

Dear Mr. Counsellor of States Filippo Lombardi,

Mr. Director General,

Mrs. Director,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all in the Ganz Museum this afternoon.

I express my sincere thanks to the Director General and to the museum Director, Mrs. Csibi, for their great help for making this special event possible.

Today, we celebrate on a single occasion several important events, with important guests and partners.

As part of the “Grand Tour of Switzerland in Hungary” program, and of the partnership project between Lake Geneva and Lake Balaton, we have enjoyed a performance of the Alphorn Academy of Switzerland. I address a special thank you to our musicians for bringing a piece of Switzerland’s culture to this event.

I would also like to draw your attention to the newly published touristic guide about Switzerland, available in Hungarian language. The author, Viktor Wierdl and the managing director of Hibernia Publisher, Jenő Marton are present with us this afternoon.

Today, we have gathered to celebrate the opening of the “Gottardo 2016” exhibition.

With the inauguration of the Gotthard Base Tunnel on June 1, Switzerland celebrated one of its greatest engineering achievements and the completion of the country's largest-ever construction project. With this tunnel, Switzerland is linking the Italian- and German-speaking parts of the country. But Switzerland also links northern and southern Europe, and is making an essential contribution to the transport infrastructure on the continent. Let me welcome Mr. Niederhauser, who was a conductor for almost 30 years and who knows the old Gotthard tunnel like the back of his hand.

The “Gottardo 2016” exhibition will give you deeper insight into the truly historic dimensions of the new Gotthard tunnel. This informative exhibition aims at making the public aware of the epic achievement through the Swiss Alps. Five themed modules cover the topics of history, facts and figures, engineering and the importance of the project of the century for Switzerland.

I thank the sponsors of the Gotthard Base Tunnel, namely ABB, Sika and Stadler Rail, for their great and instructive contribution to this exhibition.

I cannot think of a more suitable venue for this exhibition. As a pioneer in railway wheel production, Abraham Ganz had a particularly strong link to railways. As an inventor, merchant and factory owner, he made a decisive contribution to the development in leading the feudal Hungary of the 19<sup>th</sup> century into the industrial age.

This compatriot was a pioneer in many respects and a true success story of a Swiss abroad. Many years after his death, an organization was established, representing all those who decided to leave their native land and to seek their fortune abroad. This organization is celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year and I’m very pleased to welcome the Vice-President of this “Organization of the Swiss Abroad”, Mr. Filippo Lombardi, member of the upper chamber of the Swiss parliament, as our guest of honor.

For many years, Mr. Lombardi has actively supported the interests of the Swiss abroad. Five years ago, he introduced the Parliamentary Initiative which led to the adoption of the Swiss Abroad Act. The law, which has entered into force last November, is essential for the protection and support of the Swiss abroad. The Swiss community in Budapest, including Mr. John McGough, the representative of the Swiss in Hungary to the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, was keen to invite Mr. Lombardi in order to thank him for his outstanding contribution in their favor. I think that I’m speaking also on their behalf when I say that this jubilee provides an excellent framework to celebrate the organization itself and the Swiss abroad but also to express our most sincere appreciation to Senator Lombardi.

Senator, we thank you wholeheartedly for your great support for the Swiss abroad and it is now my great pleasure to invite you to address the audience.