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Embassy News

A Word by Jürg Bono, Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Consular Affairs

Fellow-citizens and friends of Switzerland,

By the time you read this article, Christmas is just around the corner and the year 2016 almost over.

This is the perfect opportunity to reflect about what happened during this year, with focus on the Consular section of the Embassy.

The first thing coming to mind is the Earthquake which woke us up just after midnight, early Monday morning on 14 November 2016. Luckily, as we all know by now, no Swiss people were injured. But, at the time of the shaking, you can imagine that nobody was thinking about going back to sleep. The situation had to be assessed which is not an easy task even during daytime, but becomes even more difficult at night. We rapidly knew that nobody from the staff was hurt and all the family members were well. In the morning, the Honorary Consul in Auckland and all the Presidents of the Swiss Clubs in New Zealand were contacted and asked to relate any information about injured Swiss people or damaged properties to the Embassy. Even though the central business district of Wellington was shut down on Monday, the Embassy stayed operational during the whole time. On Tuesday two people were allowed to assess the offices. As it turned out, there were only minor damage to report and no structural problems detected. As was noted, all the efforts put into the preparation of the handling of a crisis was time well spent.

As a follow up of the disaster I just wanted to remind you to let the Embassy have your e-mail-address and your mobile phone number. This time there was no need to inform you by SMS or e-mail, as the New Zealand authorities did a tremendous job and we knew that you had access to information you needed. The New Zealanders also evacuated seven Swiss tourists from Kaikoura and kept the Embassy up to date with information about stranded Swiss nationals in the region.

The other big event for the Consular section is the coming visit in Auckland of the biometric passport station in order to save you a trip to Wellington in the beginning of December. This means, that after the visits to Christchurch & Auckland in 2013 and Dunedin & Hamilton in 2015, this service is offered in Auckland again. Mrs. Gloria Giugno will spend one week up North and establish Swiss travel documents for over 123 Swiss people, with the precious help of our Honorary Consul Peter Deutsche.

More in the background, a new application to administer all the Swiss living abroad was introduced in summer 2016. The introduction of the new software meant a lot of extra duties for the consular section, besides the daily workload. Together with this new program, an Online Desk for Swiss national residing abroad was introduced. You now have the possibility to access consular services, such as notifications of changes of civil status, changes of address, etc. online. Furthermore you will be able to order documents and pay them online. More about this possibility is to follow in one of the next Swiss Review.

In October 2016 the Embassy also participated in the Oceania Swiss Club Presidents' Conference which took place in Melbourne Australia, together with the presidents of the Swiss Club of Auckland and Hamilton as well as the president of the Swiss Society of New Zealand. I am sure that your presidents will inform you about what was discussed at the conference. It was a great experience to interchange with presidents from all over Australia and the different views were very enriching.

The Ambassador and the entire Embassy team wish you and your families with all our hearts a joyful Christmas, a beautiful summer and many good things in the year to come.

Jürg Bono

Mir stönd jetz wieder im Advent

Mir stönd jetz wieder im Advent!
E heimlich i liebi Zit,
trotz grossem Lärm und vielem
Gschrei
wos'i der Wält ussi git.

S wird doch i mänger Stube schön,
mängs Härzli strengt sich a
und sinnet, wie's ein Nebedmönsch
es Freudli mache cha.

Me steckt die erschte Liechtli uf,
und i däm Sillberschy
erwached d Wiehnachtshoffnig
schnäll
für alli – gross und chli.

Advent, du liebi, stilli Zit
mit Tannegrün im Chranz,
zünd a i mängem Härz und Aug
en stille Wiehnachtsglanz!

E-mail address needed

Dear fellow citizens,

Most business is done online nowadays. It is therefore very important to have your e-mail address registered with your Embassy.

The advantages are numerous:

- Communication is much more rapid.
- In case of an emergency, the Embassy can contact you straight away.
- You do not need to be at home in order to receive your correspondence.
- A lot of paper is saved. This is good for the environment.
- It's cheap.

Should you already have your e-mail address registered, you can disregard this communication.

If not, please fill in the online form on the following webpage:

www.eda.admin.ch/wellington -> Services
-> Registration and deregistration, Change of Address -> Change of address abroad

The "Swiss Review" has been delivered online since January 2010 as standard. If your e-mail address is registered with the Embassy, you will receive the "Swiss Review" by e-mail unless you specifically desire the printed version.

For THE AMBASSADOR OF SWITZERLAND
Gloria Giugno, Vice-Consul

Embassy News

Despite its shortcomings, the UNSC is and remains the only permanent forum for discussion and decision-making with the mandate and global legitimacy to tackle today's many complex security challenges. Having a voice of reason such as New Zealand on the Council, with creative and practical ideas and no vested interests, is important and can make a difference in achieving the necessary compromises and reaching better outcomes.

The insights I was able to gain from working in MFAT are consistent with key findings of the Swiss Government's recent report to Parliament on its bid for a seat on the Security Council. UNSC membership would offer Switzerland an additional platform for demonstrating its traditional and proven skills as an impartial bridge builder and for putting them to good use on behalf of the international community, thereby advancing its own interests and values. The report also concludes that Switzerland's ability to fully pursue its policy of neutrality – which is not an end in itself, but an instrument of Switzerland's foreign and security policies – would remain unchanged. Moreover, the report indicates that a seat on the Security Council would offer Switzerland better access to key states and enable it to expand its international network, which I can confirm has clearly been the case for New Zealand.

Allowing a Swiss diplomat to work as a fully integrated member within MFAT in this once-in-a-generation diplomatic endeavour is also a reflection of the strength of the bilateral relationship and mutual trust between our two countries. While there is currently no New Zealander embedded in the Swiss foreign service, perhaps a successful outcome of Switzerland's campaign for a seat on the UNSC in 2023/2024 might provide a perfect opportunity to reciprocate this valuable and inspiring opportunity.

About the author:

Flavio Milan is a Swiss career diplomat born in Biel/Bienne. With degrees in history and international relations and work experience in research and education, UN affairs and trade policy, he joined the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 2002. Prior to taking up the role of Deputy Head of Mission at the Swiss Embassy in Wellington in 2012, he served in various positions in Berne, Tanzania and Thailand. He is married and has two young daughters who have developed a distinct Kiwi accent, in addition to their German mother tongue and their father's Bernese dialect.

Swiss citizenship: Act before it's too late

The Federal Assembly has decided in 2014 to tighten the rules regarding Swiss citizenship. It had been widely felt in the country that foreigners can obtain it too easily and without being sufficiently integrated in our society. In future, citizenship applicants have to know one of our national languages, may not be social aid beneficiaries, must respect our public order and the principles of our Constitution, participate in the economic life, encourage the integration of their families into Swiss society, respect our way of life and of course not be a potential threat to the security of our nation. These changes were all overdue.

This revision of the citizenship law had been caused by abuses in Switzerland and had nothing to do with the descendants of Swiss citizens living in other countries, for example New Zealand, who might want to recover Swiss citizenship. However, the Federal Assembly has decided that also these people must fulfill the same conditions in the future if they want to become Swiss citizens. In particular, they must legally reside in Switzerland. This is an important

change compared to the actual situation when Swiss descendants with close ties to Switzerland, for example to a Swiss Club, had been able to recover the citizenship of their ancestors while living abroad, for example in New Zealand.

The new law will enter into force on 1 January 2018. Complete applications by residents of New Zealand in this situation can be received by the Embassy of Switzerland in Wellington before, but not anymore after that date.

The Embassy furthermore strongly encourages Swiss parents resident in New Zealand to register the birth of their children with the Embassy without delay. Certainly New Zealand hospitals will not do that for them. Children thus registered will automatically be Swiss citizens. This registration has currently been possible until the age of 22. Under the new law it will be raised to the age of 25. After that date, they will be able to apply for Swiss citizenship only when residing in Switzerland.

Embassy of Switzerland

New Intern at the Embassy

Dear Helvetia Readers,

I started an internship at the Embassy of Switzerland in November, where I will be working for six months. I already spent one month in New Zealand as a traveller last January, being attracted by the weather, the interesting history, the movie locations, and, of course, the natural beauty of this country. Indeed, as I grew up in Basel-Landschaft in a rural area, with my family being one of the oldest families in the village, going to a new place with a lot of agriculture, untouched nature and farm animals (my grandfather owned sheep) did not feel very foreign to me at all.

I read colonial History at Basel University and later at University College London, which meant that I learnt a lot about Swiss emigration over the last 200 years. Since my father had emigrated from Turkey to Switzerland, become Swiss and married a Swiss woman, I can fully understand the difficulties of creating one's sense of belonging in a different culture, and I am continually amazed by how Swiss traditions and a sense of community are kept alive abroad while



also successfully integrating into the local society.

At the Swiss Embassy, I hope to learn more about the workings of diplomacy and foreign affairs. Among many different projects, I will be involved in the organisation of the Swiss summer event in March 2017, where I hope to meet many Swiss Abroad in order to celebrate our traditions.

Derya Sarina Ünal