

Newsletter

of the Embassy of Switzerland to Ghana, Togo and Benin

October 2011

English edition for Ghana

The Ambassador's Welcome Message

Dear readers, dear fellow Swiss citizens,

You are reading the first newsletter of the Swiss Embassy to Ghana, Togo and Benin, which aims to inform the Swiss community and friends of Switzerland in Ghana, Togo and Benin about the official – and unofficial – activities of Switzerland in these three countries. It draws attention to relevant sources for news about Switzerland, provides information that may be useful for the Swiss abroad, and points out upcoming and past events related to Switzerland.

The newsletter is intended to appear twice a year. This first edition has to feature with some basics about what Switzerland is officially doing in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Therefore, I provide you with a brief overview about our offices in the three countries. As you will see, we do fascinating work, in each country, in different ways. In future newsletters, I hope to be able to expand about the various activities of our offices, such as economic projects in Ghana, about development projects in Benin, or about NGO work in Togo.

The newsletter, however, is not intended to be a one way communication tool. I hope to make a first step towards more interaction between Switzerland and the Swiss community as well as friends of Switzerland, and between the Swiss communities in the three countries. Therefore, I invite you to send in information, contributions, and ideas for the following issues of the newsletter to acc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch. And maybe, other – new – forms of communication will follow.

For now, I am pleased to introduce this first edition, which I hope you will enjoy reading.

Best regards,



Andrea Semadeni, Ambassador



Andrea Semadeni, Ambassador

Official Switzerland in Ghana, Togo and Benin

Ghana – Embassy of Switzerland in Accra

Bilateral relations between Switzerland and Ghana, Togo and Benin are led by the Embassy in Accra. The Swiss presence in Ghana goes back to the era of the Basle Mission, starting in the early 19th century. Modern relations developed after Ghana's independence: Switzerland recognized the Republic of Ghana on 6 March 1957, the day independence was declared. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1960.

The Embassy is located in Accra's North Ridge. It consists of a chancery, a visa section, and an economic cooperation and trade division.

www.eda.admin.ch/accra



Ghana – SECO Economic Cooperation and Development

In the framework of the Swiss development cooperation, the Economic Cooperation and Development Division of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) is responsible for economic and trade policy measures with partner countries. The main aims are to integrate partner countries into the global economy and to promote sustainable economic growth, thus contributing to poverty reduction. SECO focuses on the following four goals in Ghana: (1) Support for the government in the macroeconomic area and calling for transparent public finances with a view to fostering Ghana's macroeconomic stability. (2) Support for the financial sector to ensure a stable financial architecture. (3) Promotion of trade-friendly framework conditions and an improvement in the investment climate, in order to support the development of a sustainable export economy. (4) The strengthening of underlying regulatory conditions in the area of infrastructure and targeted investments in the energy sector that are aimed at improving efficiency and reliability.

www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch



Benin – SDC Swiss Development Cooperation

Since 1983, Benin is a priority country of Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). SDC is officially represented in Cotonou with its Coordination Office and implements its activities primarily in the department of Borgou. Expansion is planned to the department of Alibori. The SDC program is committed to the fight against poverty and has a strong focus on working towards good governance and equality of men and women. Its action aims (1) to dynamize local economies, e.g. through support of small and smallest enterprises, (2) to strengthen local government, e.g. by supporting local communities that have been established with recent government decentralization, (3) to educate adults, e.g. with programs of alphabetization and reinsertion of school drop-outs, and finally (4) to improve the health system, e.g. by supporting health insurance schemes. On a central level, Swiss cooperation is dedicated to make sure that the effects of action taken is well anchored in the government's policies and coordinated with other partners' activities in order to spread experience and promote best practices.

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

Togo – Honorary Consulate

In Togo, official Switzerland has no permanent staff. The liaison to the Swiss community, for Swiss businesses, and with the Government of Togo is facilitated through Ms. Myrna Tabchoury, our Honorary Consul General in Lomé. Being the manager of the Palm Beach Hotel, a leading hotel in Lomé, and having spent over 20 years in Togo, Ms. Tabchoury is well connected both with the Swiss Community and the Society of Togo.

For consular matters, Residents of Togo – both Swiss and other citizens – are requested to address the Embassy in Accra.



Swiss Footprints

This section of the Newsletter will cover what we did and what we plan to do in the future. It will also be a platform for the Swiss community, a showcase for activities of Swiss businesses and individuals in Ghana, Togo and Benin. Contributions are very welcome.

Ghana – Swiss support to Ghana Standards Board

To showcase one of the various economic cooperation projects of the SECO Economic Cooperation and Development, the support to the Ghana Standard Board (GSB) is a good and very successful example. Switzerland has supported and sponsored the upgrade and international accreditation of GSB laboratories. The accredited testing laboratories at GSB are in the fields of Microbiology and Pesticide Residue. The project, Trade Capacity Building Programme, aims to enhance the export performance of Ghana by creating conditions for strengthening supply capacity in selected agriculture and industry branches, establishing a credible conformity assessment infrastructure and fostering integration into the multilateral trading system. By establishing these laboratories, producers and exporters of agro-products can ensure food safety, meet local and international food standards and thereby increase the country's trade competitiveness. An opportunity also for Swiss businesses?



<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/reps/afri/vgha/repgha/coof/devpr.html>

Togo – Swiss National Day of the Swiss Community

A delegation of the Embassy had the privilege to attend the Swiss National Day celebrations of the small, but well organized Swiss Community in Togo. The party took place in the cozy garden of Hotel Le Galion in Lomé, which is run by a Swiss. Some 40 Swiss and friends of Switzerland joined to celebrate Switzerland's anniversary, with sausages, a birthday cake – and African music. It was very interesting for us to learn from the experience of the Swiss and Togolese living in the country, and it was important for us to hear the concerns of our community. And it was good to exchange information, news and rumors, and get to know wonderful people. Thank you for the invitation!



News for Swiss Abroad

Federal Elections 2011

On October 23rd, 2011, the Swiss People – at home and abroad – are called to the ballots. Voters abroad who are registered should have received the election material by now. 200 members of the National Council and 46 members of the Council of States are to be elected. Currently, 12 political parties are represented in the two chambers of the Federal Assembly. 3'578 candidates seek election for the 200 spots in the National Council. How to vote? Whom to pick? Multiple sources of information explain the procedure of voting. Three examples are to be highlighted: The official Swiss portal ch.ch provides facts, information and practical tips about the elections. Swissinfo.ch features a special coverage with information relevant to Swiss abroad. And smartvote.ch is a so-called online voting advice application. Based on a comprehensive questionnaire on political issues, it compares the political positions of voters with those of political parties and candidates. Voters receive a voting advice in the form of a position-matching. Who is your candidate?

www.ch.ch | www.swissinfo.ch | www.smartvote.ch

REGA – Repatriation for people in distress

What happens if you are sick and want to go home, want to go to Switzerland? Will the airlines allow you to fly? Will you have enough resources? This year, the Embassy came across a case of a Swiss citizen in Togo with a terminal illness who wished to spend the last days of his life back home. Eventually, his wish was made possible. But it was only the joint effort and – financial – support of the Swiss Community in Togo that allowed him to do so. This act of humanity is very commendable. Yet it is not granted that such would happen in every situation. Therefore, we strongly recommend that all Swiss abroad who can afford to spend 30 Swiss Francs a year (or 70 Swiss Francs for the whole family) and become a Rega patron. Rega gives advice in case of medical problems abroad provided by Rega's emergency operations centre. It operates medically indispensable repatriation flights to Switzerland for patrons resident in Switzerland or in the Principality of Liechtenstein as well as for Swiss nationals



living abroad. Rega may, at its own discretion and within the bounds of its resources, waive the costs for the services for patrons, wholly or in part. Rega comes to the aid of people in distress, both in Switzerland and abroad. As a non-profit foundation, it is totally dependent on the financial support of its patrons. Register online at www.rega.ch.

www.rega.ch

Soliswiss – Swiss security, worldwide

We are aware that health insurance and risk coverage is a major concern for many Swiss abroad, especially living in countries with a different standard of health care. Treatment in Switzerland is costly, yet many Swiss opt for Swiss quality when it comes to their health. For the moment, one of the solutions to consider is soliswiss, the Solidarity Fund for Swiss Nationals Abroad. It offers insurance coverage for sickness and accidents, retirement plans and death insurance, compensation upon loss of means of existence, and insurance against political risks.

www.soliswiss.ch

419 scams – Beware of internet based fraud

At the Embassy, we experience many cases of Swiss individuals and businesses that are exposed to 419-scams originated in West Africa. The name of "4-1-9" (four-one-nine) fraud is derived from a sub section of the Nigerian penal code which addresses fraud schemes. Perpetrators use very creative and innovative schemes on their victims to entice them into believing that they have been singled out to share in a multi-million dollar windfall profit. Please note that there are many variations of 419 scams. Most typical: the unsolicited email from someone unknown to you inviting you to share in a multi-million dollar profit or inheritance. Once you reply, you are requested to provide bank details. You are also subsequently requested to pay money or a fee to a bank to enable the said money to be transferred into your account. But this is only one of many forms of 419-scam. Please be aware, and read the information on our website.

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

soliswiss:

SCAMS
TARGET YOU
PROTECT YOURSELF

Sources of Information

Swiss Review

Published in five languages and with a print run of 408,000, "Swiss Review" reaches all Swiss citizens registered abroad. The journal keeps the community of the Swiss abroad updated on current Swiss political, economic, cultural and social affairs. It also informs our fellow-citizens abroad about their political rights and obligations. "Swiss Review" provides multi-faceted, objective and differentiated information and conveys a picture of present-day Switzerland. "Swiss Review" is also available online at www.revue.ch

www.revue.ch

Swissinfo – Swiss news, world wide

Are you interested in Switzerland? Do you want to be kept up-to-date with what's making headlines in Switzerland? You need look no further than www.swissinfo.ch, a nine-language multimedia news and information platform on the internet – from Switzerland, about Switzerland. [swissinfo.ch](http://www.swissinfo.ch) is geared to the needs of Swiss people living abroad and to an international audience with an interest in our country.

Politics, business, culture, science and technology, society and sport are all presented in up-to-the minute news, analyses, background reports and articles – in words and pictures, audio and video. Multimedia "dossiers" and "specials" also allow relevant topics to be dealt with in greater detail. The website offers the Swiss expatriates, who are entered on Swiss electoral rolls, dossiers on referenda and elections that are written in Switzerland's national languages, thereby allowing them to exercise their democratic rights. [swissinfo.ch](http://www.swissinfo.ch) examines the Swiss position on key international events and developments – as well as the international perspective on Switzerland.

With its variety of interactive offers of online surveys, user feedback, rating options, blogs, upload options and a range of newsletters, [swissinfo.ch](http://www.swissinfo.ch) promotes exchange between users and contact with them on a personal level.

www.swissinfo.ch



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

Swiss Events in Ghana, Togo and Benin



05.10.2011, 8.30 p.m., Alliance Française Accra

Ghana – Swiss Jazz in Accra: Kenny Drew Jr. and Thomas Dobler Duo

Kenny Drew Jr. from New York is one of the most interesting Jazz pianists of our time and the son of Jazz icon Kenny Drew. The incredible vibes player Thomas Dobler from Zurich is not only an exciting virtuosic soloist; he effectively reinvented his instrument and is able to create a very large palette of sounds.

Drew and Dobler have their roots in the American Jazz tradition as well as in the European classical music. When this swinging duo plays together, things fall right into place.

The Duo plays the opening concert of this year's Accra Jazz & World Music Festival at Alliance Française Accra. Curtain Raiser: Ayekoo Drummers.

www.afaccra.com



9.-18.12.2011, Parakou/Cotonou

Benin – Villages of partnerships in Parakou and Cotonou with free concerts on the 30th anniversary of cooperation

This December, Switzerland and Benin celebrate the 30th anniversary of the framework agreement of cooperation linking the two countries. On this occasion, a series of activities are organized in Cotonou and Parakou to commemorate the jubilee.

Remembering history, presence and development, the festive activities start from December 9 to 11 in Parakou with a village of partnership, where every institution or association that has developed partnerships between the two countries will be able to present its works and achievements. Musical podiums, thematic conferences and public

viewings of documentary films will enrich the village. The night of December 10, a free concert will present some of the best musicians from Benin.

From December 16 to 18, the village of partnership will be opened in Cotonou at the Stade de l'Amitié. The festivities will also consist of free podiums for young artists and comedians as well as thematic conferences and viewings of documentary films, followed by debates. The night of December 17, a free concert will be offered to the public at the Stade de l'Amitié.

The Swiss Development Cooperation in Benin invites the Swiss community to join the villages of partnership and to appreciate the variety and vitality of the partnerships that link the two countries, whether built by associations, municipalities, cantons, governments or on private initiative.

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

SwissCommunity.org – The platform for the Swiss Abroad

Fairly new, SwissCommunity.org is structured like a social network. It is provided by the Organization of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and aims to strengthen the link between the Swiss abroad and Switzerland. SwissCommunity.org is a global network which keeps Swiss people all over the world in touch.



www.swisscommunity.org

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