

Newsletter

of the Swiss Embassy in Mexico

May 2018

Ambassador's Welcoming Words

Dear Fellow Citizens,

It is my pleasure and my honour to address to you these words as Ambassador of Switzerland in Mexico and in Belize. It is now more than four years that I started my assignment in Mexico City in March 2014. My wife and I enjoy each time we have the opportunity to travel to Belize.

My wife and I are very pleased with our life in such a wonderful region full of culture and history. During our nine visits to Belize, I worked on strengthening the bilateral relations between Belize and Switzerland with a special focus on development cooperation and human rights projects, political bilateral issues and justice. We also took the opportunity to discover the beauties of the country and managed so far to stay at Caye Caulker in 2014, Ambergris Caye in 2015, Placencia in 2016, 2017 and 2018.

I recall that the Embassy's Newsletter intends to establish a link between the Swiss citizens living in Belize and the Embassy. In this regards, you are kindly invited, if you so wish, to make comments or suggestions anytime by addressing them to the Embassy's mailbox (mex.vertretung@eda.admin.ch). I assure you that I will pay due attention to them.

In this fourth edition, the Newsletter contents a report on my visits to Belize from September 18 to 21, 2017 and from April 15 to 22, 2018. You will then get information on the recent luncheon of the Swiss community, on the La Gracia solar system hand-over ceremony and on the project funding of the Swiss Embassy in Belize in 2017 and 2018. Finally, there will be a reminder on useful links for Swiss Abroad.

It is the last edition, which I am contributing to, because my assignment in Mexico is going to end in July. It was pleasant and rewarding for me to have the opportunity to meet many of you for lunch in San Ignacio in 2016 and 2018. I am also very grateful with regard to Mr. John Searle, the Honorary Consul of Switzerland and his wife Linda for their tremendous support all along these four years.

With my best regards,

Louis-José Touron



Mr. Louis-José Touron
Swiss Ambassador
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Bilateral Relations Switzerland - Belize

Business Trip to Belize

The Ambassador of Switzerland paid a visit to Belize from September 18 to 21, 2017 and from April 15 to 22, 2018. The first visit was primarily devoted to the Celebration of Belize's 36th Anniversary of Independence. The Ambassador attended in Belize City the diplomatic briefing hosted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belize and the Governor-General's State reception, as well as in Belmopan the official Independence Day ceremony. He participated to the field trip to Caracol, too. The last but not the least, he had a bilateral meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and met with the United Nations Resident Representative, heads of foreign missions and representatives of international organisations based in Belize as well with the leader of the opposition party.

During his second visit, he bade the Governor-General of Belize farewell. Then, he had discussions with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs including the permanent representative of Belize to CARICOM, the Chief of Justice, the Vice-chairman of the National Commission of Human Rights, heads of foreign diplomatic missions, representatives of international organisations, as well as NGOs. Because the Embassy was once more in a position to provide support for development cooperation and human rights projects thanks to its small action funds, the Ambassador visited the offices of the selected non-governmental organisations or one of their representatives. The two projects supported in 2018 were touching upon agricultural training and marine environment protection. With John Searle, the Honorary Consul of Switzerland, the Ambassador met around fifteen members of the Swiss community on April 17 in the Aguada Hotel in Santa Elena. He was happy to learn that all families felt good about living in Belize. He was struck once more by the variety of origins and competences one can find among Swiss citizens living abroad.

Thanks to the permanent support of John Searle, the Honorary Consul of Switzerland and Linda, his wife, the Ambassador of Switzerland managed to get and meet all these appointments throughout the country.



Meeting with the Swiss Community

Ambassador Touron had a very busy schedule for his last official visit to Belize in April 2018. Most of the meetings were with government officials and diplomats in Belmopan, the capital of Belize. However, the highlight of his visit was a luncheon meeting with Swiss residents who now call Belize home. Since most of the Swiss live in the Cayo District, the meeting was held at the Aguada Hotel in Santa Elena from 12 noon to 3pm on April 17. The venue was beautifully decorated with flowers and flags of Belize and Switzerland. The menu included a variety of tasty dishes including seafood, chicken, vegetarian dishes and fresh fruit salad. A very welcome addition to the menu was some Swiss cheese that was brought by Swiss national Sylvan Kuffer and some very nice Swiss wine that Ambassador Touron brought for everyone to enjoy.



Attached is a group picture from the Swiss luncheon. Pictured here are which Eva Buhler (resident for 42 years!), Collette Vergriete and daughter Nina Gross, Barbara Helbling and husband Carlton Flowers, Sylvan Kuffer and Nadja Preisig, Dorothy and Daniel Roth (oldest Swiss national residing in Belize), Gabriela Kostli (Lichtenstein), and the Swiss Bakery Family which includes: Friedrich Balmer, Bridgette Balmer Gigli, Francine Gigli, Nathalie Gigli and boyfriend Giovanni Lovell, and Jonathan Wuest. Also pictured are Ambassador Touron and wife Elyse, and Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Belize, John Searle. About 50% of the Swiss residents registered in Belize were in attendance and all were very grateful for the opportunity to get together and meet Ambassador Touron and his lovely wife, Elyse.

Ambassador Touron and his wife Elyse made a total of nine visits to Belize during his tenure as Ambassador to Belize. His efforts and contributions to the country and numerous NGO organizations working in Belize were very successful and greatly appreciated. We wish Ambassador Touron and Elyse every success in his new posting.

John Searle
Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Belize



Swiss Helping to Improve the Lives of Belizeans through Smart Solar Off Grid Projects

In May 2017, Hon. Frank Mena, Minister of Public Service, Energy and Public Utilities, along with Dario Mendez, Chairman of La Gracia Village, Cayo, inaugurated a Smart Solar off-grid rural electrification project in the village, in an effort to provide access to electricity for all Belizeans. Rural electrification using solar powered off-grid systems has been identified as a key component in the strategic plan and this was the first example of its kind in country.

This state-of-the-art system will provide electricity to more than 45 households. One benefit of the system is that it has the capacity to increase supply to meet future demand. This system will be monitored and operated remotely for efficiency and effectiveness.



Photo courtesy SESB

The primary objective of the project is to provide opportunities for economic development by giving communities the tools to reach their full potential. A six to twelve month phase will give the ministry administrative, social, and technical opportunities to monitor the system.

The project was implemented at a cost of approximately BZ\$700,000 with support from many donor organizations including the Government of Switzerland, Government of the United Kingdom, Public Utilities Commission, and Government of Belize. It will provide information on best practices for system design, implementation, and administration for extension to the rest of the country.

Solar Energy Solutions Belize (SESB) a Swiss owned Belizean company, was contracted to install the system and manage the pilot project for 1 year following its inauguration.

At a recent meeting on May 3, 2018 Dr Peter Allen, CEO in the Ministry of Energy, expressed gratitude on the behalf of the Government of Belize to the Swiss Government and all other donor's/collaborators for this project.

The project has improved the quality of life for all the villagers of La Gracia, it has proven that renewable energy electrification projects are a viable option for remote villages, and it has also allowed the Belize government to use this project as a springboard to secure funding from the EU and UAE to replicate this system in other remote villages in Belize. There are plans to install three similar systems in small communities that currently have no electricity in the Toledo District in southern Belize.

Thanks to the Swiss government, Zenna, SESB, and all other project collaborators for helping to improve the lives of Belizeans.

John Searle
Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Belize

Project Funding of the Swiss Embassy in Belize in 2017 and 2018

Each year the Swiss Embassy in Belize selects a couple of outstanding human rights and development related projects presented to us by Belizean (and International) Non-Governmental Organizations. The selected projects receive each a grant up to 20,000 BZD for their implementation. Hereby the Swiss government supports in a modest way the Belizean civil society in their valuable work in defending the universal human rights and the United Nations' sustainable development goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

In 2017 the Swiss Embassy supported the following projects:

- UNICEF – “Promoting children's access to justice”
- United Belize Advocacy Movement – “Advancing human rights through legal education and public communication”.

For 2018, the Swiss Embassy has decided to support the following projects:

- Human People to People – “Improving storage of agricultural products to reduce postharvest losses”
- Reefkeeper Belize – “Reefkeeper Ambassadors: Education, Empowerment and Opportunity”.

Organisations interested in receiving project funds by the Swiss Embassy are kindly invited to contact the Embassy:

mex.vertretung@eda.admin.ch.



Reefkeeper Belize teaching students about the environmental problems associated with trash

Credits: Reefkeeper Belize

Anita Müller
Attaché for political and sectorial affairs

Useful links for Swiss abroad

www.swissworld.org



Dear compatriots,

Quite often people are in desperate search of obtaining urgent information and then turn to this Embassy via telephone or e-mail.

However, this Embassy would like to suggest herewith to simplify this process whenever possible by clicking on the appropriate link (see below) in order to get hold of the requested information. Therefore, we have channeled some useful links that could be beneficial for you and direct you towards more concrete and accessible answers and solutions.

As follows:

General utility

The Law for the Swiss abroad, who concern the rights and the obligations of the Swiss out of its homeland (Auslandsschweizergesetz ASG):

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20133127/index.html>

Emigration / Immigration

For Swiss considering emigrating or returning to Switzerland:

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/en/organisation/Consular-Directorate-CD/Relations-with-the-Swiss-Abroad/Emigration-Switzerland>

Taxes and legal information

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/living-abroad/emigrating/retirement-abroad/taxes.html>

Travelling to different countries (travel advise) and personal security measures

Information and advices for independent travelers by country destination:

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/en/services/security/travel-advice>

Itineris: On-line platform for Swiss who want to register to assign its place and contact for the purpose of maintaining a communication with its relatives in case of mishaps during the trip:

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/de/services/consulate/Reisen%20und%20Hilfeleistungen%20im%20Ausland/Itineris>

Military service

Families and children who are interested in knowing details on the military service in Switzerland:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/military-obligations.html>

In economic difficulty or otherwise in distress

Swiss who find themselves in a complicated situation in Belize and who need help:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/swiss-citizens-abroad-distress.html>

Consular questions / consular record / marital status

Swiss who change address or change to another country:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/registration-change-address.html>

Swiss who need to request a passport or an identity card:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/identity-documents.html>

Swiss who want to register the birth of a child or another person:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/civil-status/birth.html>

Swiss who want to register a marriage or an union:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/civil-status/marriage.html>

Swiss who need to register a divorce:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/civil-status/divorce.html>

Swiss who need to register a relative's death:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/civil-status/death.html>

Swiss who need to ask for a Swiss Civil State document, an origin certificate or familiar belonging document:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/civil-status/documents.html>

Legalizations, attestations

Swiss who need to find out on the definition and the possibilities of a legalization:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/legalisations.html>

Swiss who need to find out on the definition and the possibilities of an attestation:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/attestations-certificates.html>

Swiss who want to be connected with “On-line Schalter” for Swiss abroad:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/services-and-publications/dienstleistungen-schweizer-ausland/online-schalter.html>

Vehicles

For Swiss who need to proceed with a driving license, obtain badges or need to obtain information about the import of vehicles:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/driving-and-vehicles.html>

Social Security

For Swiss who want to find out about the Swiss social security:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/services/social-insurance.html>

www.ahv.ch

www.soliswiss.ch

Economy

Swiss who are interested on the economic ambience's promotion:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/en/home/switzerland-and/export-promotion.html>

Ulrich Haug, Consul, Swiss Consul

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Lavaux – Geneva lake and the Alps
Credits: Gustave Deghilage

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