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AMBASSADOR'S WELCOME

Dear Swiss Citizens in Georgia

We have a positive momentum in our bilateral relations and look forward to further developing them. There is an increased interest for Georgia in Switzerland and we have an intensive year ahead of us. The Georgian Prime Minister and Minister of Finance were in Switzerland for the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, in May we expect the Georgian President for an official working visit to Switzerland and in June the visit of the Georgian Minister of Defense is planned. In Georgia, the Swiss Foreign Minister will participate at the Ministerial Conference of the Council of Europe and we prepare working visits of the State Secretaries of Foreign Affairs and Economy. Of special importance this year is the development of our regional cooperation strategy for the period 2021-2024 and we will continue our cooperation with Georgia in tackling illegal migration and remain active in promoting projects and exchanges in tourism, culture, education and science.



We are living in challenging times of fragmentation, transition and uncertainty on the global, regional and local level. It is therefore important that the Swiss Embassy's actions in Georgia are guided by a reliable compass, the well rooted values enshrined in the Swiss constitution. Our mission is in particular to assist in the alleviation of need and poverty, to promote respect for human rights and democracy and the peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources and to safeguard the interests of the Swiss economy abroad. We do this on the basis of a respectful and inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders.

Our newly inaugurated Embassy building was constructed with Swiss innovation on the basis of two floors of traditional Georgian architecture. This reflects well that we develop our approach respecting the roots of Georgian tradition. All official Swiss entities are now united under one roof, which facilitates a whole of Government approach and makes our projects in Georgia even more effective.

Dear Swiss Citizens, let me thank you for your personal engagement for Swiss-Georgian relations. You contribute a lot to it and the team of the Embassy looks forward to continuing the cooperation with you in order to develop together more Swissness in Georgia in the future.

I wish you a healthy and prosperous New Year!

Patric Franzen
Ambassador of Switzerland to Georgia

INAUGURATION OF THE NEW EMBASSY

The inauguration of the Embassy's new premises located at 12 Radiani Street and a high level visit of the President of Swiss Parliament were the nucleus events of the year for the Swiss Embassy in Georgia.



On 28 October, at 13:00, the new Embassy was officially opened in a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the President of the Swiss Parliament, Mrs. Marina Carobbio Guscetti, and by the Chairperson of the Georgian Parliament, Mr. Archil Talakvadze.

The inauguration was celebrated by a reception for the Swiss colony living in Georgia, the Georgian authorities, the diplomatic corps, as well as representatives of the private sector and other partners and friends of Switzerland.



The risotto prepared and served by cooks of the "Pro Risotto" Association of Ascona (Canton of Ticino), Swiss alphorn tune and the performance by "Kapelle Oberalp" added genuine Swiss flavour to the celebration.

The day was crowned by the Jubilee Concert celebrating 60 Years of UNICEF Switzerland and 30 Years of the Convention of the Rights of the Child in cooperation with the Vivace association. The evening saw a brilliant performance by Georgian and Swiss young prodigies at the Rustaveli Theatre.



During her 4-day visit, Mrs. Marina Carobbio Guscetti met with the President, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Speaker of the Parliament, as well as other dignitaries. She also visited projects funded by Switzerland in Marneuli and Rustavi and inaugurated a Swiss-funded project on ethnic minorities.

Finally, at the Embassy's inauguration, the public saw for the first time an exhibition of Swiss posters and panels related to the cooperation between Georgia and Switzerland. This exhibition will be made available to the public in other provinces of Georgia in 2020.

More on the visit [here](#) | Photos of the Inauguration [here](#) | Photos of the meeting with the Speaker of the Parliament [here](#) | Photos of the field visits [here](#) | Photos of the project launch [here](#)

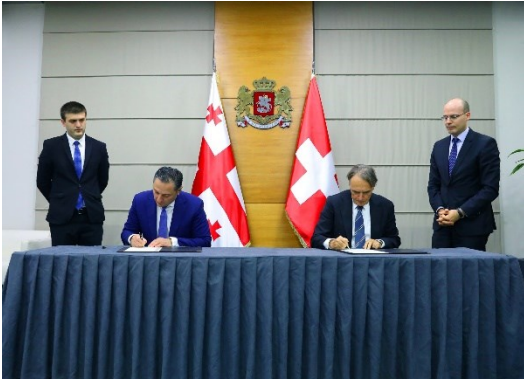


POLITICAL COOPERATION

Switzerland initiated and facilitated a meeting between Foreign Ministers of Georgia and Russia

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and Russia, David Zalkaliani and Sergey Lavrov, respectively, held first direct talks in 12 years on the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly. The meeting was initiated and facilitated by Switzerland (see FDFA Press release [here](#)).

Swiss State Secretary for Migration's visit to Georgia



The Government of Switzerland put Georgia on the list of 'safe countries'. The decision was made on 28 August and entered into force on 1st October.

Following the decision, State Secretary for Migration Mario Gattiker paid a working visit to Georgia on 16-17 September. The State Secretary visited a medical center, met with civil society representatives and Government officials. Following a meeting with the Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. Gattiker and Mr. Gomelauri signed a joint declaration which underpins the intention of the two countries to ramp up the cooperation in the field of

migration.

As part of the agenda, the State Secretary held a press conference for the local media aiming to reach out to ordinary Georgian citizens and relay a key message that "Georgian nationals have almost no chance of being granted asylum in Switzerland," including those who seek medical treatment.



The press release of the visit is [here](#).
Signing of the declaration is [here](#).

Courtesy meeting with President Salome Zurbishvili

On 2 April, Ambassador of Switzerland to Georgia Patric Franzen paid a visit to President of Georgia Salome Zurbishvili.

The parties exchanged about the already very good bilateral relations and discussed the prospects of future cooperation. The President of Georgia expressed gratitude to Switzerland for its special role in the Georgian-Russian relations.



Swiss National Day

More than 300 guests, including the Swiss citizens living in Georgia, government and parliament representatives, diplomats accredited in Georgia, business partners and friends, joined the Embassy in the celebration of the National Day. Please read the [article](#) by the Georgia Today here, and check out the [photo album](#) that speaks for itself.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

SDC's First Woman Director

Starting from May 2020, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) will be headed by Ms. Patricia Danzi. Ms. Danzi will be the first woman director general to run Switzerland's largest unit of the Foreign ministry. Since 1996 Ms. Danzi has been working for the ICRC holding various positions, the latest being regional director for Africa at the ICRC's headquarters in Geneva.

More on this [here](#).

Welcome to the New Regional Director of Cooperation



The Swiss Cooperation Office of the Embassy of Switzerland bid farewell to its Regional Director of Cooperation, Olivier Bürki, who had headed Switzerland's development programme during 2015-2019. In September, the Embassy of Switzerland welcomed the new Regional Director of Cooperation, Danielle Meuwly. Before joining the South Caucasus Office, Ms. Meuwly held high positions, inter alia, in the World Bank, OECD, and the UN General Assembly.

Pictures of the Reception for Danielle Meuwly [here](#).

Presentation of the Climate Adaptation Programme



On February 19, Switzerland, Green Climate Fund (GCF) and United Nations Development Programme under the lead of the Government of Georgia presented the joint project "Strengthening the Climate Adaptation Capacities in the South Caucasus." The seven-year, USD 70 million aims at protecting around 40% of the Georgian population from the natural disasters triggered by climate change.

The programme consists of two complementary projects funded by the GCF (USD 27 million) and the SDC (USD 5 million). The Swiss-funded project has a regional dimension and aims to prepare the population for inevitable consequences of climatic change. Switzerland will bring to the project its best expertise including from its own collective experience, as well as lessons learnt accrued during the project's inception phase and from earlier interventions of the Swiss humanitarian office.

More on the conference [here](#).

Caucasus Mountain Forum in Ankara



Few months after the presentation, the Caucasus Mountain Forum kicked off in Ankara within the frames of the Climate Adaptation programme bringing around 200 participants from different corners of the world. One of the objectives and achievements of the Forum was the adoption of the Caucasus Regional Research Agenda. The guiding document consists of concise analysis and research of the 10 most important thematic areas defined based on the results of the Caucasus research data collection from regional and international scientists. More on the conference [here](#).

Vice-Director of SDC Ruth Huber's visit to Georgia



In March, the Embassy hosted the visit of Ambassador Ruth Huber, Vice-Director of SDC and Head of Department Cooperation with Eastern Europe in Bern.

Ambassador Huber visited the Swiss-funded projects and met with the beneficiaries of the Alliances Caucasus Programme and National Identification and Traceability System, as well as one of the vocational education colleges in Kachreti. It was symbolic that on 8 March, the International Women's Day, Ambassador Huber met with a group of 15 female community workers to discuss the challenges of being

economically active in the regions. The meeting was organized by the UN Women, the implementing partner of Switzerland's Women's Economic Empowerment project.

More on this [here](#).

A New Unified Municipal Online Platform to Simplify Access to Services



On September 28th, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia unveiled a new Unified Municipal Online Platform, which will transition over 15 different municipal services into the virtual space, giving immediate access to citizens in 63 municipalities of Georgia. The development and implementation of the online platform is undertaken with the support from the World Bank and Switzerland under the Second Regional and Municipal Infrastructure Development Project.

Please read the article [here](#).

Facebook pictures [here](#).

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Swiss Businesses to expand in Georgia



Senior consultant of the Switzerland Global Enterprise Michael Kühn and Managing Director of the Joint Chamber of Commerce Dorit Sallis visited Georgia on 20-22 May. The visit aimed to explore new business opportunities for Swiss companies and possible future investment, notably in the sectors of agriculture, logistics, tourism, and process outsourcing (see Photo gallery of the visit [here](#)).

Throughout the year, many companies made the decision of entering, or consolidating their presence in, the Georgian market. Most notably, Swiss chocolate producer Camille Bloch announced in January that the company plans to exploit hazelnut plantations in Georgia and use Georgian-made ingredients for its famous trademark chocolate labelled as Ragusa. These plans were disclosed after a meeting between Georgian then-Prime Minister, Mamuka Bakhtadze, and Chief Executive Officer of Camille Bloch, Daniel Bloch, at the World Economic Forum in Davos.



The Swiss economy is increasingly recognizing Georgia's potential as a logistics and transport hub. The Swiss-based company Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC), which is already one of the market leaders, inaugurated a new terminal in Batumi in February.

In October, another Swiss company active in this sector, Kuehne + Nagel, signed a memorandum with the Anaklia Development Consortium, on the occasion of the 3d Silk Road Forum.

Better Protection of Intellectual Property Rights

The agreement between Georgia and Switzerland on the protection of geographical indications and use of the indication of source "Switzerland", which was signed on 31st May 2018, came into force on 1st September 2019. It protects well-known Swiss and Georgian indications and contributes to maintaining the long-term reputation of the countries' quality products.

For Switzerland, this concerns specific indications such as *Tête de Moine*, *Gruyère*, *Swiss chocolate* and *Swiss watches*. Also protected are the indication "Switzerland", the Swiss cross, as well as the names of the Swiss cantons. For Georgia, the agreement contains denominations for specialities such as *Kakheti*, *Sulguni* and *Borjomi*.

The agreement is an answer to the business community's desire to protect "Swissness" abroad and corresponds to the Parliament's wish to regulate the use of geographical indications in international treaties. The treaty supplements the free trade agreement concluded between Georgia and the EFTA countries, which came into force for Georgia and Switzerland on 1st May 2018.

CULTURE

Francophonie

On 20 March, Ambassador Patric Franzen hosted a reception in commemoration of the International Day of La Francophonie. The day was observed in the presence of the Ambassadors of the countries which are members of the *Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*, as well as many professors and teachers of the French language from across Georgia.

The celebration of the Francophonie transcended the capital of Georgia and for the second time on end the Embassy visited Kutaisi. Specifically, Deputy Head of Mission Alvaro Borghi visited and handed over a batch of Swiss books to the library of Akaki Tsereteli State University. The visit continued in two schools of Kutaisi and concluded with the movie screening "Corn in Parliament". The movie was also shown in Tbilisi.

Photos of the Reception [here](#).

Photos of the Francophonie in Kutaisi [here](#).

German Language Month

Traditionally, the Embassy of Switzerland joined the celebration of the German language month and on this occasion organized three events. The first was the presentation of the novel "On Flying out of Breath" by Swiss writer Annette Lory and its Georgian translation by Mzia Galdavadze, which took place on 23 April at the Austrian Library in Tbilisi. The other two events were: the movie screening of "The Devine Order" at the Cavea cinema and the presentation of the Georgian translation of Frisch's "Montauk" by Maia Panjikidze. The presentation of the book was blended with the discussion of the Volker Schlöndorff's "Return to Montauk" which is believed to have been inspired by Frisch's novel.

Photo album of the presentation "On Flying out of Breath" [here](#).

Photo album of the presentation "Montauk" [here](#).

Photo Exhibition in Batumi and Mestia



During a high touristic season, the exhibition “Switzerland-Georgia” was opened by the Deputy Head of Mission, Alvaro Borghi, on 10-11 August in Batumi, and on 13 August in Mestia where it stayed for two months, giving a vast opportunity to thousands of local and international visitors of the Mestia National Museum to assess the similarities between the two countries.



CONSULAR

Swiss need only ID card to enter Georgia

According to a decree signed by the Prime Minister of Georgia, Giorgi Gakharia, dated 28 November 2019 and effective immediately, Swiss citizens are now allowed to enter Georgia with their ID cards alone.

Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia
Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus

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