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Special Award presented at the 6th International Smart Factory Summit 2025

Biel/Bienne, 16 June 2025 – Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Detlef Zühlke has been presented with the **Special Award** at the 6th International Smart Factory Summit. The award recognises his visionary and sustainable pioneering work in the field of industrial digitalisation. With the **Smart Factory** concept he developed in 2005, Prof. Zühlke set a global milestone that still serves as the basis for the development of **Industry 4.0** today.

As founding director of **SmartFactory-KL**, the **world's first manufacturer-independent smart factory for networked production**, Zühlke established a groundbreaking demonstration and research platform. This became a model for numerous international Industry 4.0 initiatives, including the Swiss Smart Factory at the Switzerland Innovation Park Biel/Bienne (SIPBB), which was founded in 2017 by Dr Dominic Gorecky.

Prof. Zühlke headed the **industrial IT systems** research field at the **German Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (DFKI)** for over two decades and was Professor of **Production Automation** at the **Technical University of Kaiserslautern**. His work continues to have a significant influence on the research, standardisation and industrial implementation of cyber-physical production systems.

The award was presented by Dr. Kurt Bettenhausen, former member of the board of **SmartFactory-KL** and internationally recognised expert in industrial automation.

The **6th International Smart Factory Summit (SSF)** took place from **11 to 13 June 2025** in **Biel/Bienne, Switzerland**, and was organised by the **Swiss Smart Factory (SSF)** at the SIPBB and the **United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)**. Over **150 experts from more than 20 countries** took part in the intensive **2½-day programme**.

In addition to leading companies such as Roche, Nespresso, Siemens, Dassault Systèmes, Coca-Cola and the World Economic Forum (WEF), renowned research institutions such as EPFL and CSEM were also represented, as were founders of pioneering start-ups in the field of robotics and artificial intelligence, including AICA, Wandelbots and NEURA Robotics.

The programme was rounded off by exclusive visits to the **Technikwelten Museum in Solothurn** and the **precision manufacturer Laubscher** in Täuffelen – both impressive insights into the innovative strength of the region.

The summit provided a high-calibre platform for the international exchange of knowledge and experience between **industry, science, start-ups and politics** – with a common goal: **to actively shape the future of intelligent, connected production**.