



Hydroelectricity: a pillar of the electricity supply

**Address delivered by Hans E. Schweickardt, Chairman of Grande Dixence SA
Press presentation on April 30, 2010**

Only the spoken version shall be authentic

Ladies and gentlemen the media representatives,

It is with pleasure and pride that I welcome you this morning to Bieudron to celebrate **three events of key importance for Grande Dixence SA:**

1. First of all, our company is celebrating an important event this year: its sixtieth anniversary. It was in August 1950 that the company Grande Dixence SA was established in order to build the hydroelectric facility that we know today.
2. But 2010 will also be remembered as the year in which the Cleuson-Dixence facilities were re-commissioned. Since January 27 of this year the Bieudron power station has been operating again, after a 9-year stoppage.
3. Finally, we are celebrating today the inauguration of the new information pavilion, where we are right now, and the visit circuit through the Nendaz and Bieudron power stations. In view of the popularity of the Grande Dixence dam with the public during the summer months, we have decided to build a new information pavilion and a visit circuit along the Rhône on the plain, open all-year-round. But the purpose of this pavilion and the visit circuit is also to present our activities and the challenges of the energy sector to the public at large. We are indeed convinced that our facilities are the best way to spread knowledge about our sector and to describe its challenges. Rather than being a trivial visit, the discovery of the Bieudron site is intended to be playful and educational. We will have an opportunity together to walk around the two power stations later in the day.

Before telling you something about the history of Grande Dixence SA, I would like to remind you of one key figure of our electricity supply mix.

Very few people know that **56% of the electricity produced in Switzerland is of hydroelectric - and therefore renewable - origin.** This percentage of renewable energy in Swiss production is one of the highest in Europe.

If production from hydroelectric, nuclear and new renewable energies is added up, more than 90% of Swiss kilowatt hours are produced without emitting any CO². In the present context, marked as it is by global warming, this is indisputably a considerable asset for our country.



But let us come back for a few moments to the highlights **of the history of Grande Dixence SA.**

The plan for this exceptional hydroelectric facility built right at the heart of the Valais, in the val des Dix, surpassed by far all that had been built until then in this sector – in terms of dimensions, design boldness and the sums at stake.

In 1965, after 15 years of titanic works, all the structures of the Grand Dixence complex were completed. From then on the power stations of Fionnay, Nendaz and Chandoline took turns at transforming this considerable mass of water into electrical power, sufficient to supply the equivalent of 400,000 households with electricity.

New structures were built on the site between 1993 and 1998 to increase the production capacity of the complex. This was the case of the Bieudron underground power station, which forms an integral part of the Grande-Dixence facility.

But the history of our company has also been marked by the grief caused by the tragic accident that occurred on December 12, 2000, claiming the lives of three people. We will commemorate this sorrowful event later on in the official part of the proceedings.

The re-commissioning of Bieudron will make it possible to react very quickly to the demand for electricity during peak times. It will also contribute to the stability of the Swiss and European grids. As everyone knows, the compensation energy requirements - which is the energy necessary to balance at all times the level of consumption and production in the electricity grid - are constantly increasing owing to the present and future expansion of new renewable energies in Switzerland and Europe.

With their 1269 megawatts of additional peak-time energy - which is, moreover, renewable - the Cleuson-Dixence facilities will thus make a vital contribution to the country's supply security. The builders of the Grande Dixence complex were not only hydroelectricity pioneers but also real visionaries by foreseeing the country's future energy requirements.

The re-commissioning of these facilities is also a major asset for our shareholders, who have always shown their confidence in us: they are Alpiq Suisse SA, Industrielle Werke Basel (IWB), BKW FMB Participations SA and Axpo AG.

In order to mark the event, an open-day will be held on Saturday, May 1, 2010 at Bieudron, from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Visitors will be able to discover the new information pavilion and to walk round the visit circuit through the Nendaz and Bieudron power stations.

Without further delay, I will now give the floor to Mr. Daniel Mouchet, Chairman of Cleuson-Dixence Construction SA.