

*Press release*

## **Focus on sustainability key for Swiss financial centre to stay competitive**

*Zurich, 20 June 2018*

At its 2018 annual conference, Swiss Sustainable Finance (SSF), for the third year in a row, brought together high-level speakers and a captivated audience to debate current issues in sustainable finance. The event offered a platform to deliberate on developments, in light of the EU action plan and resulting legislative proposals published earlier this year. With sustainable finance more and more on the global agenda, keynote speaker Philippe Le Houérou, CEO of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), shared his views on how private finance can help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and create a more sustainable world. Simon Zadek, Principal, Project Catalyst, a project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), gave an overview of international trends and results of different initiatives. In SSF's preceding annual Members' Assembly, it strengthened its board with two new members, who will support SSF's work to mainstream sustainable finance.

### **An international expert voices his call to action**

During his keynote speech at SSF's annual conference "Game-changers in finance – leveraging Swiss Expertise," IFC's Le Houérou said that "despite the impressive progress that the international community has made against poverty in recent decades, the world's challenges are simply too vast to be addressed with official development assistance alone. Private finance will have a key role to play in achieving the SDGs by providing the necessary capital and the innovative financial tools to respond to the toughest development challenges." Le Houérou stressed the importance of IFC's long-standing partnership with Switzerland and said the Corporation's Creating Markets strategy will unlock new investment opportunities in emerging economies.

### **The fast pace of developments requires the Swiss financial centre's attention**

Also on the event agenda was Simon Zadek (Principal, Project Catalyst, United Nations Development Programme) who served as co-Director of the UN Environment's Inquiry into the Design of a Sustainable Financial System. He demonstrated the need for Swiss financial sector players to keep innovating in order to keep pace with the fast development, stirred amongst others by the EU action plan, which suggests concrete regulatory changes to strengthen sustainability in finance.

### **Two expert panels debated the role of institutional investors and efficient ways to address climate risks**

An expert panel consisting of representatives from compenswiss, Pictet Asset Management and the Swiss State Secretariat for International Finance (SIF) debated changing requirements of institutional asset owners regarding the uptake of sustainability risks in their asset management and resulting innovations provided by the industry. In a following panel, Professor Reto Knutti, one of the lead authors of the IPCC report, provided insights into recent climate research findings that

demonstrate the urgency of fast climate action. The panellists representing MSCI, International Capital Markets Association (ICMA) and UBS agreed that effective tools to integrate climate aspects into investment decisions are increasingly being developed but stressed the importance of further working on solutions that capture opportunities while avoiding material risks.

### **SSF 100 members and 14 board members strong**

In 2018, SSF was proud to gain its 100<sup>th</sup> member. The continued membership growth mirrors the increased interest and commitment SSF sees amongst financial players. Sabine Döbeli (CEO, SSF) stated that “only through the engagement and activities of our members, can SSF achieve our goal of making Switzerland a leading financial centre for sustainable finance.” The SSF Board also gained new members when René Nicolodi, Swisscanto Invest by Zürcher Kantonalbank, and Pascal Zbinden, Swiss Re, were voted onto the board during the SSF Members’ Assembly in the morning prior to the SSF annual conference. “With a successful year behind us, having launched 5 publications, organised 9 events and created stronger links to international initiatives, SSF is now looking ahead and planning its next steps with increased support and a focused strategy,” concluded Jean-Daniel Gerber (President, SSF).

### **Contact:**

Swiss Sustainable Finance

Sabine Döbeli, CEO

Tel. +41 44 515 60 52

[sabine.doebeli@sustainablefinance.ch](mailto:sabine.doebeli@sustainablefinance.ch)

[www.sustainablefinance.ch](http://www.sustainablefinance.ch)

### **Additional information:**

> [Swiss Sustainable Finance Annual Report](#)

> [Website of SSF Annual Event](#)

> Swiss sustainable investment market study 2018 ([English report](#), [German summary](#), [French summary](#))

> [Newsletter SSF](#) bimonthly

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**Swiss Sustainable Finance** (SSF) strengthens the position of Switzerland in the global marketplace for sustainable finance by informing, educating and catalysing growth. The association, founded in 2014, has representation in Zurich, Geneva and Lugano. Currently SSF unites 100 members and network partners from financial service providers, investors, universities and business schools, public sector entities and other interested organisations. An overview of Swiss Sustainable Finance’s current members and network partners can be found [here](#).