

Finanzdelegation

Délégation des finances

Delegazione delle finanze

Joint Committee on Finance



100 ans

Eidgenössische Finanzkontrolle

Contrôle fédéral des finances

Controllo federale delle finanze

Swiss Federal Audit Office



125 Jahre

## **Closing Remarks by Hans-Rudolf Merz, Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Council of States**

With a look back into the past and its major events, the jubilee celebration of the Joint Committee on Finance and the Federal Audit Office is about to end. The moment has also come to adjourn our meeting. Let us now look ahead and set our sights on the future.

Throughout the past decades, Switzerland has developed its own system of state supervision, one whose supreme guiding principles are democracy and the rule of law. Our understanding of democracy is a comprehensive one. Rooted in values, it embraces not only elections and referenda, but also the public and the mass media.

Grounded in these principles, the practical and daily cooperation task of supervising and monitoring unfolds between the various competent bodies from the legislative branch (the Joint Committee on Finance), the executive branch (internal oversight), and the autonomous Swiss Federal Audit Office. This structure – a veritable sharing of power within the separation of powers – will definitely continue to find its justification in our country of republican processes in the future as well. Such a system of high supervision, functioning simultaneously both operatively and implementationally, is fully in keeping both with dynamics, the diversity, and the sometimes contradictory nature of reality, as well as with the inexorable flux in the daily life of our collectivity. On the whole, the system has stood the test of time.

Does this then imply for the future: Go with the *status quo* and more of the same? - No, not at all. The issues and the specific challenges are in a state of constant evolution. While auditing the cashbox was, so to speak, one of the core activities of the Joint Committee on Finance during the era of the First World War, nowadays it is for instance confronted with the complexities of the information technologies. Furthermore, the Joint Committee on Finance is more than ever obliged to develop a flair for pinpointing potential bottlenecks and weak points according to the way in which the political issues are unfolding. It must act as an antenna to capture signals of interference, excess, misuse, and contradiction surfacing in the political mainstream, and at the same time alert other bodies, above all the professional financial auditors, as to the threat of these possible irregularities. And conversely, it should also act to put an end to situations in which the rule of law is unjustly denigrated or slandered.

For its part, the Federal Audit Office, in performing its role as both partner and instrument of the Joint Committee on Finance, has been vested with accrued importance. With the passage of time, it finds itself ever more obliged to rely on highly qualified specialists.

The past and present system of high supervision of the Confederation's finances will thus also be the system of the future. However, its success will depend upon the degree to which it is able to adapt itself content-wise to the evolutionary dynamics of the State. As illustrated by countless examples in political and economic life, this is indeed a question of being equipped with the appropriate structures. In the final analysis, however, it is even more a question of having competent people.

Thus as our celebration draws to a close, my final wish for the Joint Committee on Finance and the Federal Audit Office is that they continue, in the future as well, to benefit from the services of the right people, the best our country has to offer.