Ladies and gentleman

My name is Maarten Loeffen, I’m the managing director of Association Stadswerk the Netherlands. First and foremost on behalf of our association and our Dutch partner organisations I would like to thank Mrs. Hedda Samson the Dutch ambassador in Switzerland for inviting us to this Apero. At the end of my speech as a token of our appreciation, I would like to present you with a small gift inscribed with a statement in respect to the purpose of our visit: Von den Alpen bis zum Flachland wissenauschtauch macht stark. That’s what it’s all about. Secondly I would like to thank the city of Zurich who in the coming days is so willing to share with us the efforts necessary to become world’s most sustainable city . We a very eager to hear about your plans and projects and we are very pleased that so many Zurich professionals have gathered here with us this evening.

As stated on the inscription and mentioned previously: the exchange of professional knowledge, know-how and experience is the main goal of our three day visit to Zurich. I hope that all of our Swiss colleagues assembled here with us will also seize this opportunity to acquire some Dutch knowledge. Our delegation is made up of the members from five associations. Apart from Stadswerk our delegation represents: Foundation Rioned, Royal association water network, Association Sustainable municipalities and Waternet, the water company which covers the entire water circle in our capital Amsterdam. We all work in the public space sector and the title of our program states: This trip will place your own professional knowledge in a broad perspective.

Please allow me to shortly introduce our group and then I would like continue by telling you why we are so interested in Zurich. In our group there are: ~~13~~ 18 participants representing 7 towns, ranging from the biggest cities to smaller towns, ~~6~~ 7participants from water boards, 7 participants from other water related companies and 3 participants from engineering companies.
Why are we visiting Zurich ?

Like Switzerland we have a public space in the Netherlands to be proud of. Due to the urge to slow down climate change and at the same time the need to adapt to the changing climate we have a lot of challenges in common. Zurich seems to be well ahead on the road to a more sustainable city development. It was a Dutch engineering company Arcadis (also represented in our group) that pronounced Zurich as the worlds most sustainable city. This election drew our attention and made us choose the road to Zurich. We are eager to explore the hindsight’s on your policy concerning the greening of the city, public heath, water safety and mobility solutions.

As you may know both of our countries are about the same size: 41.000 but with 17 million inhabitants the Netherlands is densely populated. Urbanisation has taken a big flight in the Netherlands. By 2030 90% of the people will be living in an urbanized area. Maybe we should consider the Netherlands no longer as a crowded country but as an empty city. So it is that we take great interest in matters concerning healthy urban living. How can we reduce air pollution and the use of automobiles, and stimulate biking to create a climate proof green infrastructure? Matters of which Zurich seems to be working on within a bigger schedule and a long term planning.

We are looking forward to seeing and learning about the inspiring projects you are currently realizing. But even more so we would like to get to know you better, so that we can get in touch not only now, but also in the near future and learn from each other’s successes and failures.

I thank you for your attention.