

# Newsletter

of the Embassy of Switzerland to Ghana, Togo and Benin

April 2012

English edition for Ghana

## Editorial

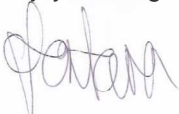
Dear readers, dear fellow Swiss citizens,

First of all, let me thank you for all the – very positive – feedback to the first newsletter we sent out last October. I am today happy to present you this second edition. The newsletter aims to showcase what we do and who we are at the Embassy. We will use this editorial section to introduce ourselves.

I am responsible for the administration of the Embassy: human resources, budget/accounting, building maintenance and security. Moreover, I oversee the consular affairs. This includes the visa section and – this affects you most – the relations to the Swiss living in Ghana, Togo and Benin. During official trips, I always enjoy to exchange with you and to learn about your experiences and needs.

This newsletter – especially the information for the Swiss abroad – actually gives you an idea of many aspects of my daily work: I ensured the implementation of the Belgian Embassy taking over our visa for Benin, I check visa decisions of my staff, I oversee the registration and civil matters of Swiss citizens, I recently updated the crisis readiness organization of this Embassy, and I often answer inquiries from Swiss who have been the target of a scam. In addition to that, I represent the Ambassador as his deputy, and I have the pleasure to coordinate the cultural affairs of this Embassy – just like the screening of the film “An African Election” you are going to read about ...

Enjoy reading!



Claudia Fontana Tobiassen

*Claudia Fontana Tobiassen is Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Chancery. Originating from Flims in the Grisons, she joined the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in 1990, and served in Amsterdam, Stockholm, Rabat, Vienna, Atlanta and Rio de Janeiro. She has been posted to Ghana since July 2009. Claudia is married and has two daughters. She likes hiking in the Shai Hills.*



Claudia Fontana Tobiassen,  
Deputy Head of Mission

Please send information, contributions, and ideas for the following issues of the newsletter to [acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch).

# Swiss Footprints in Ghana, Togo and Benin

## Ghana – SECO support to Ethical Fashion

“Kente”, one of Ghana’s landmark textiles, has been hand-woven for centuries. It has colorful patterns and is a symbol of wealth. Initially a preserve of local royals, nowadays it is widely worn and displayed by many people, rural and urban. Ghana has a long-standing tradition in textiles and related accessories. Besides Kente, Bologan is another indigenous fabric is produced in Ghana, as well as Batik.

These rich ethno fabrics have become the attraction of a joint SECO and International Trade Centre (ITC) project that aims to link producers of these fabrics and fashion designers in Ghana with international markets. The project, called Ethical Fashion Initiative, will develop the value chain for these fabrics from sourcing of raw materials to fashion design and manufacturing of clothing and lifestyle products. The initiative targets particularly poorer communities and young people.

A sustainable value chain between the creators (fashion designers in Ghana), suppliers (communities in Ghana) and the buyers (large distributors) will be established, supported by ethical business practices and sound labor conditions. This project will thus create new jobs in Ghana and thereby improve the economic situation of poor communities. Ghana will serve as a hub for the transformation of inputs (traditional fabrics out of organic and fair trade cotton supplied from the SECO supported program in Burkina Faso and Mali), into very attractive African fashion adapted to European taste from highly creative young Ghanaian designers. Buyers in Europe (Manor Switzerland, Coop Italy) have already committed themselves to this project.

The Government of Ghana – through the Ministry of Trade and Industry – is a keen supporter and facilitator of this ITC/SECO project. The Ethical Fashion Initiative inserts itself in Ghana’s National Creative Industries Initiative. As ITC already implements a similar project in Kenya (see link), it will be able to draw lessons for the Ghana project.

[www.intracen.org/exporters/ethical-fashion/](http://www.intracen.org/exporters/ethical-fashion/)



*“The product of this Initiative will be a fantastic messenger of a different Africa. One that creates jobs by transforming deep routed tradition, skills, creativity and talent into your passion: African Fashion!”*

Brigitte Cuendet  
Head of SECO-Program

## Ghana – Switzerland @ KAIPTC

Since its establishment in 2003 by the Ghanaian Ministry of Defence, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Teshie near Accra has trained more than 5400 individuals from over 86 countries in the field of peacekeeping. The centre has carved a niche as a world class research and training facility for Africa - a regional centre of excellence, that embraces all aspects of research and training for enhanced performance in integrated peace support operations.

The Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport has supported KAIPTC with approximately USD 1 Mio. over the last three years. In addition, Swiss military personnel have been deployed to Ghana. Currently, two Swiss officers serve at KAIPTC: Colonel General Staff Christof Gertsch (3<sup>rd</sup> from left) is Head of Training, Evaluation and Development (TED) and a senior staff member at KAIPTC; Major Markus Fischer (4<sup>th</sup> from left) is one of the course directors at the centre. He replaced Major Martin Bamert (1<sup>st</sup> from left) at the end of March 2012.

KAIPTC is currently expanding into gender studies. Starting in June 2012, a new Master's degree in Gender, Peace and Security will be offered. One of the lecturers of this first master's degree course is a lawyer from Switzerland, Mirjam Frey Haesler (2<sup>nd</sup> from left).

[www.kaiptc.org](http://www.kaiptc.org)

## Togo – Swiss Ambassador visits Mercy Ships

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Ambassador Andrea Semadeni visited the "MS Africa Mercy", one of the vessels of the organization "Mercy Ships". Mercy Africa is at berth in Lomé from January to June 2012 and offers its services to the people of Togo.

Mercy Ships offer medical treatments, deliver medical supply, and support community development projects to respond to short and long term needs of the most deprived. Africa Mercy is the world's largest, private hospital ship. Its deployment to Lomé helps to fill gaps in the Togolese health care system, while



serving the dire and immediate needs of the population. On the ship, thousands of specialized surgical interventions are provided, such as cleft lip and palate repair, cataract removal, orthopaedic procedures, facial reconstruction and obstetric fistula repair. The surgeries are performed by specialized surgeons free of charge, without regard to race, gender or religion.

The Ambassador had the privilege to meet with 12 crew members from Switzerland who serve as nurses, drivers, supply specialists or in whatever functions are needed. He was impressed by the devotion they have for the cause, and by their work.

[www.mercyships.ch](http://www.mercyships.ch)

## Ghana – Screening of Film “An African Election”

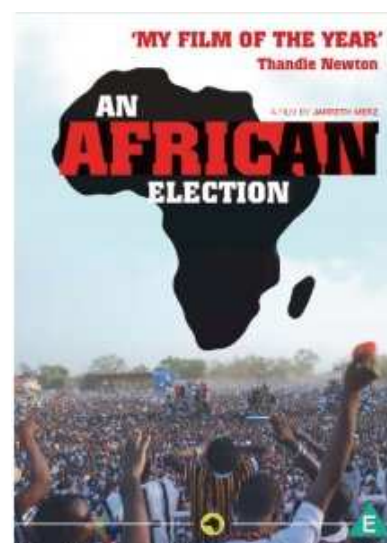
On March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, the documentary film “An African Election” by Swiss-Ghanaian director Jarreth Merz was screened for a VIP-audience in Accra.

Merz follows the key players of the 2008 presidential elections in Ghana for almost three months to provide an unprecedented insider’s view of the political, economic and social forces at work in Ghana. He builds suspense by taking the viewer down the back roads of the nation to capture each unexpected twist and turn in a contest that is always exciting and never predictable.

The film has won several prizes at film festivals and has received very favourable reviews from critics. In the run-up to the 2012 elections, it is planned to show the film to a broader audience throughout Ghana. The Cultural Foreign Policy Centre of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs supports the translation of the film into some of Ghana’s local languages. The Embassy – together with the Ghana Ministry of Information – invited to the VIP-screening.

In his opening remarks, Swiss Ambassador Andrea Semadeni saw the film as a proof for the strengthened democratic culture in Ghana and emphasized on the significance of peaceful 2012 elections for the development of country – and for its reputation as a democratic front-runner on the African continent.

<http://anafricanelection.com/>





## Benin – 30 Years of Cooperation

Last December, Switzerland and Benin celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the framework agreement of cooperation linking the two countries. On this occasion, a series of activities took place in Cotonou and Parakou to commemorate the jubilee. In both cities, the festivities included a village of partnership, where every institution or association that has developed partnerships between the two countries was able to present its works and achievements. Musical podiums, thematic conferences and public viewings of documentary films enriched the village. On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011, the governments of Benin and Switzerland, as well as the implementing partners, conducted a tripartite review of the 30 years of cooperation that led into the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two governments. Switzerland was represented by Maya Tissafi, Vice-Director of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC).



*For the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, SDC created a series of ads featuring the beneficiaries of its projects. "I am a farmer. I nourish Benin, I am proud of it."*

**JE SUIS PAYSAN.  
JE NOURRIS LE BENIN,  
J'EN SUIS FIER.**



<http://www.cooperation-suisse.admin.ch/benin/>

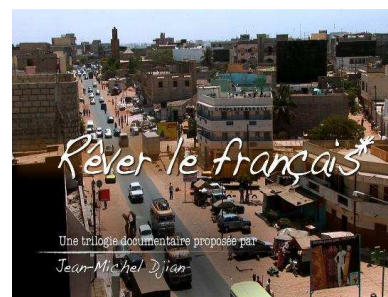
## Ghana, Togo and Benin – Journée de la Francophonie

March 20<sup>th</sup> marks the international day of the Francophonie. On that day, the French language and the values of the Francophonie – the values of solidarity and dialogue between cultures – are celebrated throughout the world. The French speaking Togo and Benin, but also neighboring Ghana are members of the International Organisation of Francophonie. In all three countries, a variety of cultural events took place.

Switzerland, proudly sharing the culture of the French language, participated in several events. In Ghana, Swiss Ambassador Andrea Semadeni spoke at the opening of the “Quinzaine de la Francophonie” and participated in a panel discussion on the occasion of the screening of the film: “Rêver le français – le pouvoir du verbe”.

In Benin, the Swiss Development Cooperation co-sponsored the “quinzaine”, and director Jean-Luc Virchaux, participated on a conference on “Haiti – Benin, diversity, belonging, cultural resemblance”.

[www.20mars.francophonie.org](http://www.20mars.francophonie.org)



20 mars 2012  
Journée internationale de la Francophonie  
[www.20mars.francophonie.org](http://www.20mars.francophonie.org)



ORGANISATION  
INTERNATIONALE DE  
la francophonie



## News for Swiss Abroad

### E-Voting / Voting for Swiss Abroad

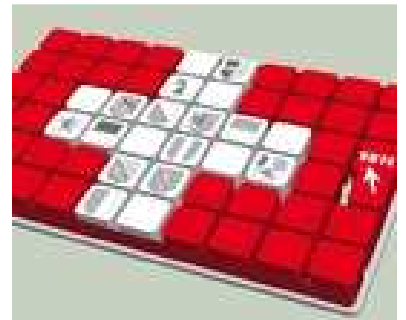
In no other country does the electorate enjoy such extensive rights to participate in political affairs as in Switzerland. Each year the electorate is asked to vote several times. Voters have the option of casting their vote either at a polling station, by post or, in future, electronically. Several Cantons run pilot projects on electronic voting. To date, citizens in 13 Cantons can participate in votes online.

Online voting is a very interesting option for Swiss abroad, too. Postal votes from abroad often experience delays, which means that it is difficult for people to cast their vote efficiently. E-voting is therefore the future of voting for Swiss abroad. Today, Swiss e-voting is available in EU-countries, North America and other states, covering about 90% of all Swiss Abroad. On the African continent, so far only Swiss living in South Africa can cast their vote on line. Yet it is the aim to make e-voting available in other countries, step by step.

The Embassy will follow up on the issue. Until e-voting is available in Ghana, Togo and Benin, Swiss will have to cast their vote by post – which is actually quite a convenient way, compared to the system of other countries.

Remember: “Decisions are made by those who show up.” Swiss abroad have to register with the Embassy and request their right to vote, indicating the municipality of their last residence or origin. In case you have not already done this, the Embassy very much encourages registering. Please request the registration form by e-mail: [acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch).

<http://www.bk.admin.ch/themen/pore> | [www.webvote.ch](http://www.webvote.ch)



## Ghana – Crisis Readiness

Ghana – the stable, the peaceful, the beautiful. That's how we experience the country. Yet, as examples in the region show, a crisis can emerge quickly.

It is one of the Embassy's prime tasks to be prepared for a crisis situation, and to be able to assist Swiss citizens. Together with this newsletter, we therefore send you a leaflet on precautionary measures and behavior in crisis situations. Please print the leaflet, read it carefully and keep it with your important documents.

The Embassy has a network of contact persons ready to be activated in the event of a crisis. The following people will try to keep contact with Swiss nationals:

Accra (city):	Embassy Emergency Line, 0244 327 616
Tema:	David KESSLER, 0244 319 591
Greater Accra (w/o Accra/Tema):	Yasser ASCHKAR, 0244 356 989
Eastern Region:	Markus WICKI, 0244 793 339
Ashanti Region:	Katharina NIKLAUS-SIPPAH, 0244 213 016

For all other regions: Embassy Emergency Line, 0244 327 616

Please take note of the person who is ready to keep contact with you. We recommend to save the number in your cell phone right now.

As long as this network of contact persons is not activated by the Embassy, it is the Embassy that serves as a point of contact in case of emergency (Embassy Phone: +233 30 222 81 25; Embassy Emergency Line/Duty Officer: +233 244 327 616).

Please also consider the travel advice of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (link below).

[www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/rebs/afri/vgha/rhgha.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/rebs/afri/vgha/rhgha.html)





## Benin – Belgian Consulate issues Visa for Switzerland

Since January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the Belgian Consulate in Cotonou, Benin, issues short term visa to Switzerland for people residing in Benin. Thus, it is no longer necessary to travel to Accra for a visa to Switzerland.

Since July 2010 already, the Swiss Embassy in Accra, Ghana, has been issuing visa to Belgium for people residing in Ghana. This applies for all Schengen short term visa. In case more than one country within the Schengen space is visited, the visa has to be requested from the country with the most significant stay. People residing in Togo travelling to Switzerland still have to apply for a visa at the Swiss Embassy in Accra, Ghana.

This information does not affect the Swiss living in Ghana, Togo and Benin, as you don't need a visa for entering Switzerland. However, this news may be useful for your friends and family.

For the Swiss living in Benin, the SDC coordination office performs several consular services.

[www.eda.admin.ch/accra](http://www.eda.admin.ch/accra) | <http://www.cooperation-suisse.admin.ch/benin>

## 419 scams – False Scholarship Offers

In our last newsletter, we raised awareness against internet-scams (419-scams). Over the last months, we observed an increase of attempted scams against people residing in Ghana, Togo and Benin under the pretext of false scholarship offers. Perpetrators fake letterheads of Swiss authorities offering scholarships or assistance with visa applications. Based on these documents, targeted victims are asked to spend money for application fees, thus being defrauded.

There are many variations of 419 scams. Please be aware, and read the information on our website.

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/afri/vgha/repgha/bizgh/chinv.html>



## Swiss Events in Ghana, Togo and Benin



17.05.2012, Lomé, Togo

### Togo – Reception for the Swiss Community

The Honorary Consul General of Switzerland to Togo, Ms. Myrna Tabchoury, has the pleasure to invite the Swiss Community of Togo for a cocktail and get-together. The cocktail is hosted by fellow Swiss Ms. Dominique Ribereau-Weiss, spouse of the German Ambassador Joseph Weiss, at their Residence. The Ambassador of Switzerland to Ghana, Togo and Benin, Andrea Semadeni, will attend the event. An invitation by e-mail will be sent to Swiss citizens who are registered (RSVP). In case you will not receive an invitation, please contact Ms. Tabchoury: [lome@honrep.ch](mailto:lome@honrep.ch).

Time: Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012, 18.30-20.30

Venue: German Ambassador's Residence, Boulevard de la République, Lomé, Togo

RSVP to [lome@honrep.ch](mailto:lome@honrep.ch) / +228 92.02.99.39 before May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012

### OSA – Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

The Organization of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) represents Swiss expatriates' interests in Switzerland. It informs Swiss living abroad about what is happening in Switzerland and provides them with a wide selection of services. The OSA is supported by some 750 Swiss expatriates' associations and Swiss institutions all over the world. It was founded in 1916 and is recognized by the authorities as the representative organ of the Fifth Switzerland. Information and advice on all types of legal, social security insurance and training matters are also provided by the OSA as well as the magazine "Swiss Review" and a wide variety of activities for young Swiss abroad.

[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch)



Auslandschweizer-Organisation  
Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger  
Organizzazione degli Svizzeri all'estero  
Organisaziun dals Svizzers a l'ester

## Contact Information

Embassy of Switzerland (Consular district: Ghana, Togo, Benin)  
Kanda Highway/Ridge Street  
North Ridge Area  
Accra  
Ghana

Postal address:  
Embassy of Switzerland  
P.O. Box 359 GPO  
Accra  
Ghana

Phone : +233 30 222 81 25  
Fax : +233 30 222 35 83

E-Mail : [acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch](mailto:acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch)  
[acc.visa@eda.admin.ch](mailto:acc.visa@eda.admin.ch) (Visa Section)  
[acc.economicsection@eda.admin.ch](mailto:acc.economicsection@eda.admin.ch) (Economic Section)

Internet : <http://www.eda.admin.ch/accra>