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by way of removing internal hurdles concerning social and health insurance and the recognition of Diplomas and study times and international agreements with regard to pensions and double taxation.

PS: I've tried to translate this latest info from the Secretariat as accurately as possible. For us oldies, today's modern version of the German language doesn't make much sense, particularly when you come up against words such as "zielspezifische Auslandproduktionen" or "Informatisierung" "der Präsenspflege als Antennen und als Multiplikatoren", I'm sure you all understand what I mean!

Yours
Heinz L.

Swiss capital plays host to UN appeal

The flag of the United Nations flew over the Swiss parliament for the first time recently, as part of the UN's consolidated appeal for funding.

Although Switzerland has only been a UN member for two months, Bern was chosen as one of eight cities around the world to help launch the appeal.

Some of the UN's most senior officials, including the deputy secretary general, Louise Fréchette, came to the Swiss capital to call on donor countries to contribute \$3 billion (SFr4.37 billion) next year in order to alleviate suffering

in some of the most impoverished and conflict-ridden areas of the world.

Thirty countries and regions are being targeted, and in Bern special attention was paid to three in particular; the Caucasus, Guinea, and the Israeli-occupied territories.

"Last year we got 57% of what we asked for. This year we do hope for more than 50 or 60%," said Louise Fréchette, United Nations.

The title for this year's consolidated appeal was "Hope for the future", but as field workers in some of the regions explained, keeping hope alive among people who have suffered decades of conflict is very difficult.

Peter Hansen, the UN's senior official in the occupied territories, pointed out that the refugee crisis in the region first began 52 years ago, and that the occupation itself has now lasted 32 years.

"Hope for these people is small, and flickering," Hansen told his audience, "and it needs to be nurtured."

And Frederick Lyons, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for the northern Caucasus, paid tribute to the many dedicated aid workers in the region, who risk their lives to bring relief to people in need.

Some 57 Russian and expatriate aid workers have been abducted in the past few years, Lyons said.

Although the UN is asking for \$3 billion from donor countries in 2003, it is unlikely to raise that much.

"Last year we got 57 per cent of what we asked for", Louise Fréchette told swissinfo.

"This year we do hope for more than 50 or 60%."

But, Fréchette said, one of the problems with funding was that donor countries tended to focus on areas of need which had received a lot of media attention, whereas other regions with equally serious situations were often forgotten.

"I think it is regrettable that the best publicised regions attract more funds," said Fréchette. "But it is understandable that people's compassion is directed towards the situations they are best informed about. I think the media can help a lot here."

Switzerland, even before it became a UN member, was among the world's 12 biggest donors of aid, contributing SFr280 million annually to the humanitarian activities of the UN and to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Now that the country is a full member of the UN as well as a major donor, foreign minister Joseph Deiss believes the Swiss can offer more than just money.

"I think first and foremost we remain a neutral country," Deiss told swissinfo, "and we hope that this will be an asset within the UN system."

"I think there are three main areas where we can bring added value," he continued.

"Human rights in general, peace promotion, and finally development co-operation. There I think we can bring in things that other countries can't necessarily bring in."

Deiss, long a supporter of Swiss membership of the UN, was clearly pleased that the organisation had selected Bern as one of the cities to launch the appeal.

"Yes, it's certainly a great satisfaction for a country which has been a member for two months now," he said. "Especially after the warm reception we received in New York."

"But above all," he continued, "we hope that this launch will be successful."

source: swissinfo.org



Optimist: One who finds an opportunity in every difficulty.

Pessimist: One who finds a difficulty in every opportunity.



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