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AMBASSADOR'S WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear fellow citizens,
Dear partners and friends,

It is a privilege for me to welcome you to the Newsletter 2021 in my capacity as the new Ambassador of Switzerland to Georgia!

Despite the pandemic, the year of 2021 saw no shortage of high-ranking visits to both Switzerland and Georgia, events and new beginnings. Both Switzerland and Georgia value the solid bilateral relations. In this regard the visit of President Zurabishvili to Switzerland was of great importance to the two countries. The presidents of Switzerland and Georgia took stock of the bilateral relations and explored avenues of future cooperation.

The highlight of the year was the development of the new Swiss Cooperation Programme 2022-2025 for the South Caucasus. Building on past achievements, Switzerland will continue to render support to alleviate poverty, to deal with the repercussions of the pandemic, to promote respect for human rights and democracy, to curb migration and to facilitate better use of natural resources.

Throughout the year, and against the background of the pandemic, it was a priority for the Embassy to provide timely consular services to our compatriots. The consular staff stood ready to aide Swiss citizens and those willing to travel to Switzerland; the website and the Facebook page were also regularly updated to keep all well informed.

2022 will see a landmark milestone in our bilateral relations - 30 years of diplomatic relations! Switzerland and Georgia already enjoy outstanding relations in myriad areas. The 30th anniversary will be a good opportunity to celebrate the friendship and explore opportunities to further enhance the cooperation.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Stay healthy and see you in 2022!

Heidi Grau
Ambassador

POLITICAL COOPERATION

The year of 2021 has been a remarkable year and a significant milestone in Switzerland-Georgia relations. Exactly 30 years ago, on 23 December 1991, Switzerland recognized Georgia's independence, 25 years ago Switzerland opened the Cooperation Office in Tbilisi to support Georgia become a democratic country with strong institutions, and 20 years ago Switzerland opened the Embassy in Georgia to forge a long-term partnership between the two countries.

In view of the perpetual pandemic, no celebratory events were organized. Instead, the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia produced a short documentary film which captures the whole spectrum of Swiss interventions in Georgia, ranging from bilateral trade to Swiss international cooperation.

If you missed the documentary on the Embassy's Facebook page, here is a [link](#).

2021 is also marked by high profile visits of Georgian officials to Switzerland bringing the bilateral relations between the two mountainous countries to a new level.

President Zurabishvili visits Switzerland



On 15 October, President Salome Zurbashvili paid a visit to Switzerland. It was the first official visit of the Georgian President to Switzerland. President Zurbashvili met with President Guy Parmelin as well as with Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The parties discussed bilateral relations including trade relations between the two countries, Switzerland's good offices and peace and security in the Caucasus region. They also touched upon the issues of climate change, energy and migration.

Switzerland has been providing Georgia, and the region with humanitarian assistance and later on with support in development since 1988. In 2022, Switzerland will kick off another four-year Programme to render continuous support to democratic reforms in Georgia to the tune of CHF34 million for the period of 2022-2025. The program aims to promote sustainable economic growth and thereby help alleviate the social and economic impacts of the pandemic.

The press release please find [here](#).

A bilateral deal under the Paris Climate Agreement



On 18 October, Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga and Levan Davitashvili, Minister of Environment and Agriculture of Georgia, signed an intergovernmental agreement on climate protection.

The deal is concluded under the Paris Climate Agreement which allows states to achieve their climate goals through climate projects in other countries. The given intergovernmental agreement envisages the development of a national programme to promote the energy efficiency of buildings in

Georgia.

The press release please find [here](#).

Deputy Foreign Minister visits Switzerland



On 22 March, Deputy Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia held a meeting with State Secretary of the FDFA Livia Leu Agosti, Head of the Eurasia Division Anna Ifkovits, and Head of the Human Security Division Simon Geissbühler. The Georgian Deputy Minister expressed gratitude for Switzerland's role in peacebuilding and as a facilitator in relations with the Russian Federation within its protecting power mandate.

“Georgia and Switzerland share much more than mountains and wine tradition. Glad to meet with Lasha Darsalia for a fruitful exchange on Switzerland and Georgia's bilateral relations, regional and international stability and prosperity. Looking forward to further strengthening our ties,” Ms. Leu's tweeter reads.

FDFA delegation visits Georgia



Peacebuilding and human rights protection are key aspects of the Embassy's work in Georgia. As part of its efforts, Switzerland elaborated a set of recommendations concerning strengthening the participation of minorities in decision-making processes by establishing consultative mechanisms. Switzerland's recommendations also cover increased protection of human rights defenders.

These and other human rights related issues were on the top of the agenda of Ambassador Simon Geissbühler's visit to Georgia on 14-19 September. Mr. Geissbühler is in charge of peace promotion and human rights policy at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). The Ambassador met with State Minister Tea Akhvlediani, MFA's Political Director Giorgi Zakarashvili, and Deputy Minister of the Interior Alexandre Darakhvelidze. The Swiss delegation also met with key stakeholders in the area of the rights of ethnic and religious minorities, including the Public Defender of Georgia.

Swiss Ambassador to the Russian Federation visits Georgia



From 10 – 12 November, the Swiss Ambassador to the Russian Federation, Ms. Krystyna Marty Lang, paid a three-day visit to Georgia in the framework of Switzerland's protecting power mandate. Switzerland is safeguarding Georgian interests in Russia and Russian interests in Georgia since the two states broke off their diplomatic relations in 2008.

Ambassador Marty met with Minister of Foreign Affairs David Zalkaliani, State Minister Tea Akhvlediani, representatives of the Georgian Parliament, Think Tanks and project partners. The goal of the visit was to get first-hand information about the situation in Georgia and the region.

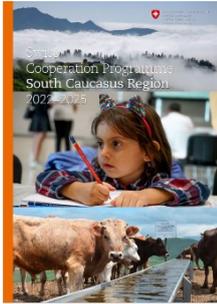
2021 Local Elections in Georgia

Through its decentralization programme, Switzerland supports strengthening of local self-government bodies in Georgia and facilitates citizens' participation in decision-making processes and in shaping the future of their respective communities. For [#2021localelections](#), two teams of the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia, as well as short- and long-term observers from Switzerland, joined the the OSCE/ODIHR election monitoring mission and by doing so contributed to the assessment of the entire electoral process in the country.



DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Swiss Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus 2022-2025



In 2022, Switzerland kicks off its new Cooperation Programme for the South Caucasus to be implemented in 2022-2025.

Building on past achievements, the Programme centres around the three thematic areas: Governance and Peace, Economic Development and Employment, and Environment and Climate Change. The financial commitment for this period amounts to CHF 80 million.

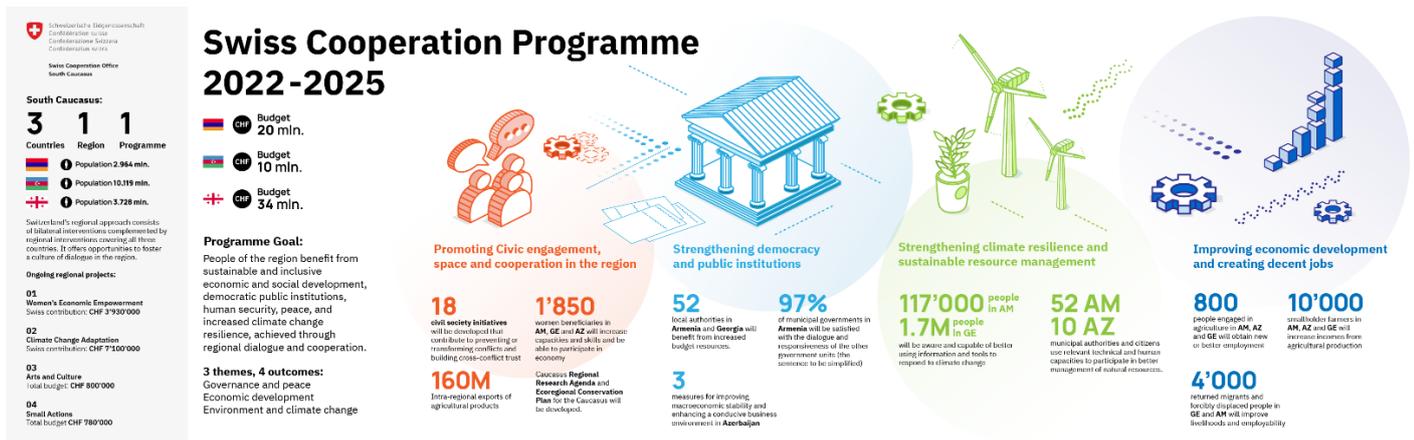
The Programme will adopt a systemic approach to poverty reduction, gender equality and social inclusion. Gender and good governance will be treated as transversal themes. In addition, the Swiss programme will systematically consider how its interventions influence or are influenced by migration, the environment, digitalisation and the media.

The Programme can be found [here](#).

The abridged version of the Programme can be found [here](#).

For the Programme's slideshow, please visit our [Facebook page](#).

Programme infographic please see below



SDC HQ hosts Georgian Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture



Minister Levan Davitashvili held a meeting with Ruth Huber, Vice Director of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The parties covered the issues related to agriculture and the environment, and discussed the priorities for the future cooperation in the framework of the new Swiss Cooperation Programme 2022-2025.

The Swiss delegation visits SDC-funded projects in Georgia



On 1-3 November, the Swiss Cooperation Office hosted a visit of the Swiss delegation headed by Ursula Läubli, Head of Eurasia Division. On the three-day field visit, the delegation travelled to the regions of Georgia to meet with project partners and exchange with projects' direct beneficiaries, inter alia, small-scale entrepreneurs and women beneficiaries from Pankisi.

Investment Forums in Georgia's regions



In 2021, two regions of Georgia - Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti – organized investment forums which offered platforms to discuss investment opportunities and economic challenges brought on by the pandemic.

Through the SDC-funded project “Fostering Local and Regional Development in Georgia”, Switzerland supports local economic initiatives with an aim to boost the local economic capacity and tap the potential of municipalities. So far, at least 18 local economic initiatives were implemented with a focus on tourism development.

More information about the project can be found [here](#).

Local economic initiatives on tourism development can be found in this [brochure](#).

Conflict Transformation



Switzerland continues to support civil society actors to prevent conflicts and contribute to conflict transformation efforts in Georgia. To this end, Indigo Fund examined the opinions of the young generation of Georgians and South Ossetians about their vision of peace and conflict transformation efforts. Results of the survey were widely shared with authorities, civil society and a wider audience. In addition, Georgian and Abkhazian civil society dialogue participants published a joint document, outlining measures for creating the conditions to move toward lasting peace in the Georgian-Abkhaz context.

New projects

Rural SMEs in Georgia: Switzerland launches a new business-focused initiative to support rural SMEs in Georgia. The Rural SMEs Development Project will help facilitate rural SMEs' access to bank and state finance and business support services. The project is implemented by a consortium led by Swisscontact and including Mercy Corps and the Springfield Centre for Business in Development.

For more information, please read the [article](#) by Georgia Today.



Forestry project: On 30 September, the SDC, GIZ, Green Climate Fund, and the Government of Georgia officially launched the joint 7-year project. The project will support Georgia to carry out the forest sector reform in a socially just fashion. Switzerland will bring to the project its technical know-how and vast experience in the forest government.

More information about the project can be found [here](#).

Regional Director of Cooperation talks to Georgia Today on Swiss Cooperation in Georgia

Danielle Meuwly, Regional Director of Cooperation, wrote an op-ed for Georgian English language newspaper 'Georgia Today' detailing the scope of the Swiss-funded programmes in Georgia and Switzerland's commitment to the implementation of the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Read the article [here](#).

CULTURE

Switzerland and Georgia in posters



On 21 April, the Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia, in cooperation with the National Museum of Georgia, opened the exhibition "Switzerland and Georgia in Posters" in Mestia, Svaneti.

The exhibition was officially opened by Ambassador Patric Franzen, Director of the Svaneti Museum Rusudan Japharidze, Mayor of Mestia Kapiton Zhorzholiani, and Deputy Regional Governor Nino Vibliani.



CONSULAR COVID-19 New Regulations – entry to Switzerland

As the regulations on entering both Switzerland and Georgia were being adjusted in response to the ever changing pandemic situation throughout the year, the Embassy of Switzerland is regularly updating information on the website as well as the Facebook page.

The most recent regulations and links to relevant Federal departments can be found [here](#).

The infographic below features new rules on entering Switzerland as of 20 December 2021.

New rules on entering Switzerland

From 20 December

Vaccinated or recovered



Complete entry form



Present negative test* result

Not vaccinated and not recovered



Complete entry form



Present negative test* result



Further test* 4-7 days after entry**

No test or entry form required for:

- Professional drivers
- Cross-border commuters***
- People from border regions***

No test required for:

- Children under the age of 16
- People exempted from testing
- Medical emergencies



Foreign nationals:
Check if you are allowed to enter at www.sem.admin.ch



Travellers entering Switzerland are **not currently required to quarantine.**

* PCR test (not more than 72 hours old) or rapid antigen test (not more than 24 hours old).
** Cantonal authority must be notified of the test result.
*** Test and form required when entering by plane or coach.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad – News Update #01

You will find attached the news update from the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)



2021-12-12 OSA
News Update.pdf

“SWI Plus”, your daily briefing on Switzerland

The journalists of Swissinfo.ch monitor current events to bring you the latest on what is going on in Switzerland. “[SWI Plus](#)” the App for the Swiss Abroad.

Certificates of life and marital status for recipients of Old Age pension and Survivor’s Insurance (OASI) or Disability Insurance (DI) - automation of the control process for Swiss citizens living abroad

As of January 2022, the Swiss Compensation Office (SCO) improves the control process through automated exchanges that will simplify the procedures for a large part of Swiss nationals residing abroad. In concrete terms, this means that Swiss nationals living abroad who are duly registered with the Swiss representation of their place of residence will, in principle, no longer receive a request for a certificate of life and marital status. The request will be communicated directly to the SCO by the Register of Swiss Abroad.



Newsletter_DE.pdf Newsletter_FR.pdf

Online Desk for Swiss nationals residing abroad

Entering your personal details in the Register of the Swiss Abroad, ordering confirmations, announcing civil status matters and subscribing to publications: The FDFA’s online desk offers Swiss nationals abroad the opportunity to request services from the comfort of their homes. The FDFA’s online desk simplifies correspondence between Swiss nationals residing abroad and their Swiss representation.

Embassy of Switzerland in Georgia
Swiss Cooperation Office for the South Caucasus

12 Radiani Street, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia
www.eda.admin.ch/georgia
www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyTbilisi