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**MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SWISS CONFEDERATION
TO SWISS PEOPLE LIVING ABROAD,
FOR AUGUST 1, 1971**

Dear compatriots,

On this National Day, when Swiss people at home and abroad commemorate the foundation of Switzerland, 680 years ago, I should like, on behalf of the Federal Council, to send all compatriots abroad my cordial greetings and best wishes.

This year our National Day is being held against a very special background. Life in our national community has undergone a basic change with the conferment of full voting and election rights on the women of Switzerland. In the referendum of 7 February 1971, a significant milestone in the life of the Swiss people, the women of this country were granted voting and election rights at federal level, what was an impressive demonstration of confidence. On this first day of August, for the first time in the history of the Confederation, the women of Switzerland have taken their place in the ranks of voting citizens as fully qualified members with equal rights. Our country has emerged from this referendum united and strengthened, and we have every reason to be pleased with this development.

Another encouraging sign should also give us great satisfaction: the appeal made to the Swiss people in 1970, Nature Conservation Year, for the maintenance of a wholesome environment, on which the survival of mankind may well depend, has not gone unheeded. The Swiss people have understood the needs of our time. At the communal, cantonal and national levels, increasing efforts are being made to follow up words with deeds and co-operate actively to preserve the world in which we live.

I feel that there is every reason for all of us to interpret these two facts as a good omen for Switzerland, from which we can draw strength and courage to go forward into the uncertain future.

For you, my esteemed compatriots in foreign lands, may this show that to us here at home it is of primary importance to preserve the genuine homely qualities and hospitality of our country, also and not least for you Swiss people living abroad who hope to visit Switzerland one day.

So I should like to invite you to celebrate this year's anniversary of the Confederation together with us. On this National Day, I feel the imperative desire to offer you my heartfelt thanks for the loyalty you have always shown to the land of your fathers and for the affection you cherish for the homeland. So, once again, on behalf of all of us here at home, let me convey to you and your families my heartfelt greetings and good wishes for your future health and happiness.

RUDOLF GNÄGI
President of the Swiss Confederation