

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Geneva State Council, I have the pleasure to welcome you today for this conference dedicated to Energy, Environment and Development.

Geneva is the right place to debate these complex matters which are today at the heart of national and international agendas. The shores of Lake Geneva have already welcomed in the past high-level meetings which brought significant inputs to the topics of your encounter.

Allow me to recall a few of them.

You have probably heard about the Founex International Seminar. Back in 1971, the concept of ecodevelopment was invented in this village nearby Geneva. This concept rose to fame the next year during the landmark United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm.

In the following decade, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) laboured in Geneva, where it carved the concept of “sustainable development”.

The preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held in Rio in 1992, also took place in Geneva.

Geneva also happens to be today one of the principal world oil and energy trading centre, and it is increasingly becoming a carbon trading hub.

The conference that brings you together today is innovative in that it attempts to address the three domains – energy, environment and development – as an interrelated issue at the global level.

This Conference's special character also comes from its attempt to bring together different stakeholders, reaching beyond the three areas of concern to also encompass Academia, industry and business, international organizations, national governments, NGOs and media.

Multiple bridges and continuous interactions are called for in order to overcome the divides that exist between these different worlds.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The economic crisis cannot cancel the fact that last summer, the oil barrel almost reached the 150 dollars mark. Neither can it cancel the dramatic consequences of the oil and food prices surge, especially on the most fragile countries of the world.

This crisis will come to an end and the return of growth will bring back to the fore the question of raw material prices, together with the issue of the foreseeable depletion of fossil energies.

The states and all stakeholders of the global economy must urgently face up to their responsibilities. They must prepare together the post-economic crisis era, in order to allow for the sustainable development of our societies. This means notably a drastic reduction of our dependency on non-renewable energy sources.

The economy is obviously not the only dimension to be considered. We all understand that if we do not act quickly and in a meaningful way, climate disorders will reach a point of no return. This topic will be at the heart of the third World Climate Conference, which will take place in Geneva in the coming month of September.

The constraints that sustainable development imposes us provide us with a way out of the crisis. This way entails building the framework for a sustainable and lasting growth for our planet.

The resolute action of states, together with an increased level of responsibilities that all economy stakeholders have to assume, will lead us in the right direction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference offers a remarkable opportunity. I truly hope that based on the exchanges, discussions, dialogues and outcomes of this first Energy Pact meeting, fruitful actions and new ideas will arise which will be of significance for our common future.

Geneva stands ready to assist in every possible way in this quest, and we will continue to play our part in offering a genuinely multilateral meeting ground and a centre of reflection for the humankind.

Thank you.