

SWISSEMBASSYMANILANEWSLETTER

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Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Embassy of Switzerland

WELCOME

Manila, 18 August 2014



Dear fellow Swiss citizens, dear friends of Switzerland

I am pleased to reach you today with this new edition of our Newsletter. This periodical communication from the Embassy was discontinued for some time but is now back on track. We have a strong will to step up our communication with the resident Swiss community and with friends who have a special interest in Switzerland. This Newsletter will bring you some information on the most important activities of the Embassy and update you on some relevant consular matters.

In this era of social networking and new media, we have been given the opportunity by the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs to serve as a pilot-project Embassy in the use of Facebook. Indeed we inaugurated our www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyManila page a little more than a month ago. I strongly encourage social networkers to join us on this interactive media and to give us some feedback. Next to regular news and cultural agenda of the Embassy, this Facebook page is also intended to serve as an extra communication tool in case of emergencies. The Yolanda disaster has indeed taught us that the lack of communication options can slow down our response capacity during a crisis.

In this edition the “Swiss & International Affairs” will update you on some of the Embassy’s economic and trade related activities of recent months such as: The co-hosting by the Embassy of the General Membership Meeting of the Philippine-Swiss Business Council (PSBC), the signing of a Joint Declaration on Cooperation (JDC) between the EFTA states and the Philippines, and the 1st Swiss–Philippine Joint Economic Commission (JEC) Meeting held in Manila last July 14.

The “consular news” section will inform you on new arrivals at the Embassy, the upcoming new law for Swiss living abroad, the E-voting status for Swiss abroad and present our new visa procedure. Under “Development Project”, you will get an overview of the Swiss Government response during the Yolanda disaster.

Last but not least “Cultural Events” will give you an insight on the most recent cultural activities of the Embassy and make you discover the newly created “Swiss Cultural Fund – Philippines”.

I hope you will enjoy reading this publication. We have opted for a wide distribution of this Newsletter. If you enjoy reading it feel free to forward it to people you believe might be interested to receive it. For those of you who do not wish to receive this Newsletter in the future you have the option to unsubscribe at any time by simply sending an empty email response with subject “Unsubscribe”.

On behalf of the Swiss Embassy in Manila, I wish you all a good and disaster-free rainy season!

Raoul Imbach
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Switzerland co-host the ASEM DRRM Conference in Manila

Typhoon Yolanda has shown how increasingly important Disaster Risk Reduction and Management is becoming. Switzerland, a member of ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) since 2012 is also active in this field and for its first participation in ASEM it co-chaired the ASEM-DRRM conference, which took place in Manila at the beginning of June this year. With Ambassador Ivo Sieber as Head of Delegation and Mr. Arno Wicki of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) leading the team of Swiss experts, Switzerland co-chaired one of the working groups of the conference entitled “Regional and International Organizations and International Humanitarian Assistance Organizations (Improving the International Response System through Specialization and Coordination)”.

PSBC GMM cum Business Forum co-hosted by the Swiss Embassy

The Swiss Embassy co-hosted the First 2014 General Membership Meeting (GMM) of the Philippine-Swiss Business Council (PSBC) on 11 February 2014 with a sit-down dinner at the Swiss Ambassador’s Residence. The highlight of the GMM was the Philippine-Swiss Business Forum, which featured former Philippine Secretary of Finance Margarito B. Teves as Resource Speaker for the topic, “Opportunities for 2014 and Beyond (What Practical Opportunities the Philippine Leadership can focus on during the years to come and How Business and the Country can benefit from them).”

Mr. Teves presented the possibilities and prospects for the Philippines in the areas of banking, finance, energy, and business, which was followed by a very engaging Open Forum with the representatives of the PSBC-member companies. The Open Forum Moderator was Professor Ernesto Garilao, President of the Zuellig Family Foundation. The other highlight of the event was the Induction of New PSBC Members that was officiated by Inducting Officer Atty. Miguel Varela, Chairman of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the mother organization of the PSBC.



Former Finance Secretary Margarito Teves as Guest Speaker during the PSBC GMM cum Business Forum



Representatives of the PSBC member-companies at the PSBC GMM cum Business Forum



PSBC Chair Rosario Cajucom-Bradbury and Swiss Ambassador Ivo Sieber present tokens to former Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Guest Speaker, and Professor Ernesto Garilao, Moderator



From left: Ms Monica Mæland, Minister of Trade and Industry, Norway; Mr Kristinn F. Arnason, Secretary-General, EFTA; Mr Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Iceland; Mr Gregory L. Domingo, Secretary, Department of Trade and Industry, the Philippines; Mr Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, Federal Councillor, Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, Switzerland; and Mr Norbert Frick, Ambassador, Permanent Representative Permanent Mission in Geneva

Getting a step closer to a possible FTA between EFTA and the Philippines

The EFTA-Philippines Joint Declaration on Cooperation (JDC) was signed on June 23, 2014 in Iceland, providing for a normative framework for the negotiations of the EFTA-Philippine Free Trade Agreement.

Philippine Secretary of Trade and Industry, Hon. Gregory L. Domingo, concluded the JDC with the 4-member countries of EFTA, namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

Negotiations on the EFTA-Philippine Free Trade Agreement could start later this year or early next year and should provide an important impetus to strengthen Swiss-Philippine bilateral economic relations.



Ambassador Livia Leu, Head of Bilateral Economic Relations at the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, concludes the Minutes of the 1st CH-PH JEC Meeting in Manila with Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal, Jr. of the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry

First CH-PH Joint Economic Commission takes place in Manila

On 14 July 2014, the first meeting of the Swiss-Philippine Joint Economic Commission (JEC) took place in Manila, following its establishment last year via an agreement concluded by Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs, Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen and Philippine Secretary for Trade and Industry Gregory Domingo.

During this year's JEC inaugural meeting, the Swiss delegation was chaired by Ambassador Livia Leu, Head of Bilateral Economic Relations at the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, while Undersecretary Adrian Cristobal, Jr. of the Department of Trade and Industry headed the Philippine delegation.

The aforementioned recent signing of a Joint Declaration on Cooperation (JDC) Agreement between the Philippines and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA), of which Switzerland is a member, was part of the JEC discussions, the JDC having laid the ground for the launch of free trade negotiations..

The JEC Meeting, which also included the participation of private sector representatives, was followed by a Business Forum that offered a platform for government and business to look at concrete ways for companies from both countries to develop and strengthen trade and investment partnerships.

The new Law for Swiss living abroad (Auslandschweizergesetz, ASG / Lois sur les Suisses de l'étranger, LSE)

By end of 2013 over 730'000 Swiss were registered at Swiss embassies or consulates abroad. At the moment, various laws, decrees and directions exist for overseas Swiss. To end this sometimes confusing situation, a new law concentrates all these regulations in one legal text. This concerns in particular the following areas:

- support and integration of Swiss living abroad
- political rights (voting)
- social assistance if needed
- creation of a so called "guichet unique" , or a "one contact point" for all the questions that might arise from Swiss living abroad

Furthermore, the new law will regulate Consular Services for Swiss living in Switzerland and travelling abroad - consular services will not be for free and Consular Protection can be limited if a person disregards travel recommendations of the Swiss Government, or acts in a negligent manner. The new law has already passed the Council of States and will be debated in the next National Council's session. If approved it will come into force on 01 January 2015.

E-Voting

Since 01 January 2014, Swiss living abroad may vote via Internet (E-voting), if they are registered in a voting office of one of the following cantons: AG, BE, BS, FR, GE, GR, LU, NE, SG, SH, SO and TG. The remaining cantons will follow in due time.

As before, the cantons who offer the e-voting possibility will send out the documentation, together with the instruction on how to vote electronically, by ordinary mail. .

The National Telecommunication Commission (NTC) informed the Embassy that there are no legal or technical obstacles in the Philippines to vote via internet and transmit ciphered data.

It is important to note here that e-voting offers just another possibility to attend to your voter's right. You may still vote by mail or personal appearance in your voting office. If this information encourages you to exercise your right to vote and if you are not yet registered as a voter please find more information on

<http://aso.ch/en/consultation/living-abroad/political-rights>.

New Visa procedure

Schengen Visa Regulations have changed effective 14 November 2013. For applicants residing in the Philippines, this means they have to appear in person to

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS



Temporarily installed tarpaulins provided by Switzerland allow classes to resume in a provisory school in Daan Bantayan.



A staff of the Swiss Humanitarian Assistance Team supervises the distribution of shelter kits to disaster victims.

apply for a Visa in order to have their fingerprints captured.

The Embassy has outsourced this task to a Service Provider TLScontact. Since then, TLScontact has been collecting visa applications, taking fingerprints, cashing visa fees and handling passport distribution.

Clients can easily make an appointment directly via TLS's website or by telephone, appear on the agreed time, deposit the application, and have fingerprints captured. Within 30 minutes the whole process is accomplished. TLScontact hands over the passports and files to the Embassy for decision. Once the visa is granted, the passport goes back to TLScontact, who delivers it to the applicant.

Please note that children below the age of 12 are exempted from giving fingerprints. Spouses of Swiss citizens have the possibility to do the visa processing at any time from Monday to Thursday between 9am and 12 noon (Friday 11.30am) directly at the Embassy without making an appointment.

Typhoon Yolanda: Swiss humanitarian aid teams helped affected people in the Visayas

On 8 November 2013, one of the strongest tropical typhoons ever recorded hit the Central Philippines leaving behind great devastation, thousands of victims and despair. Moved by this humanitarian disaster, Switzerland immediately responded: only two days after, teams of experts of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) started relief operations in some of the most seriously affected areas in Northern Cebu and Western Leyte. The Swiss experts were among the first foreign aid workers to help the gravely harmed populations in Bogo, Daan Bantayan and Bantayan Island in Cebu, and in Naval/Biliran and Ormoc in Western Leyte.

Over the past months, a total of 40 professionals – shelter experts, architects and logisticians, water and sanitation engineers as well as medical doctors and health specialists in the first weeks – have been active in emergency and rehabilitation activities, operating out of their logistical hub in Cebu City.

During the first weeks of the initial emergency response phase, Swiss Humanitarian Aid supplied locally provided food and kitchen sets as well as hygiene and shelter-kitsto tens of thousands of victims. They helped local governments in providing safe drinking water with specialized equipment flown in from Switzerland. For example, they prepared locations for 5'000 to 10'000-litre water reservoirs to be installed for water distribution. 21 tons of medicine, food packs and shelter materials were air-shipped from Switzerland and distributed in coordination with local authorities to the needy in the Visayas.



Construction specialists of the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit discuss emergency response measures with local experts in Daan Bantayan



A classroom rehabilitated by Switzerland is ready for the start of classes

In the recovery phase in 2014, projects were initiated in the area of livelihood. For instance, fishermen were provided with new boats or were financially supported to repair their damaged boats in order to allow them to restart their businesses and generate income. Rice seeds were distributed to local farmers so that they could secure the next harvest. Switzerland also supported the rehabilitation of social infrastructure including the temporary provision and rehabilitation of 32 classrooms and health centers by both financial assistance and expertise. Furthermore, pumping stations, water systems, and springs were repaired or cleaned to re-establish the supply of drinking water. All activities included capacity building for local partners, aiming to raise awareness of Disaster Risk Reduction.

Until June 2014 – the end of the Swiss humanitarian operations in the country – Switzerland has invested between seven and eight million CHF in humanitarian operations. Apart from the directly implemented activities by SDC, this overall financial engagement of Switzerland includes contributions to multilateral and international partner organizations.

Swiss solidarity

Complementary to the support of the Swiss government, the major private Swiss humanitarian fundraising platform, “Swiss Solidarity”, has raised more than 42 million CHF for the Philippines. We are proud to highlight the great solidarity of the Swiss population in connection with the typhoon victims. This amount will allow the implementation of a number of programs by Swiss NGOs who are active in the Visayas.

Tasks of the Embassy in Manila

All Swiss Humanitarian Aid operations were carried out in close cooperation with the Swiss Embassy in Manila. The Embassy coordinated with Philippine authorities, UN organizations and Swiss NGOs. It provided local knowledge and supported the humanitarian teams logistically. On a diplomatic level, the Embassy assured the coordination and communication with the Philippine government and with other state donors.

Apart from this humanitarian work, our staff further organized, together with the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), the European Commission, and Japan, a Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management that took place in Manila on 4-6 June 2014. This conference, organized within the framework of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) allowed around 150 participants from Asia and Europe to have a fruitful exchange on how to further improve international humanitarian coordination and how to reduce risks and vulnerabilities in relation to disasters.

Swiss compatriots affected by typhoon Yolanda

Yolanda has also affected our Swiss compatriots living in the Visayas. The Embassy, in close cooperation with the Crisis Management Center of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Berne, intensively worked to locate Swiss nationals in the affected areas days after the typhoon. Teams of consular employees of the Embassy in Manila, and staff flown into the country from Swiss Embassies abroad, have been deployed to actively search for our compatriots in heavily affected areas or those difficult to reach. The Embassy helped a number of persons to get out of danger zones, receive medical treatment, or get repatriated to Switzerland if necessary. However, no Swiss citizen was among the numerous casualties.



Inauguration of the water project in Adams, Ilocos Norte

Small Development Aid Projects of the Embassy

Every year the Embassy finances a few small development projects in rural areas. These projects are aimed at providing basic necessities to underprivileged villages in order to improve their health and living standards.

Three such projects were water projects inaugurated in March and April this year in the municipalities of Lemsnolon, T'boli and Surallah in the vicinity of Lake Sebu Mindanao, and in Adams, Ilocos Norte.

CULTURAL EVENTS



Ambassador Ivo Sieber explains the Swiss Cultural Fund Philippines at the launch of the SCF-PH with Swiss jazz artist Claude Diallo

The Swiss Cultural Fund

On 26 May 2014, the “Swiss Cultural Fund – Philippines” was inaugurated during a VIP reception at the Swiss Ambassador’s Residence. The “Swiss Cultural Fund – Philippines” is an initiative of the Embassy created to foster cultural exchange between Switzerland and the Philippines. It aims at giving Filipinos more opportunities to discover Swiss artists and get acquainted with Swiss culture. On the other hand, Swiss artists learn more about Philippine culture and, where possible, create synergies. The first Swiss companies to join the Fund as sponsors were Nestlé, Bühler, Ferring, SGS, Sika and Swatch.



Francophone Ambassadors led by Swiss Ambassador Ivo Sieber and Guest of Honor, Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario, raise a toast to celebrate Francophonie

Francophonie 2014 in the Philippines

The Embassy of Switzerland invited the talented Swiss singer/composer Laurent Brunetti for this year's Francophonie, who came with Swiss pianist and composer Mario Pacchioli. The Swiss duo performed 6 times during their two-week stay in the Philippines, receiving standing ovations during their concerts at the Cultural Center of the Philippines, Alliance Française de Manille and at the Rizal Park open air auditorium. Later during the same month, the Swiss cartoon feature "Titeuf" was also shown in said auditorium.



Swiss singer-composer Laurent Brunetti performing at the Cultural Center of the Philippines



Swiss jazz pianist-composer Claude Diallo in Manila

Claude Diallo in concert

Manila was the last stop for Swiss jazz pianist and composer Claude Diallo, who performed with his trio in his Asia tour which included Malaysia, Taiwan and Japan, before heading to the Philippines, for a few solo performances. The talented Mr. Diallo, born of a Swiss mother and a French father, lives in New York – the jazz mecca of the world. His melodic style, allied with an incredible technique, made each of his performances a real treat for the audience. Claude is the first artist sponsored by the newly-created Swiss Cultural Fund – Philippines.



Raoul performs before a packed crowd at the Rizal Park last June 1st

Raoul and the Wild Tortillas at Rizal Park

The Embassy counts in its ranks an artist. Raoul Imbach, aka Raoul, is the Deputy Head of Mission of the Swiss Embassy in Manila. Diplomat during the day and entertainer during his free time, Raoul is no stranger to the stage. With a 50-year singing / composing career, he has published 10 CDs of his own composition.

On June 1st at the Rizal Park Open Air auditorium, he performed his first solo concert in the Philippines in front of a delighted audience. Accompanied by his band "The Wild Tortillas", and dancers of the Salsa Congress Manila Boracay Group, he got people on their feet dancing and cheering to some of his newest compositions and adaptations like "Hello Eto Ako", "Binibini" and "It's more Fun in the Philippines".

OTHER EVENTS



Ambassador Ivo Sieber (R) and DFA Undersecretary Evan Garcia (L) hold the ceremonial toast with the Papal Nuncio (M) in Manila

Swiss National Day 2014

Swiss National Day 2014 Official Reception in Manila

The official Swiss National day was celebrated this year on August 01 at the New World Hotel for VIP guests, Diplomatic corps, members of the government, and executives of Swiss companies

Ambassador Ivo Sieber and his wife, Gracita Tolentino-Sieber hosted the event and welcomed the Honorable Undersecretary Evan Garcia of the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs as Guest of Honor. After the official speeches, guests got a chance to enjoy typical Swiss food and share an enjoyable Swiss time together.

On the following day the Swiss Club of the Philippines held its traditional celebration of the National Day at the Manila Polo Club for the Swiss community

Swiss National Day Celebration in Cebu

It has long become tradition in Cebu to celebrate the Swiss National Day at the Cebu Marco Polo Hotel. On August 1st 2014, the hotel's Swiss General Manager, Hans Hauri, together with his team, made it once again a wonderful evening of games, raffles, music, dance, and Swiss delicacies by Chef Stefano Verrillo. All this took place in a beautifully Swiss-decorated location



...as Marco Polo General Manager, Hans Hauri (L), raise his glass with Embassy Deputy Head of Mission, Raoul Imbach (R) during the National Day toast in Cebu

OTHER NEWS



New Swiss Personnel at the Embassy

Mr. Lorenzo Barelli (right; and welcomed in this photo by Mr. Hans-Peter Fitze, Consul and Head of Chancery) has replaced Mr. Andre von Ah as Deputy Head of Chancery effective July 24, 2014. Mr. Barelli was posted in Nairobi, Kenya before coming to Manila.



Mr. Marco Bonorand (left) has replaced Ms. Daniela Di Gaspare at the Consular Section of the Embassy and has recently started his one-year traineeship in Manila. Mr. André von Ah (right) has left the Embassy and will start his new assignment as Head of the Consular Section in New Delhi/India at the end of August.

A vertical advertisement with a red border. At the top, the word "Your" is in red with a white cross in the 'o', followed by "Embassy is on FACEBOOK" in blue. Below this is the URL "www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyManila". A Facebook 'f' logo is followed by "Like us on FACEBOOK". At the bottom, there is a red banner with a white mountain range silhouette. Below the banner, the Swiss flag cross is shown next to the text: "Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft", "Confédération suisse", "Confederazione Svizzera", "Confederaziun svizra", and "Embassy of Switzerland in Manila".

The Swiss Embassy in Manila on Facebook

The Swiss Embassy in Manila is now on Facebook, with the aim of conveying a multi-faceted and authentic image of Switzerland and its foreign policy. We share information on the work we do, give updates on Swiss-related events, and provide advice on Consular matters. At the same time, the Embassy will tap Facebook in case of emergencies, particularly in the provision, of instructions to Swiss citizens and locating them in the event of disasters.

Everybody who takes an interest in Swiss affairs is welcome to visit us on our Facebook page and to communicate and give comments. Like us now on [www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyManila!](http://www.facebook.com/SwissEmbassyManila)