

Introductory words of councillor Martin Graf for the SolarSuperState award 2013, held at the Volkshaus on 23rd August 2013, Zürich

Dear Mr. Maegaard, chairman of SolarSuperState, ,
dear Mrs. Montoro, Representative of the Spanish Ministry of Commerce
Your excellency, ambassador of Denmark, Mr. Lars Vissing
dear Mr. Steinmann, Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Energy
dear ladies and gentlemen

You are all warmly welcome to this evening's event, the SolarSuperState award 2013. I am very happy to receive you all here in Zurich, especially all the foreign guests from other European countries.

I am myself very much honoured to have been invited for the introductory speech. In my function as state councillor of justice and interior I do not have the occasion to open an event on energy questions all too often. Even though I do regard the question of natural resources as absolutely crucial for the further development of mankind.

I presume your General Secretary Mr. Volkwein invited me, because he knew about my beliefs in this field of action and – no doubt – because I am member of the board of AXPO.

I, however, never expected to meet you, Mr. Meegaard, some day here in Zurich. The first time I took notice of your activities at the «Nordic Folkecenter for Renewable Energy» was through the film „The Fourth Revolution“. I actually thought of visiting the centre one day, actually even recommended it to the board of AXPO. But now you are here!

I hope your presence will encourage Switzerland and especially the canton of Zurich to do a little more for our hopefully sustainable future.

I assume, it is not the first time you are presenting an award in the energy sector this evening. For over 40 years you have been active in the field of energy, engaging yourself for a renewable future. It shows, how long things take, even though we seem to be living in a fast world. Probably because it is a mental barrier, which prevents mankind from believing that it is possible. 100 % renewable – how can that work? But I fully agree – it is the only way. It is the only objective that makes sense. We need to decentralize energy production, hand it over to the responsibility of each and everyone. Only then will we be sustainable.

I do of course understand that mankind always wants to go the easy and cheap way. What I do not understand is that many of us are quite happy, when others act on their behalf and with technologies they most probably cannot handle. I am actually bewildered that after all this discussion about fossil energy, all the negative experience we have had with nuclear power, hydraulic fracturing does not seem a problem. It shows that responsibility does not follow logical paths.

It shows that interests follow geopolitical priorities. It is obviously all a question of power. No matter what happens to environment and society.

Therefore I do thank your SolarSuperState association for setting up this award to encourage renewables. It is necessary to activate all means for progress.

Progress is especially required in Switzerland. We were the original developers of renewable energy. Today some 20 years later we have lost ground. We did not make the best of it. Others have taken over. Switzerland ranks 15th in solar and 54th for wind in your statistics. A rich country with the best of technologies and the best of engineers! It is rather depressing.

But we do hope to catch up again. Our government is expected to put forward a hopefully very innovative development strategy this year. And then we hope that for once our national parliament acts in an intelligent way. We have got 26 000 projects for renewable energy waiting on a long list to be financed and put into action. One of them is on one of my prisons....

If I look north to Germany and Denmark or east to Austria, a little less west to France, then we can be rather hopeful. Because meanwhile there is no way back anymore. Germany has installed so much solar and wind power over the last years that base load production will lose its market – first of all nuclear power. It is simply not compatible with the volatile renewables. And we certainly do not want to support capacity markets.... Of course we now have to think about how to finance the so far open bills of nuclear power before closing down completely. Our Federal Government at least has made a move in that regard.

Instead we have to think about considerably reducing our energy consumption, especially during winter time, about using more electricity over midday instead of at night (due to solar), about stocking energy in our mountain lakes and replacing fossil energy with renewable electricity.

But I do not want to talk about Swiss internal politics. When we look across our borders I see a lot of active people and a lot of progress. I thus do wish to congratulate the representatives from Spain and Denmark for setting an example. You do not only talk politics, you do take action. And that is what counts, that alone. Plus the fact that we want to invest into home markets, not into conflicts abroad. We want to see employment at home, instead of wars abroad.

And we do no longer want to be dependant in the energy sector, dependant on large international companies, distant countries and world powers. We want decentralization and subsidiarity. Basically more democracy in the energy sector.

For that we need political majorities. Perhaps this award can help even a little.

I do therefore thank you all for your support in achieving the goal of 100 % renewable, which basically also means far more sustainability.

Martin Graf
Regierungsrat Kanton Zürich
23rd August 2013