



Célébrations de la Fête national suisse et des 140 ans des relations bilatérales

Discorso del Consigliere federale Ignazio Cassis

Lima, Peru – 11 luglio 2024

Your Excellency, Minister Javier Gonzalez-Olaechea, Querido Javier

Honourable representatives of the authorities of the Republic of Peru,

Distinguished Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps and the international community,

Fellow citizens and friends of Switzerland,

Ladies and gentlemen

A high-quality relationship is one that is cultivated and nurtured.

That is precisely why I am here tonight: to celebrate with you 140 years of friendship between Peru and Switzerland - since the appointment of the first Swiss Consul in Lima, Mr Robert Weiss in 1884. *(NB: a descendant of Mr. Weiss, Ilse Weiss, may be present at this event, tbc by the embassy).*

Goethe said: *“Whoever drinks a cup of chocolate can endure a whole day's travel”*.

So, now we have an idea of why the Swiss have been such great travellers for decades!

Can you imagine how many miles you could travel with that much chocolate? *(NB: montrer la grande statue en chocolat dans le jardin de l'ambassade)*

More seriously: today, I discussed with Minister Javier Gonzalez-Olaechea the wide-ranging interactions between our two countries and was encouraged by the depth of our collaboration. I was equally impressed by my visit to the Pestalozzi School and the Swiss Club this morning, where I met with representatives of Swiss institutions in the country.

Dear friends of Switzerland,

Our strong ties go back to the extensive immigration of Swiss nationals from the 19th century onwards.

The first waves of immigrants came from the canton of Ticino – my home canton – as early as 1790. And the first recorded inhabitant of Swiss origin is the Ticino doctor Giuseppe Avanzini... a character with whom I have a few things in common! *(NB: Family doctor from Curio near Sessa)*

Today, Peru is the country with the fourth largest Swiss community in South America: three thousand Swiss citizens according to the latest statistics.



On this special day, we celebrate the Swiss community, but also the country that has given it a new home. My fellow citizens have rewarded this openness by helping to shape the country's economy and contributing to its development.

Economically, our relations are solid. Many important Swiss companies have established themselves here in Peru and have plans to grow.

Peruvian entrepreneurs with Swiss roots have become important economic players in specific sectors. Today, Swiss companies employ more than fifteen thousand people across Peru. This symbiotic relationship has strengthened both our economies and provides a healthy foundation for additional trade opportunities in future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

People all around the world tend to associate Switzerland with cheese and mountains.

And sometimes we reinforce these clichés: think of the first head of development cooperation, Kurt Burri, who arrived in the port of Callao in 1964... with cows to improve dairy farming in Peru!

Surprising at the time. But it worked.

Kurt Burri was followed in the seventies by the Swiss cheesemaker José Dubach... and today there is a cheese industry in Peru that provides an income for thousands of families in the Andes.

'Queso Andino' and 'Queso Tipo Suizo' are well-known cheese brands that benefited from Swiss support.

We have sold our cheese, but we still have mountains to climb:

Because of our common attachment to alpinism, several hundred mountain guides have been trained over the years with support from Switzerland. Today, the Association of Mountain Guides of Peru is continuing, unaided, to build the capacity of new generations.

Around 2010, the focus of Switzerland's development cooperation work changed:

As Peru became a middle-income country, it also became a priority country for SECO's economic cooperation: our expanded portfolio of programmes and projects now ranges from public finance management to sustainable economic growth. We support Peru's efforts to implement OECD-aligned economic reforms and standards.

Lima is also one of our two hubs worldwide for global and regional cooperation on environmental issues, including disaster risk management.

In particular, we share expertise and, together, are testing new scientific solutions to address the effects of climate change.

Together with Peru, we were among the first countries to sign an agreement for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, focusing on the international transfer of greenhouse



gas emissions. Implementing the agreement will hopefully make it possible to mobilise climate investments from the Swiss private sector for the benefit of both countries.

Dear guests,

I could mention various other aspects, such as our very unique cooperation on asset recovery and judicial cooperation. Or our fruitful partnership at the cultural level, permitting the return of over 80 artefacts to Peru over the past few years, but let me now turn to a more recent example of our special relationship.

All these examples demonstrate the close and wide-ranging ties between Switzerland and Peru.

And indeed, our shared values found very clear expression in Peru's substantial contribution to the recent Summit on Peace in Ukraine on the Bürgenstock in Switzerland.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Foreign Minister personally for the huge commitment he has shown.

Compliance with international law is a key foreign policy objective for our countries. We work closely together in multilateral institutions for a safer and more peaceful world. We are driven by the conviction that democracies need to be fostered and are the guarantors of freedom, development and innovation.

May our shared long-term vision remain strong and vibrant!

I would like to reiterate my deep gratitude to Minister Gonzales-Olaechea for his warm welcome to this beautiful country and to all of you tonight (and I can't wait to see the famous Machu Picchu tomorrow, which will be a dream come true).

¡Feliz fiesta nacional de Suiza, y aniversario de nuestras relaciones diplomáticas!

Buona Festa Nazionale a tutti!