

# Soirée Suisse

Swiss National Day 2023

15.06.2023, Garden of the Swiss Residence

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## Speech by the Ambassador of Switzerland, H.E. Stefan Estermann

Excellencies and Colleagues

Dear Partners and Friends

Good evening to everyone.

I would like to wish you a very warm welcome to our Swiss Evening / soirée suisse, edition 2023 ! Willkommen, bienvenue, benvenuti, bainvegni, καλώς ήρθατε!

This evening was intended to be an occasion to celebrate the very close and friendly relations that exist between Switzerland and Greece.

Unfortunately, we all woke up this morning in shock, learning about the tragic incident involving a refugee ship capsizing in international waters some 70 Km from the Peloponnese coast. A search-and-rescue operation is ongoing, but the number of victims is very high and continues to rise.

Despite the sad circumstances we decided to maintain our gathering, but to give it a more sober and reflective note. Thank you to be here.

I would like to ask you all to observe a minute of silence to pay respect to the victims.

(silence)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Migration is a huge challenge for Greece, and for Europe as a whole. We must do everything in our power to prevent such tragedies from happening in the future. Switzerland stands side by side with Greece, and the European Union, to take responsibility and to act in solidarity.

Please listen to the Swiss and Greek national anthems, performed by solo soprano Daphne Panourgía.

*(National Anthems)*

Thank you, Daphne.

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is also a moment for me to look back on my first year in Greece as Ambassador of Switzerland:

- I discovered what 200 years of friendship based on Philhellenism still means today.
- I discovered Greece recovering from a crisis with new dynamism and strength.
- A country assuming responsibility and leadership in regional and european issues.
- A country full of warm emotions, exciting culture and rich history.

Switzerland and Greece, two Nations at the core of Europe, different and diverse, but united by ideas that have an impact and values that guide us.

Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law are more important than ever. We support a rules-based multilateral system and respect and promote international law.

Consequently, both our countries stand for the force of law, not for the law of force. This is why we stand together in soldiarity with the ukrainian people, and condemn the russian Agression in the strongest possible terms.

Dear Guests, this evening would not have been possible without our fantastic sponsors of today's evening. As leaders in quality and innovation, these companies represent the Swiss economy at its best. And they are all here in Greece. In alphabetical order:

ABB

ABC Maritime

Adecco Group Greece

Aegean Airlines (not a Swiss company, but they feel like one...)

Emil Frey representing Mercedes Benz

Heracles Group of Companies, a member of Holcim Group

Korpí Mineral Water

Mövenpick Ice Cream

Nespresso Professional Coffee

Nestlé Hellas

Roche Hellas

Sika Hellas

Syngenta Hellas

...and of course

Swiss International Air Lines.

Thank you to these wonderful partners and sponsors.

And last but not least, I would like to thank my phantastic Embassy team who supported my wife and me all along our first year in Athens, and who did a great job to organize this evening.

Don't forget to taste the Swiss wine at the drinks bar, the Swiss raclette, prepared the authentic way in the tent over-there, the Swiss sausages (Bratwürste) from the grill in the back of the garden, the Ice Cream as well as Coffee at the two stands over-here.

Thank you, and enjoy the evening in our garden!