



*Excellency,
Mr. the State Councilor,
Mr. Mayor of the city of Geneva,
Mr. Mayor of the commune of Grand-Saconnex,
Representatives of the commune of Grand-Saconnex,
Mr. President of the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry,
Mr. President of Palexpo,
Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie Council,
Ladies and gentlemen, representatives of the 35 exhibiting Maisons,*

Official Inauguration speech – SIHH 2019 - Monday 14 January 2019

Fabienne Lupo, chairwoman and Managing Director

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Exhibitors Committee of the Salon International de la Haute Horlogerie, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Cité de la Haute Horlogerie and to open, in your company, this 29th SIHH. 29 years, how time flies!

On the eve of its 30th edition, SIHH continues to evolve and to open its doors to new brands and new audiences.

This year, we have the pleasure of welcoming Bovet, who has decided to join us. This brings the number of brands exhibiting at SIHH to 35, including 17 in the Carré des Horlogers which returns for its fourth year.

We're also delighted to again open SIHH to the public, who can visit us on Thursday, from 3pm to 10pm.

Most of all, we are proud to present this new-formula SIHH which isn't just a fair showing the latest collections from the 35 exhibiting brands, but a genuine platform for communication and exchanges; a more compact, faster-paced event for the entire international watch community.

It will have escaped no-one's attention that the watch industry has been confronted with an important paradigm shift in recent years. This begins with structural change as brands take over part of their



distribution and continues with the development of e-commerce. Watch brands have also adapted to new channels of communication, and have taken onboard their customers' different buying habits. More so, they have focused on their most important and most prestigious multibrand retailers – the very ones who contribute to our mission to promote Fine Watchmaking.

In this new context, SIHH, which was designed as a private trade fair, must continue to promote business between the brands and these distributors. It must remain that exclusive and prestigious environment where the foremost journalists and retailers can see watchmaking at its very best.

However, SIHH must also satisfy exhibitors' new expectations by opening more widely to watch enthusiasts, to the general public, and especially younger generations so that these new audiences can discover and marvel at this industry we all love.

When we opened SIHH to the public, three years ago already, we wanted to give watch lovers the opportunity to discover the latest creations before everyone else, and to meet the watchmakers, the designers and the entire ecosystem of Fine Watchmaking.

Because SIHH is a place to do business, but it is also a place for learning, discovering, understanding and dreams...

It is where the international watch community meets, makes plans, builds projects and exchanges views. A place to talk about watches in a different way and to different audiences.

This is why we created SIHH LAB. This new space presents some of the technology and digital innovations coming out of exhibitors' R&D departments, embarking new audiences on the fabulous adventure that is Fine Watchmaking.

Today's SIHH is also and above all a platform that produces and publishes expert content. A think tank for our industry, SIHH takes place in Geneva but people all over the world must hear about it. This is the purpose of SIHH LIVE, where brands can talk to their community, both at the fair and beyond, through a programme of keynotes, panels and presentations. Streamed live to social media, each one is an event that no watch fan will want to miss.

With such a packed agenda, it's easy to see why SIHH is a force, a momentum for everyone connected to Fine Watchmaking. It's where trends are made, and a gathering place for the international Fine Watch community.

This rendezvous would not be possible without the unwavering support of the City and Canton of Geneva, the Commune of Grand Saconnex, Palexpo, and our hotel partners, thanks to whom we can extend a warm welcome to the members of this international community who honour us with their presence.

I wish to thank them most sincerely for their years of continued support. I would also like to congratulate the wonderful team at the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie for their dedication, and for the many months they have put into preparing this unique and exclusive event.

Also, I wish to thank and encourage our many service providers - the installers, decorators and caterers, the security, hospitality and transport staff, and our press agency: close to 1,500 people who bring you the most beautiful fair in the world.

It is with this community spirit in mind that we have made an agreement with Baselworld, and have decided to coordinate our dates from 2020.

Our one objective must be to serve the greater good of the industry, and this decision is proof of that. We and the Baselworld executive agreed on the importance of coordinating our two events, which will be held back-to-back starting in April 2020 and for five editions.

I'd like to end with this quote from Henry Ford: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."

All that remains is to wish you a wonderful SIHH.

Fabienne Lupo