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Ambassador Dr Beat Nobs's speech held at the AGM in Auckland, June 1, 2008

Welcome

As the patron of the Swiss Society of New Zealand it is indeed my great pleasure to be here with you today. My special welcome goes to all of you who have travelled from far and wide, in particular those members from the Wellington, Taranaki and Hamilton Swiss Clubs to share this day with our fellow Swiss from the Auckland Swiss Club. It is always a great pleasure for a Swiss Ambassador to meet with his fellow countrymen and -women and to get to know their life stories, share their experiences and, of course also to hear their problems, if there are any.

Thanks to the Swiss Club of Auckland and the President of the Swiss Association

A speech would not be right if I did not use this opportunity to thank on the outset the President of the Auckland Club, Marcel Rüedi, and the committee of Auckland Club for the great efforts they undertook to have us here at their beautiful farm. I am looking forward to enjoying a wonderful day with all of you and later on a beautiful dinner in the city of the sails tonight.

At the same time I would want to extend my heartfelt thanks to:

The President of the Swiss Society, Mr. Roland Schütz,

The Secretary and Helvetia Editor Ms Trudi Brühlmann and

The Treasurer Ms Heidi Amelung for all the good work they have done in their first year of office!

The past year

The past year has been a very busy one for the embassy and for myself. As you know, it is my duty but also my pleasure to do my utmost to improve and intensify our bilateral relationship with the Government and the people of New Zealand. Albeit geographically far apart, all of us must understand that we do share a great number of problems that either can only be solved at a global level by joint political action, such as climate change, or we can at least compare notes and learn from each other's experience in addressing the issues at hand. Or, in very few cases, there are some open questions between our two countries the solution of which is basically in our common interest, such as the question of the conclusion of a Working holiday scheme, the thorny issue of the New Zealand Superannuation Scheme and its consequences for people –

Swiss and others – who are entitled to foreign state pensions, or the imminent opening of the New Zealand market for import of cheeses from Switzerland made of non pasteurized milk. Some delegations from Bern have visited New Zealand, representatives of New Zealand authorities have visited Switzerland. In that regard, Swiss delegations have visited to share their experience with their Kiwi colleagues in the fields of waste treatment and to compare environmental issues regarding our different agricultural systems. Recently, a high level delegation of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs has just recently visited their counterparts in Bern and the Ministry of Transport will send a delegation to Zürich to see for themselves how the local transport solutions in that largest city of Switzerland with its very elaborate S-Bahn system and integrated transportation solution might hold some useful examples in particular for the city of Auckland.

But some of you might have noticed, that there has been a pretty active Swiss presence in the cultural field recently in New Zealand, where a great number of Swiss artists could have been heard or seen at various locations in New Zealand.

They were:

Theatre Vidy Lausanne performed Max Black at the Auckland Festival in March 2007.

Some radical solo performers in the audio/sonic art genre performed in Wellington 2007.

Solartaxi in Wellington and around New Zealand in January 2008.

The 1000 Peace Women photo exhibition was shown in Wellington (outdoors!) in March 2008.

Roman Signer's video works were exhibited in Auckland in March/April 2008

Schweizer Klavier Trio played Chamber Music in Lower Hutt in May 2008

Issues of Interest

Let me turn to some more specific aspects that might be of direct interest to you:

The issue of Swiss Cheese in NZ: As you might know, it is very difficult to import real Swiss cheese to NZ, the reason being that the really good cheeses, like Vacherin Fribourgeois, Etivaz, Appenzeller to name just a few, are produced from raw milk, which – for

risks perceived by the NZ-Food Safety Authority – is banned from being imported. However, negotiations between our competent federal authorities (BVet) and the food safety authority are well underway, so that hopefully in the not too distant future it will be possible that you can bring such cheese into the country. At the same time, NZ cheesemakers will also benefit from the right to produce such cheeses in NZ itself. Glorious times ahead!

Superannuation

As I have pointed out in my annual speeches in the past and at the various AGMs of the Swiss clubs all around the country that I have participated, I as the Ambassador of Switzerland in this country and our authorities back home are absolutely aware of the unfortunate situation Swiss citizens in NZ are in regarding the deduction made from your NZ Superannuation if at the same time you are entitled to a Swiss AHV. Let me tell you, without giving away too much: We are talking to the NZ Government at this point in time. This issue is on the agenda.

Citizenship issues

I am pleased to tell you that the number of Swiss Citizens in NZ as of Dec 31, 2007 is 6374 up from 6241 in 2006. The interesting thing is that we are receiving more and more queries regarding the possibility to get Swiss citizenship by third or fourth generation Swiss, who all of a sudden become aware of the fact that it might be in their interest not just to be Kiwis but also have a European nationality. We figure that a number of reasons are responsible for that, some emotional, some economical. One of the reasons is certainly that people as far afield as NZ become aware of the fact that with a Swiss passport it's possible to live and work in Europe, including the UK, for as long as you like, where on the other hand the visa regulations for Kiwis in the UK for example are tightened almost every day. Another reason is the fact that young Kiwis, much helped by the fact of easy travel, that have a Swiss background of some sort, want to check out the homeland of their ancestors and some of them even stay and marry Swiss. After all, Switzerland is in the centre of Europe, a very dynamic continent, where there is a lot of cultural and economic action with the chances for the young and agile to get ahead in life.

Be reasons as they may, in order to give your children the chance, don't forget to register them when they are born and later on, please make sure that your kids that turn 18 fill in the registry forms when they get them. I know from my own sons that if you don't watch it those forms do not get filled in nor sent back to the embassy. Please don't hesitate to ask me or contact the embassy regarding any citizenship issue you

might have. It goes without saying that both NZ and Switzerland are fully accepting dual or triple or quadruple nationalities, it is no problem at all.

Elections

In conclusion let me just point out one last topic, which might interest you as well. I am referring to the federal parliamentary elections late last year. You might remember that I sent a letter to all the Swiss that were not registered as voters with the embassy in early 2007. The echo was very positive: The numbers increased from 660 (13.3%) to 902 (18, 7%), which percentage-wise must be the largest increase among all Swiss communities in the world in one year! I am very proud of that. Now of course I know that one problem needs solving to make the often clumsy process of receiving the voting material from the Swiss community of your choice run smoother. As it is now it is complicated and time consuming, sometimes rendering it nearly impossible due to the time constraints. The solution is electronic voting by computer. Unfortunately, we are not there yet. Being a federal republic, elections are run by the individual cantons. But the canton of Neuchatel will be the first one soon to run trials with the Swiss abroad registered in Neuchatel. But the problem is recognized and sooner or later all of you will be able to enter your election account and comfortably cast your vote from your home in Hamilton, Taranaki or Auckland.

I thank you for your attention and wish you a very pleasant day. Of course I am at your disposal for any question you might wish to put forward.

NB

Der Panther

*Sein Blick ist vom Vorübergehn der Stäbe
so müd geworden, dass er nichts mehr hält.
Ihm ist, als ob es tausend Stäbe gäbe
und hinter tausend Stäben keine Welt.*

*Der weiche Gang geschmeidig starker Schritte,
der sich im allerkleinsten Kreise dreht,
ist wie ein Tanz von Kraft um eine Mitte,
in der betäubt ein grosser Wille steht.*

*Nur manchmal schiebt der Vorhang der Pupille
sich lautlos auf. – Dann geht ein Bild hinein,
geht durch der Glieder angespannte Stille –
und hört im Herzen auf zu sein.*

Rainer Maria Rilke

SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year ending 31 March 2008

Income	2007/2008	2006/2007
Subscriptions	\$12,985.50	13,105.00
Advertising	\$2,907.00	3,969.00
Interest	\$2,240.25	2,216.10
Donations	-	7,500.00
Competition subscriptions - Medals	\$1,348.00	1,328.00
	\$19,480.75	28,118.10
Expenditure		
Helvetia - Printing	\$16,138.99	15,486.75
Packing/Postage	\$3,008.21	3,228.08
Stationery/Administration	\$613.77	1,226.23
Competitions - Medals	\$1,383.68	1,778.68
Auditor	\$108.00	-
Bank fees	\$30.00	-
Prizes	-	635.66
	\$21,282.65	22,355.40
Cash Profit/(Loss)	-\$1,801.90	5,762.70
Accrued Income Year End 31.03.07	-\$270.00	
Accumulated Funds at beginning of year	\$49,226.86	43,464.16
Excess/Loss Income at end of year	-\$2,071.90	5,762.70
Accumulated Funds as at 31/03/08	\$47,154.96	49,226.86
Current Assets		
National Bank - Cheque Account	\$7,154.96	8,956.86
National Bank - Term Deposits	\$40,000.00	40,000.00
Accounts Receivable (Debtor)		270.00
	\$47,154.96	49,226.86
Less Current Liabilities	NIL	NIL
Net Assets	\$47,154.96	49,226.86

Represented by:

Accumulated Funds as at 31/03/2008 **\$47,154.96** 49,226.86

Wellington, April 2008

Heidi Amelung, Treasurer

SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2008

1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTING POLICIES

General Accounting Policies

The measurement base adopted is that of historical cost. Reliance is placed on the fact the entity is a going concern.

Revenue and expenses are recognised on a cash basis.

Specific Accounting Policies

The Branch is not registered for GST purposes. These accounts have therefore been prepared on a GST inclusive basis.

Changes in Accounting Policies

There have been no material changes in accounting policies during the year.

AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF SWISS SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INCORPORATED

I have audited the attached Financial Statements. The Financial Statements provide information about the past financial performance of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Incorporated and its financial position as at 31 March 2008. This information is stated in accordance with the accounting policies set out on the previous page.

Committee's Responsibilities

The committee is responsible for the preparation of Financial Statements which give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Society as at 31 March 2008 and of the results of operations for the year ended on that date.

Auditor's Responsibilities

It is my responsibility to express an independent opinion on the Financial Statements presented by the committee and report my opinion to you.

Basis of Opinion

An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the Financial Statements. It also includes assessing:

- the significant estimates and judgements made by the committee in the preparation of the Financial Statements, and
- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Society's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed. I conducted my audit in accordance with New Zealand Auditing Standards. I planned and performed the audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which I considered necessary in order to provide sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the Financial Statements are free from material misstatements, whether caused by fraud or error.

Other than in my capacity as auditor I have no relationship with, or interests in the Swiss Society of New Zealand Incorporated.

In forming my opinion, I also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the Financial Statements.

Unqualified Opinion

I have obtained all the information and explanations I have required.

In my opinion, proper accounting records have been kept by the Society as far as appears from my examination of those records: and the Financial Statements on the previous pages

- comply with generally accepted accounting practice;

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Society as at 31 March 2008 and the results of its operations and cash flows for the year ended on that date.

My audit was completed on 12 May 2008 and my unqualified opinion is expressed as at that date.

LYN HANSEN
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

Wellington, NEW ZEALAND