



The centenary of Spiez Laboratory

Bern, 23 October 2025 – Speech of Rafael Mariano Grossi

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Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here with you. It was an honour to be at the Confederation on this important day.

Honourable Councilor, we had an opportunity to discuss earlier today the situation in the world; the role of Switzerland, and how we are working together at this moment of tension – it is a moment of fragmentation, it's a moment where we have to multiply efforts for peace. And what we are doing today is a rare occasion of satisfaction in an atmosphere which is normally charged with concerns and preoccupations. Through Spiez – and through what we are recognizing today – we are reminded that it is possible to work together; that it's possible to work for peace; and that it is possible to combine science and technology in pursuit of the greater good. If we had to explain to somebody who is not an expert in international politics, chemistry, or nuclear science what Spiez does, this would be it.

My personal experience has allowed me, as it was just said, to be in contact with Spiez for many years and while wearing different hats. I suppose there is someone from the OPCW (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) here, an institution that I have in my heart. I contributed to the creation of that institution, and when we were working there, creating and establishing an international organization (no easy feat, as you can imagine) Spiez was the institution providing an indispensable angle. Through the years, as I have followed their work there and the work of my friends and colleagues in The Hague, I have seen how important – indispensable, even – that work has proven to be in dealing with the use of chemical weapons. These are challenges we had thought would be something of the past: we were remembering the days in the 1920s, when all these things happened, and how they continue to haunt us. And it is thanks to institutions like the OPCW, supported by Spiez Laboratory, that we were able to tell the truth of what happens. And it is the same now, in my present capacity as head of the IAEA, that we continue to benefit from such work in very different and very unique circumstances.

I was noting just a few moments ago when I was confirming this collaboration with Spiez, the different and unique angles in which we work together. You were mentioning, State Secretary, what we do in Fukushima. Let me tell you a bit more about what we do because I think this anecdote encompasses all that is good about a scientific institution working with an international organization to solve a political problem.

The Fukushima power station, which was, of course, subject to an accident in 2011, is still being cooled now - it still requires water for the reactor cores to be cooled. That water, once it goes through the stricken reactors, has to go somewhere, and it has been accumulated in tanks around the nuclear power plant. But a permanent solution needed to be found.



In the end, Japan decided to apply a certain methodology to cleanse this water from dangerous radionuclides and then to release the cleansed water into the sea. But other countries were concerned. They were saying, "We don't trust this. This is going to be a fatal blow to the environment," so much so that very serious import bans were established on fish and seafood from Japan, at the cost of billions of dollars, in addition to the political tensions that arose.

So, from the IAEA, we approached countries in the region, China and others, that were concerned. We said: "We have a plan. How about allowing the IAEA to perform an independent monitoring, sampling, and analysis of this water, which is prepared to be discharged into the Pacific Ocean, before the operation, during the operation, and after the operation?"

And, of course, for this to be done, we needed to have the necessary partners and friends. I decided that Spiez would help me, and so we got in touch. (I'm simplifying, of course, because others also around the world came to our support.) But we were – through this technical cooperation, thanks to the credibility, thanks to the prestige, thanks also to this active, positive, affirmative neutrality of Switzerland – able to present to the parties a plan they could accept.

And so, today, we have already completed 15 batches of tons of water and proved to the international community that nothing in that water is affecting the environment.

I had the opportunity to be there in the boat. One of the experts from Spiez was there with me. (He is here – I saw him a few minutes ago.) We were cold and wet, on a small boat rocking in the Sea of Japan, collecting the samples together. I wanted to be with them. After we got the results, the work could commence.

This is an example of how incredibly simple, but incredibly important, it is to have institutions like Spiez. We are working in Chernobyl, we are working in Zaporizhzhya, and you are working in so many other places that occupy the headlines of newspapers for political reasons. We are comforted, and we are reassured. Why? Because we have places like Spiez that are working with us and helping us in our work.

So, all the honour to them. Thank you very much, and let's continue. Thank you.