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NEW AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Reader,

It is a privilege for me to serve Switzerland in beautiful Georgia as new Ambassador. Our countries have a lot in common, from the breath-taking landscapes, the excellent wines to the strategic geographic situation. But we also both managed to conserve our deeply rooted historic traditions and share the mountaineering mentality and the same values. So it is no surprise that Swiss and Georgian people connect very well!

I look very much forward to discovering more of this country, its regions, its rich and diverse culture and its people and to explore together with the team of the Embassy the potential to further develop and strengthen our cooperation.

The Year 2019 started already positively. During the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, Georgian Prime Minister Bakhtadze and his Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Economy met our Federal Councillor and Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis. They took stock of our bilateral relations and explored avenues of future cooperation.

There are also some highlights to come. On March 23 our Swiss National Football Team will play in Tbilisi with Georgia for the qualification to the European Championship and in the second half of 2019 we will officially open the New Embassy of Switzerland on Radiani Street 12 uniting the different divisions of the Embassy under one roof increasing our synergies.

I very much look forward to meeting you personally during this year and to learn from your experiences and ventures in Georgia and I hope you enjoy the reading of this Newsletter.

Sincerely Yours,

Patric Franzen
Ambassador of Switzerland to Georgia

POLITICAL COOPERATION

New Ambassador presented his credentials



On 13 December, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Swiss Confederation to Georgia Patric Franzen presented his credentials to then President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili.

During the meeting, the President and the Ambassador discussed the profound bilateral relations including a wide gamut of activities that the two countries are involved in. The parties also touched upon the progress that has been made in different areas of cooperation, including development aid, economy, science, education and culture.

Check the gallery [here](#).

Visit of the Parliament's Speaker to Switzerland

On 12 September 2018, a Georgian delegation headed by Mr. Irakli Kobakhidze, Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia, paid an official visit to Switzerland upon an invitation made in 2016 by then President of the National Council Christa Markwalder during her visit to Georgia. As part of this visit, Irakli Kobakhidze most notably met with Dominique de Buman, President of the National Council, and Filippo Lombardi, President of the parliamentary Swiss-Georgian Friendship Group. The delegation also paid a courtesy meeting to Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis.



Bilateral relations, Switzerland's increasing support to economic reform and its unique mediating role in relations with Russia were discussed at the meetings. On the agenda were also the intensified cooperation in the areas of education, research and innovation, as well as peace promotion.



Meeting between Prime Minister Mamuka Bakhtadze and Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis

On 23 January 2019, Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor and Head of the Foreign Affairs Department of Switzerland, met with Mamuka Bakhtadze, Prime Minister of Georgia, at the sideline of the World Economic Forum in Davos. The counterparts discussed the strong bilateral relations between the two countries.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Closure of MOLI in Kakheti



Five years ago the SDC started a new project in the most agricultural region in Georgia, Kakheti. The project “Market Opportunities for Livelihood improvement” aimed at improving the livestock market system by targeting businesses and institutions from which small-scale farmers receive inputs and services, or sell their produce to. As a result, 27’000 farmers and 82 enterprises benefitted from the project. On 22 November, partners, beneficiaries, local and national government representatives and the SDC gathered together to present the final results of the project, one

being a membership agreement between the Dairy Georgia and the European Dairy Association signed on the same day. Secretary General of the European Dairy Association Aleksandre Anthon spoke high about project results pinpointing the intent of his organization to make for the strengthening of the dairy sector in Georgia as a vital sector of the animal agriculture development in Georgia.

Read more about the closure event [here](#).

Read more about the project [here](#).

Check the gallery [here](#).

Opening of new projects

2018 was a remarkable year for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for it launched three large-scale projects, two of which cover the South Caucasus Region.



The SDC has long acknowledged that climate change poses a grave threat to places, species and livelihoods of people. Proper response to the challenge is needed to also secure the sustainability of the results accrued from the development work. With this in mind, the SDC initiated in 2018 a new regional project "Strengthening the Climate Adaptation Capacities in the South Caucasus" to adequately address the challenge.

The project will be implemented by our traditional partner, UNDP Georgia, and a local NGO Sustainable Caucasus. While UNDP Georgia will devise multi-hazard mapping and risk assessment methodology followed by its institutionalization, the local partner will focus on policy-making and advocacy on issues of climate adaptation and sustainable mountain development in the South Caucasus.

More on this project [here](#).



On 10 December, the SDC joined the world celebration of Human Rights Day which ends the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, marking it by a public presentation of the project “Economic Empowerment of Women in the South Caucasus”. The regional project is implemented by UN Women in Georgia, in close cooperation with UNDP offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The project sets out to ensure that women, particularly the poor and socially excluded, in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are economically empowered and participate in decision-making. More about the project [here](#).



On 6 November 2018, the SDC officially announced the extension of its project “Modernization of Vocational Education and Training related to Agriculture”. The decision was sealed by a project document signed between the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia, UNDP Georgia and the SDC.

Over USD 6 million will be spent in 2018-2022 to promote Vocational Education & Training in agriculture and offer Georgian farmers modern educational opportunities and services.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Georgia was Guest of Honour of EXPOVINA

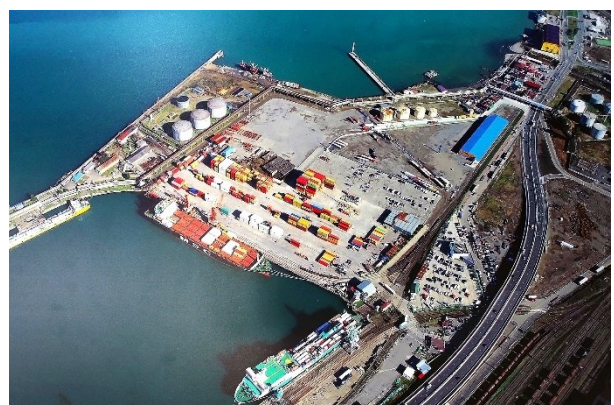


On November 1-15, EXPOVINA, one of the world's largest wine fairs, was organized for the 65th time, and Georgia, for the first time, was invited to be a Guest of Honour.

All the visibility material, including flyers, banners and tickets, featured Georgia, its ancient tradition of winemaking along with wine routes. During the event, a total of 16'654 wine bottles were sold, as compared to approx. 19'700 bottles that were exported to Switzerland in 2018.

Swiss investment in logistic infrastructure

The Swiss-based Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) announced a new investment in support of Georgia's ambition of being the regional logistics hub. The opening took place in Batumi on 7 February 2019 in the presence of Managing Director of MSC Georgia Alkan Alicik, Minister of Economic Development and Infrastructure Giorgi Kobulia, Head of Ajara Government Tornike Rizhvadze and Swiss Ambassador Patric Franzen.



A multimodal shipping terminal in Batumi will increase container flow by 100% and offer more job opportunities for the local people.

In his opening speech, the Swiss Ambassador accentuated on the strategic location of both Switzerland and Georgia, making the two countries perfect logistics hubs. "The new investment by the Swiss company will help Georgia serve as an entry gate to the Caucasus, and beyond," Ambassador Patric Franzen added.

Founded in 2009, MSC Georgia is so far the leader shipping company in the country with ports of call in Batumi and Poti.

CULTURE

Photo exhibition



On 20-21 November, the Embassy of Switzerland organized an exhibition "Switzerland-საქართველო" at the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia. The exhibition presented in pictures the similarities and commonalities between Switzerland and Georgia which had been collected in a single photobook published by the Embassy in 2017.

The photobook was dedicated to the momentous year of 2017 as the two counties - Georgia and Switzerland - celebrated the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations.



Italian Language Week

For the *Settimana della lingua italiana nel mondo*, the Embassy lined up a movie screening on October 17. The documentary "Il Senso Della Bellezza – Arte e Scienza Al CERN", directed by Valerio Jalongo, was a successful attempt to probe the link between science and beauty through the work of scientists at CERN, in Geneva. More than 100 people, mostly youth, came to the cinema to explore this linkage between science and beauty.

Summer school for filmmakers in Gori



In August, Gori saw training lasting 8 days for young filmmakers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and world-renowned professionals. The training was organized within the frames of the CinéDoc International Film Festival as part of the SDC's Regional Arts and Culture Project.

The Regional Arts and Culture Project has been implemented in the South Caucasus since 2012 contemporary art being its enduring focus. With a new phased started in 2017, the project brought in two new components – photography and documentary film. The thematic component of documentary film will support the documentary competition “Focus Caucasus” within the Documentary Film Festival CinéDoc-Tbilisi. The second component of photography seeks to preserve the photography heritage by housing the collection in the first ever Museum of Photography and Multimedia.

Read the article [here](#). Project description can be found [here](#).

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

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Elections 2019

Federal Elections 2019 – Your Vote Matters!

Parliamentary elections will be held in Switzerland on 20 October 2019. As a Swiss national living abroad, who is included in the Register of the Swiss Abroad, you are allowed to vote in elections as well as stand as a candidate

for election to Parliament.

[Information on the 2019 elections for Swiss nationals living abroad](#)

ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION

Sustainable development of mountainous regions in Georgia

As a follow up meeting of then President of the Swiss Confederation Doris Leuthard, a delegation composed of Swiss, Austrian and Slovenian specialists visited Georgia from October 30th to November 2nd, 2018. The aim of the visit was to contribute to the promotion of the sustainable development of mountainous regions of Georgia by sharing the best practices and broad expertise of the international experts. The agenda envisaged a visit to the Kazbegi municipality and a meeting with the Mayor of Stepantsminda, as well as a conference where the top building and renovation projects carried out in the Alps were presented.



Read the article [here](#).

Chkhenkeli archives arrived home



Supported by the Swiss Embassy in Georgia, personal belongings and European memoirs of Akaki Chkhenkeli, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the first Democratic Republic of Georgia, personal correspondence of Kita Chkhenkeli, the scholar and fierce advocate of the Georgian language in Switzerland and Europe, at large, were handed over by Thomas and Marianna Kraye and Thomas Häusermann to the Tbilisi State University where the documents will be further examined. The

documents have also been digitalized at the Zurich University.

The handing over of the Chkhenkeli archive came as Georgia commemorated the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia, making the event both emotional and very symbolic for the Georgian population.

Georgia Today about the [event](#).

Building bridges through science

Mr. Timothy Ryan from the Swiss National Science Foundation visited Georgia in January 2019 to partake in a meeting with the Georgian scientific community.



The exchange was organized and hosted by the Shota Rustaveli National Scientific Foundation of Georgia and served the purpose to inform the Georgian counterparts about the Swiss research landscape and grants mechanisms thereof. Please click [here](#) to read the presentation.

The meeting was crowned with a reception hosted by Ambassador Patric Franzen, who stressed the importance of cooperation in science as one of the best ways of building bridges between the two countries.

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