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OSA and Embassy News

Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Montreux 23rd March 2019

The 97th Congress of the Swiss Abroad was held on August 16th in Montreux. 91 Representatives worldwide attended the Congress.

The elections for the representatives in the 2021 elections were planned to be executed via E-voting. This will however not be possible and has been put on hold until further notice. Direct election via e-voting of the OSA delegates (as per pilot projects in Australia and Mexico in 2016) will not be possible. For us in New Zealand there will be no change in the voting procedure in 2021.

At the great 'Fête des Vignerons' in Vevey, a delegation of the Young Swiss Abroad was invited to take part in the parade. This festival is only held 4 times each century.

It has been brought to notice that female participation in the Council of the Swiss Abroad is 31%, but only 2 out of 11 executive members are female. It is the goal of the OSA to increase the female participation in the future.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) is working on a new 'Political Vision 2028', entailing, improving, curtailing and remodelling their services to the Swiss Abroad. Also limiting further digitalisation where not appropriate. These efforts are all in the framework to cut financial costs.

The financial situation of the OSA is neutral and balanced with little reserve. The treasurer of the OSA reassured the meeting that the current finances allow for a normal course of business but does not allow for special projects or emergency situations. Therefore, he stressed that the motion brought forward previously to broaden the income basis of the OSA, is being taken seriously and is pursued.

A special OSA project is being planned by merging of all current three OSA websites into one. A budget of some CHF320K is envisaged for this project. FDFA supports the move with a special grant of CHF100K. We were told that the initiative is necessary to maintain an efficient relationship with the sponsors and other supporters, besides making it easier for passing on messages to the readers.

Social Security of the Swiss Abroad remains a core task for the OSA. The

Swiss Abroad face different problems with transfer of pension, old age or other insurance payments from Switzerland to their countries of residence. A resolution was accepted asking the Swiss authorities to safeguard the social security rights of the Swiss living in EU countries, where about 450'000 Swiss Abroad live.

For the Swiss Federal Elections – 21 October 2019 the OSA will prepare an overview of political parties and their pattern of voting in respect of issues regarding the Swiss Abroad.

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During the 3 days in Montreux I have also contacted several parliamentarians and a member of Economiesuisse who is permanently present in Brussel. They have given me assurance that they will use their contacts within the EU and Germany to make politicians aware of Section 70 and the theft by the New Zealand Government. I shall feed them with the relevant information they require. The awareness is becoming more and more important within the EU as the New Zealand Government is seeking a Free Trade Agreement with the EU and pensioners from the EU are also affected with the NZ pension rip off.

The next Council of the Swiss Abroad meeting will be held in Berne on Saturday, 14 March 2020 and the Congress will take place on Friday, 21 August 2020 in Lugano.

*Peter Ehrler
Elected Council Member of the Swiss
Abroad representing New Zealand.*

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The Swiss Society and
Helvetia Team



Dear fellow citizens and friends of Switzerland,

It is a great privilege for me to write a few lines in this distinguished newsletter «Helvetia».

On the 1st of October 2019, I arrived in Wellington and was warmly welcomed by the superb staff at the Embassy. Now, after a few weeks, I am getting used to the strong (cold) winds and the sometimes fast changing weather in the capital city.

Before arriving to New Zealand, I was posted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia until August 2019. Thereafter, I spent the summer vacations in Graubünden (Davos and my birthplace Falera).

My diplomatic career started in 1992 as a trainee at our Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. Belgrade, Riyadh and Baghdad followed. From 2008 until 2010, I was Deputy Head of the Human Security Division in Berne. In December 2010, the Federal Council appointed me as Ambassador and Special Representative for Sudan, South Sudan and the Horn of Africa.

From 2012 until 2015, I served as Ambassador in Amman (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) and then we moved to Malaysia. I am very honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to work in New Zealand, such a beautiful and likeminded country.

My wife Marina and I enjoy outdoor activities such as skiing, running, swimming and mountain climbing. We are certain that we will enjoy our stay in Aotearoa a lot with so many beautiful places to discover.

Most of all, we are looking forward to meeting our compatriots and friends of Switzerland in New Zealand. Before leaving for destinations with Swiss Clubs or where a large number of Swiss citizens live, we will contact responsible persons in order to be able to exchange views and learn about your experiences and interests.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the Embassy is open for suggestions and comments. Any feedback is always most welcome.

Best regards,

Michael Winzap, Ambassador