the most happening countries in the world. A country which ranks among the top globally in several metrics of national performance, including government transparency, quality of life, economic competitiveness, innovation index and human development. Here in Switzerland, every Canton, every city and every small township has something unique to offer.

As a diplomat, one feels so proud to represent India, which is one of the oldest, largest and perhaps among the very few continuous civilizations in the world. It is world's largest democracy and fastest growing large economy. India was the richest country on earth until the time of British invasion in the 17th Century, a wealth which attracted many maritime explorers like Vasco-de Gama and Christopher Columbus to launch their voyages. You feel proud to represent a country where four world religions were born, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. India has more Christian population than the total population of countries like Canada and Australia. In fact, Christianity reached India and flourished there since 52CE, much before it reached most parts of Europe. Many of the communities when they faced persecution abroad, chose to travel to India, such as the Parsees from Persia, today's Iran. The Jewish population came to India in large numbers from Israel in the year 70 CE, after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Today, Parsees are one of the most vibrant communities in India while some of the oldest Jewish synagogues are still active in India. We are proud of our diversity.

You feel honored to represent a country which has over 1/6th of the population of the world. That means every sixth person in the world is an Indian, with a 1.3 billion population. A country which has over 30 million Indian diaspora abroad. This diaspora has branched out all over the world today. Well assimilated, it is studded with Nobel Laureates, Booker Prize winners, Emmy Awardees, distinguished physicians, engineers, businessmen, IT experts and Artists and spiritual leaders. The diaspora wherever they are, have produced successful entrepreneurs, beloved educationists, astronauts, stars in every profession and good civic minded

citizens. This diaspora is now nurturing a second and third generation including in Switzerland that will surely outshine its parents, at the same time cherishing the fine traditions of India.

We come from different parts of India, North South, East and West. We speak different languages, we worship different gods, we eat different foods, we wear different clothes, but there is a feeling of oneness and common consciousness that keeps us together, make us proud of our nation India. I congratulate the Indian Association in Baden for the excellent work it does in celebrating India and promoting Indian culture in Switzerland.

There has been a deeper engagement of India and Switzerland in recent years. Our business engagement with Switzerland is growing rapidly. Our bilateral trade today is nearly USD 20 billion. The engagement between Indian and Swiss companies are deepening. Same is the case with other areas such as culture, movies, yoga, Ayurveda, tourism, cuisine and people to people exchanges. It would not be an exaggeration for me to say that I see an India connection in every corner of Switzerland. Almost every museum in this country has some India connection. Every year several hundreds of thousands of Indians travel to Switzerland to appreciate the beautiful landscapes of Switzerland. Each year several thousands of Swiss nationals travel to India for tourism and business. Almost every city in Switzerland has group of citizens who believe in yoga and practice it every day. Indian film industry continues to look at Switzerland as a shooting destination.

This year is a special year for India – Swiss relations. This is the 70th anniversary of the signing of Friendship Treaty between India and Switzerland signed in 1948. We are organising a Festival of India in several cities in Switzerland - connecting Himalayas with Alps. In December we have a reputed Kathakali troupe coming to Switzerland. In December we are organising a week long cultural gala 'Namaste Switzerland'. I invite you all to participate at the various events that we organise in Switzerland. Pls follow us on twitter and Facebook. Once again thank you for inviting me and my wife Joice to this event.

Thank you.