



Seoul, 9 December 2020

Chers cumpatriots, cari compatrioti,
chers compatriotes, liebe Landsleute,
dear fellow Swiss citizens living in Korea,

For all of us, 2020 was an unusual year: the COVID-19 pandemic uprooted our normal ways of doing business and changed our social life dramatically, reminding us, how vulnerable our societies are and how disruptive public health crises can be for both our lives and livelihoods. We had to adapt to new circumstances, reinventing our daily routines and our way to interact with others, shifting to home office, online conferences and safe manufacturing and servicing methods. I am gratified to learn that the small Swiss community in Korea is doing fine, despite the pandemic. To my knowledge, nobody within the Swiss community in Korea was infected, and according to what I heard, even the sales figures of Swiss enterprises in Korea look quite encouraging. This is indeed good news and I would like to commend all of you for this achievement in these challenging times. Alfred Einstein was right saying that "In the midst of every crisis lies a great opportunity" – at least for those who are ready to seize it and to adapt quickly.

During the whole year, the Embassy was busy analyzing and reporting the situation in Korea, expanding high level contacts, improving business and R&D opportunities in Korea and defending Swiss enterprises' interests when they encountered problems. In the field of our bilateral relations, a phone conference call between Swiss President Sommaruga and Korean President Moon in June opened a series of high-level conference calls on COVID-19 and related matters, in which both countries vowed to collaborate closely. Progress in our endeavors to modernize the Free Trade Agreement and the Civil Aviation Agreement were assessed in an online political dialogue between the Ambassadors for Asia Pacific in Bern and for Europe in Seoul. The Embassy continued to strive to provide best services to Swiss and Korean citizens alike and contributed through supporting meaningful events to the positive image of Switzerland in Korea.

In order to reach out to old and new audiences and to maintain a high visibility of Switzerland in the Korea. Embassy organized webinars and posted messages on our Facebook account. In late summer, thanks to the efficient Korean crisis management, we gradually moved back to person-to-person events. We were able to screen fourteen movies with the late Swiss actor Bruno Ganz in Seoul and Gwangju. The four-week-long retrospective attracted more than 1'250 viewers. Based on the assumption of a gradual recovery we have high expectations for 2021. Many projects showcasing Swiss innovation and excellence in all fields are in the pipeline. The opening of the Swiss Pavilion at the Gwangju Biennale is scheduled for February 2021. Hopefully, many other events and opportunities for interaction will follow.

At the end of a momentous year, let me thank you wholeheartedly for your cooperation and partnership. My team and I wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe and healthy, and looking forward to seeing you again soon in 2021.

Warm regards.

Linus von Castelmur
Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Korea