

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Having reached the conclusion of our two day Economic Zones Workshop, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both the speakers and participants for making this the success that it has been.

A mark of a good seminar is the eagerness of participants to tap into the wealth of knowledge brought to the discussions through actively participating in discussions and generating a strong flow of questions. As we have all seen, we seem to have achieved this on the occasion of this workshop.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on a few of the key points that have emerged during the two days of deliberations.

A key point that emerged relates to the importance of strong support from the respective governments in establishing and increasing the probability of success of the economic zones. There has been some very interesting debate on the exact nature of the role of government in establishing economic zones, but it seems clear that the legal, regulatory and institutional framework plays a crucial role and should be set up from the national government level. Examples of this emerged during discussions on the Jebel Ali Free Zone and the Shanghai Pudong Zone yesterday.

Secondly, while there are different forms of ownership of economic zones around the world, ranging from public ownership, as in the case of Jebel Ali, to entirely private construction and management, for example the Al-Tajamouat Industrial City in Jordan. A crucial element going forward is the need to ensure that the best practices established in the zones can be extended to the benefit of the economy as a whole.

Thirdly, the crucial issue of whether a private-operated and financed SEZ can compete against a government operated and financed SEZ sparked a considerable amount of debate yesterday. The adage of “build them and they will come” also seems to have stirred considerable debate.

Fourth, a clear conclusion during the course of deliberations relates to the fact that strong developers are required to finance the creation of SEZs, but that financing of economic zones, like all project finance, requires careful structuring to allocate risks appropriately. Risk mitigation is also important, including phased build-out of infrastructure, and involving public agencies in financing to ensure, and to signal, government commitment. One way of achieving this may be through a public-private partnership.

Finally, many speakers showed us the importance on building on what you already have, whether in terms of infrastructure or existing industries, rather than starting entirely from scratch. This is something to bear in mind in planning new zones. All the countries in this region have strengths to build on, whether it is existing export industries, existing

infrastructure, or existing zones of some type. The way forward is to build on what you already have.

At this stage, I would like to thank Switzerland's State Secretariat for Economic Affairs for their financial support, as well as the teams at the IFC and FIAS that have worked assiduously towards setting the stage for the successful workshop this week. Special thanks to all the various speakers and moderators who have traveled from far and wide to be here, and who have all made excellent presentations. Thanks are also due to the staff of the Oberoi who have patiently supported all our needs while bringing you this workshop.

Once again, many thanks for your participation and I hope that you have found this workshop as instructive as I have.