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Embassy/Swiss political news

Tourism and promotion material on Switzerland available from Swiss Embassy in Wellington

On a recent trip to Mount Maunganui towering majestically over Tauranga, I made a pit stop at the equally impressive „Café Suisse NZ“ (Cruise Deck, 169 Maunganui Rd, Mt Maunganui). After enjoying a mouth-watering Swiss home-style breakfast, I had a chat with friendly owners/chefs Betty and Geoff.

Betty mentioned that from time to time, Kiwi clients enquire about Switzerland as a holiday destination. She is more than happy to offer her advice and even prepared a small folder with touristic information about Switzerland.

Betty also mentioned that she had received information flyers and touristic brochures from the Embassy in the past, which were appreciated by the interested clientele at Café Suisse NZ.

The Swiss Embassy in Wellington acts as the local New Zealand antenna for the official Swiss national tourism office “Switzerland Tourism” (see www.myswitzerland.ch). We constantly have a number of brochures, fact sheets, travel information etc. in stock and on display at the Embassy.

Moreover, we also have various promotion and education material on Switzerland prepared by “Presence Switzerland”, the communication agency of the Swiss Confederation (www.fdfa.admin.ch/presenceswitzerland).

If you are running a business with a “Swiss touch” here in New Zealand, and are interested in displaying or distributing tourism and promotional material on Switzerland to your clients, please get in touch with us (wel.vertretung@eda.admin.ch). We are happy to discuss your needs and send you a tailor-made package.

By Flavio Milan, Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington

Maurer new Swiss President

Late last year, the Swiss parliament officially elected Ueli Maurer as the new President for 2013. The defence minister is a member of the rightwing Swiss People's Party. The post of president rotates annually among the seven cabinet members. The 62-year-old received 148 out of 202 votes in the parliamentary presidential election. Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter will be his deputy.

Maurer, who takes over from Conservative Democrat Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, was backed by all parliamentary groups except the Green Party. Opposition from the centre-left Social Democratic Party did not transpire. The party had indicated in summer that they might sanction the defence minister for lack of collegiality within the seven-member cabinet which he joined in December 2008. Maurer, former president of the rightwing Swiss People's Party, replaced outgoing minister Samuel Schmid.

Faithful to his party's hardline policies, Maurer is against closer ties to the European Union. His political opponents also say he is hostile to women and immigrants, and is not afraid to put across his views. The president's post is largely ceremonial. Maurer will lead government meetings and represent the country abroad on state visits. While still pursuing his ministerial activities, he is considered first among equals for a year and does not defer to the other ministers during that time.

After 12 months as the country's leader, the president then hands over the reins to the next in line, Minister for Foreign Affairs Didier Burkhalter. Under the Swiss constitution, responsibility for foreign policy is not restricted to one specific ministry. Instead, the entire government has a say in how foreign relations play out. Maurer has said that he will hand over certain foreign visits and responsibilities to Burkhalter where it makes sense, so that the minister can build up international contacts.

Source: www.swissinfo.ch (5 December 2012)

One in ten Swiss lives abroad

Almost 716,000 Swiss citizens live outside Switzerland. The trend observed for several years continued in 2012, according to figures released by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. “The number of Swiss abroad has increased by 1.72 per cent, going from 703,640 in 2011 to 715,710 in 2012,” it said in a statement. More than half of these live in Europe (442,620), mostly in neighbouring France (186,615), Germany (80,715) and Italy (50,091).

Outside Europe, the United States is the top destination, with 76,330 domiciled there. Israel is home to 15,970 Swiss – a jump of 21.44 per cent since 2007. The proportion of Swiss abroad on a Swiss electoral register has stabilised at roughly a quarter of those eligible to vote,” said the foreign ministry statement.

The population of Switzerland reached eight million in 2012, but around 20 per cent of people living in the country are foreigners.

Source: www.swissinfo.ch (10 January 2012)