

International School of Zug and Luzern: Graduation 2009
(Zug, June 6, 2009)

Graduation speech

(Regierungsrat Matthias Michel, Volkswirtschaftsdirektor des Kantons Zug)

Dear graduating students
Dear responsables of the International School
Dear Parents and friends of the students
Dear Guests

This ceremony is a special event for all of you. First, for all the graduating students - now you have your ticket to the universities of the world. It may be the first time your parents have a daughter or son graduating. And for the school it is the first time the new International School of Zug and Luzern has this ceremony.

For this special event, I have two main messages, positive ones:
First, you have all the opportunities of this world. Second, the economical crisis is over.

But first, let us stay with the special sensation of the first time, of the first times. It's a human experience to remember - all of our life - the first times. Your parents can tell you, when, at the age of one, you could stand on your own feet the first time, when you managed to pronounce your first "Mama" or "Dady", when you first had the courage to ride a bike. And you remember your first school day, your first open air night, your first falling in love, your first kiss. These first times you will never forget. And you will never forget this first step into the world with your AP-Graduation.

Why? I give you three reasons.

First, on a long journey, we always remember the crossroads. At the end of the International School you stand at a crossroads and have to decide which way, at least, which direction to go. Some of you have already decided, which University, which place or which field you will start in autumn. Others are taking a gap to get some experience by working or travelling.

Second, you will remember this moment, because it's full of opportunities. Hardly ever again will you be in a similar situation. From now on, you start professional specialization; with each decision in one or another direction, you will miss out on others. By taking opportunities you leave others behind. With your AP-Graduation in your hand, with the personalities you have developed during the last years, not least by the chances you got at the International School and not to forget the support of you parents, by all this you have reached a point, where all the opportunities of the world are yours. You are privileged. This is the main positive message of today: You have all the opportunities of the world.

And third, you may never forget the present economical, political and social circumstances: In the last few months, we have experienced the first global economical crisis. Never before has recession touched all of the important economies of the world at the same time: the economies in America, Asia and Europe. I assume, that you as students of an International School and mainly children of parents of the international community, that you feel this crisis within your families and friends; maybe more than other people, living within a pure swiss social network or the pure local market.

But, didn't I promise you, five minutes ago, to give you a good message about the crisis, that it could be over? How can this be, you might think, that the Minister of economy dare to announce this? Of course, in these months, we feel the hard consequences of the errors and false estimations in the financial market, which lead to the overall crisis. But the worst moment of the crisis is over. Why? The worst moment was a few years ago: Then, the financial market based on errors, overestimations and on harmful developments, mainly in the US real estate - market, but we didn't know about it. The worst moment is, when you are at the end, but you don't realize it. In these moments you decide on a wrong basis with the consequence of misjudgements. To have cancer and not to know about, that is the worst thing. Now, we know the reasons, we have the diagnosis. This enables us to act. In this sense, we have at least the opportunity to surmount the crisis.

To sum up: You as young people, as graduating students, you stand at the crossroads of the opportunities of the world. At first glance, these opportunities may be weakened by the economical crisis. But at the same time, we have the opportunity to overcome this period. And I am convinced, that we will be successful. Mainly because of you: With your personalities, your know-how and especially with your skills, wills and visions, you will be a strong generation of new leaders. In a few minutes, we will hear about your plans for the future. Your pan show, that you are eager to know the world, to gain knowledge and experience and to take on responsibility.

Hearing of your future plans, you will take up studies in universities in Europe, the States, Canada or elsewhere. Studying is one thing. But don't forget about life, about all the experiences that will shape you. The world needs not only intelligent people, but experienced ones. Just learn from the life of wise men. One of them, the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, wrote a poem, one of my favourites. Borges, born in Argentina, moved, at the age of 15, with his family to Switzerland, where he attended school; later, he travelled to Spain, then back to Argentina. In his old age, at the age of 85, he wrote a poem called "Instantes" (Moments). Some words out of it (Spanish, than translated):

"Si pudiera vivir nuevamente mi vida.
 En la próxima trataría de cometer más errores.
 No intentaría ser tan perfecto, me relajaría más.
 ...
 Correría más riesgos, haría más viajes, contemplaría
 más atardeceres, subiría más montañas, nadaría más ríos."

Translation:

"If I were able to live my life again,
 next time I would try to make more mistakes.
 I would not try to be so perfect. I would be more relaxed.
 ...
 I would run more risks. I would take more trips,
 I would contemplate more sunsets,
 I would climb more mountains,
 I would swim more rivers."

I met this poem a lot of years ago. Typically, not while studying at home, but while travelling as a back-packer in Latin America. You will be given a copy of this poem. It's worth reading it. It encourages us to live our visions and to experience as much as we can. By these words of a wise man I wish you an interesting future. And for today, I congratulate you, that you have successfully reached a platform and even more: a springboard, which - by your own energy - will launch you into a bright future!