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President of the Swiss Confederation Simonetta Sommaruga



National Day 2015 greetings for the Swiss abroad

Dear fellow Swiss around the world,

Today we all live in a globalised world. As Swiss living abroad, you know particularly well the meaning of globalisation. Some of you will say: 'Switzerland is and remains my home'. Others might say: 'I have two homes – the country in which I live, and my country of origin, Switzerland'.

What is clear is that everyone needs a home. And by that I mean a feeling of having roots, having an identity. In Switzerland, there is currently a heated debate about this identity. Some people claim Switzerland stands for independence, sovereignty and going it alone in Europe. For others, Switzerland is – and always has been – an open

country connected to the rest of the world through clever alliances.

Dear fellow Swiss, Switzerland is not the only country facing these issues. Globalisation means change, and changes always raise questions and launch debates. There is, however, one aspect on which almost all Swiss agree: our direct democracy is a unique political system – and we all identify with it.

I am proud to be president of the country whose citizens have the most political power and responsibility in the world. Direct democracy is a courageous system – and that is one of the reasons why I like it and why it fascinates me. The results of votes are often very close. The reform of the television and radio law was approved in June by a margin of only around 3,000 votes. The Swiss media wrote that the Swiss abroad had made the difference.

And yet many citizens do not bother voting because they think their vote would not make a difference. How wrong this is was shown a few weeks ago by another vote – about car park fees – in a commune in central Switzerland. There were one thousand and sixty Yes votes. And the No votes? One thousand and sixty-one... So in Switzerland every vote really does count.

Dear fellow Swiss, your votes count too. Today, only a quarter of Swiss who live abroad are registered to vote in Switzerland. It would make me happy to see this figure increase over the coming weeks. After all, federal elections will be held in October. If you haven't already registered to vote, you can do so in your

embassy until mid-August.

What's more, for many of you, votes and elections will in future be easier. This year, for the first time, a majority of cantons are offering electronic voting for Swiss who live abroad. So you can see that we are committed to enabling you to take part and exercise your responsibility.

Dear fellow Swiss, I send you warmest greetings from the cabinet and wish you a wonderful August 1st – wherever you are in the world.



HELVETIA X-MAS COMPETITION

Santa Has Some Cool Stuff To
Give Away This X-MAS!

Do you or someone you know have
a really cool or very Swiss
personalised plate?

SWIS5

Take a photo of it before
31 October 2015 and send it by
email to alexandra@fribesco.com
or post it on our
Auckland Swiss Club Facebook
Page and win one of three great
Christmas presents!

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