

Honorable CERN management and other representatives, Ambassadors, esteemed researchers and Slovenian business representatives,

It is my pleasure and honor to open this first Slovenian industry day at CERN. Firstly, I would like to apologise the presence of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport dr. Jernej Pikalo, due to his urgent obligations, but let me share his clear message of full support to this event.

I also warmly welcome the presence and support of our two Ambassadors here in Switzerland, H.E. Sabina R. Stadler, newly appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Slovenia to the Office of the United Nations and to the other International Organizations in Geneva in charge of all official correspondence between the Republic of Slovenia and CERN, as well as H.E. Ambassador Ms. Marta Kos, from the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Bern.

The Republic of Slovenia's associate membership in the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) undoubtedly marks an important milestone on the path towards the full membership that Slovenia hopes to obtain in 2022. Nevertheless, the associate membership itself provides an opportunity for Slovenian science and economy to create additional value and to enhance their development.

This membership grants Slovenian scientists unlimited access to all CERN programmes and thereby increases the intellectual base of collaborating institutions. Associate membership also bodes well for the Slovenian economy, seeing as it allows Slovenian businesses full access to CERN contracts and, through that, entry into highly competitive markets of knowledge-based products.

Slovenian scientists established scientific cooperation with CERN many years ago, in fact even before Slovenia became an independent state. In their decades of joint projects with CERN, Slovenian scientists achieved multiple scientific breakthroughs in understanding the fundamental building blocks of nature and the relations between them. Based on the research conducted at CERN, Slovenian scientists published more than 1,300 scientific papers in high-impact international journals. These works contributed around 54,000 citations to Slovenian science, of which more than 5,000 can be attributed to the paper on the discovery of the Higgs particle. In addition to the work carried out at CERN, twenty-five bachelors', twelve masters' and twenty-three doctoral theses were completed. Another benefit is the opportunity to be involved in not only the scientific research at CERN, but also to participate in educational programmes and the construction of parts and instruments for future accelerators.

Data on the implementation of Slovenian research and innovation strategy show that the quality of Slovenian research policy is in line with the EU Strategy 2020. We are above the EU average in terms of new PhD students and higher education attainment and the number of new PhDs. Our researchers are well-connected in the international environment, and are among the most active in Europe considering the number of scientific publications, including those in foreign co-authorship.

The impact of science in our economy is recognized, which is why we are increasing our financial support for innovative companies, and as a result, employment is increasing. We are successful in raising funding for scientific research from the Horizon 2020 European Framework Program, which increases our visibility and competitiveness in research.

In coming years, we intend to significantly increase resources for research. This would contribute to the development of science and the transfer of knowledge to society and economy. Until then, we will focus on building state-of-the-art research infrastructure, support research and development programs that enhance the innovation and competitiveness of our economy on an international scale. We encourage the involvement of Slovenian researchers in the international environment to achieve synergies between development funds, and co-funded postdoctoral projects for our most recently educated scientists abroad.

We planned to involve all, so scientific research and innovation will be defined as horizontal and will integrate different research fields with their findings.

This is especially important as major societal challenges, especially those of a global nature, are becoming more complex, therefore requiring ever higher quality solutions. They are only possible by increased research excellence. We strive to promote excellence in Slovenia at all levels, especially in the field of science and research. It depends on the quality of knowledge in a society without which rapid and continuous economic development cannot be imagined.

We also need to improve the relationship between the economy and science, as both areas need to be aware of the strategic importance of excellent cooperation and joint determination of those niches in the world market where the best results can be achieved in synergy.

I am very glad that the associate membership opened up opportunities for cooperation for the Slovenian economy. For that reason, I welcome the very first Slovenian Industry Day at CERN, which I hope will result in new and stronger collaborative relationships, and provide opportunities for joint scientific and economic work related to research and development in CERN. I believe that including Slovenian businesses in CERN's work will also strengthen the relationship and cooperation between Slovenian science and economy.

The positive response of the Slovenian economy to the first Slovenian Industry Day at CERN is encouraging and it suggests that such events at CERN will become a well-established practice allowing exchanging information, strengthening cooperation and, in the future, furthering Slovenian business interests in these events.

With the Slovenian Industry Day at CERN we aim to draw attention to the importance of research and development activities and the benefits they provide to society. I am glad that the event at CERN is taking place in autumn, as, in Slovenia, this is a season with many events related to the presentation, work, successes and promotion of scientific achievements.

Allow me to thank the CERN management and all the speakers in today's programme as well as the whole team behind who made this even possible. I wish you all successful work and I hope

for many productive individual meetings between Slovenian business representatives and CERN, which will bring new business and long-term collaboration.