

Newsletter

of the Swiss Embassy in Mexico

July 2019

Ambassador's Welcoming Words

Dear Swiss Compatriots,
Dear Friends of Switzerland,

It is a pleasure and an honor to address this message to you, our compatriots and friends living in Belize, in this new annual edition of the Swiss Embassy's Newsletter.

As you know it is the first time, since I took my new function of Swiss Ambassador to Mexico and Belize in September last year that I can communicate with you through this way.

Nevertheless, I had the chance to travel to Belize shortly after I took my office in Mexico and to meet some of you during a wonderful and very friendly encounter at the Aguada Hotel, in Santa Elena on September 18th, 2018.



Friendly gathering with the Swiss community of Belize, September 18, 2018.

This first trip to Belize City and Belmopan was a very intensive one with the main goal to present my Credentials as the new Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to the Governor General Sir Colville N. Young, to meet the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Honorable

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Wilfred Elrington and the Chief Executive Officer of the MFA, H.E. Ambassador Patrick Andrews, as well as other officials, diplomats accredited in Belize and representatives of the civil society. (See more details below).

One important part of our bilateral relations with Belize are the Small Scale Projects with local Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs) supported by the Embassy in the field of protection and promotion of Human Rights and local development. In 2019, we are supporting four projects for a total of 75,000 BZ\$. You will find more information in the article in this Newsletter about the current projects and condition to get such a support for the Embassy for NGOs in the future.

Of course the relationship with Mexico takes me and to the staff of the Embassy most of our time and energy. Nevertheless, it is my firm intention to continue to follow-up closely and to develop more the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Belize.

We are very lucky to have our Honorary Consul John Searle present on the spot there in Belize. Thanks to him, we are able to follow-up and analyze the actuality and big events such as the recent tenure of the national referendum to take Guatemala's claim to Belize's territory to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

My Deputy Head of Mission, Counselor Leo Trembley, also made an official trip last December to Belize to present, in the margin of the SICA (*Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana*) Summit, the "Montreux Document" on private security companies, a common initiative of Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He is reporting about this trip and action in the Newsletter too.

I am planning to travel again to Belize on the occasion of the celebration of the next Independence Day on September 21st and hope we will have again the opportunity to meet as we did last year.

Till then I wish you a nice celebration of our 1st of August national day!

Thanks, Danke, Merci, Grazie!

Eric Mayoraz
Ambassador

Presentation of Credentials to the Governor General of Belize

As the new Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Belize I had the honor to present on September 18th, 2018 my Credentials to H.E. the Governor General of Belize Sir Colville N. Young and to have a working meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFA), the Honorable Wilfried Elrington and the Chief Executive Officer of the MFA, H.E. Ambassador Patrick Andrews.

During these important meetings, the very good relationship between our two countries was underlined. In particular, the Belizean authorities appreciated that the Embassy was financing Small Scale projects since three years now to support efforts of the civil society in the field of Human Rights and development.

We discussed also the possibilities to develop even more Swiss investments, the cultural exchanges, the mutual support of candidatures in the United Nations and the Swiss offer to Belize to open a Permanent Mission to the international Organizations in Geneva with the double accreditation to Berne as a bilateral Embassy to Switzerland.



Presentation of Credentials to H.E. Colville N. Young, Governor General of Belize by Ambassador Eric Mayoraz, Belmopan, September 18, 2018

Presentation of the Montreux Document at the Occasion of the SICA Security Commission

During the second half of 2018, Belize was holding the President Pro Tempore of the Central American Integration System (SICA). SICA is the institutional framework for Central American Regional Integration, created by the states of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and Belize in 2000, and the Dominican Republic joining in 2013.

In its capacity as President Pro Tempore Belize hosted in December in San Ignacio (Cayo District) the LXVIII Regular Meeting of the Central American Security Commission. The event had participation of the delegations from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic as well as, the General Secretariat of SICA, as the Technical and Administrative Secretariat of the Commission.



Together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) we decided to seize this opportunity to present a joint initiative linked to the promotion of the International humanitarian law (IHL) : the so-called Montreux initiative (named after the Swiss city where the initiative was officially launched). This initiative is part of the long-standing Swiss tradition of promoting IHL since the foundation of the Red Cross by Henry Dunant in the 19th century.

The Montreux Document is specifically focusing on the law and practices applicable to private military and security companies (PMSC) The Document clarifies the misconception that private military and security companies operate in a legal vacuum by recalling, compiling, and reminding the reader of the applicable international legal obligations. The Montreux Document describes good practices in implementing existing international legal obligations. The good practices cover a number of practical areas, including: authorization systems, contract provisions, and licensing requirements, as well as suggesting a number of effective methods for states to oversee the PMSCs they come into contact with.

The Montreux Document is not a new international treaty and it does not create any new legal obligations. Regardless of their support for the initiative, states are already subject to the international legal obligations contained in the Montreux Document. Most of the rules and good practices assembled in the Montreux Document derive from well-established principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The topic is relevant for the SICA region. According to figures from Small arms survey, the PMSC sector in Central America officially registered more than 266'000 employees and 150'000 small arms. The largest numbers of PMSC's officers are found in Guatemala and Honduras. In the region the sector is quasi exclusively focused on the provision of private security services. So far only Costa Rica has officially expressed the support for the document.

Together with my colleague Eric Tardif from ICRC we had the opportunity to present the relevance and the added value of the document to all the representatives of the member states of SICA. It was important to underline the importance of this initiative outside of situations of armed conflict, in region like Central America where the security challenge are more related with violence and crime. As mentioned, the Montreux Document provides a tool which allows

governments to implement effective oversight and regulatory mechanisms of PMSCs, for example through contracts or by the implementation of licensing/authorisation systems. In the case of Central America there are many small and medium companies in the private security market and the level of competition could affect their standards and their investment in vetting, training, internal control, or encourage them to accept clients without due diligence. In support of our presentations, the representative of Costa Rica took the floor to share with its colleagues the positive experiences they had by joining the initiative.

I am convinced that this meeting was an excellent opportunity to set important milestone about understanding the importance and the usefulness of the Montreux initiative in the Central American context. I know that my colleagues in Guatemala will follow up the topic with the new presidency pro tempore. We know since Henry Dunant that the vision of bringing more humanity to ware fare and violence is a long-term strategy, but you can count on the Swiss government to continue to engage for the respect and the promotion of International Humanitarian Law.

I seize this opportunity to thank our honorary consul, Mr. John Searle, for the excellent preparation of and support during the mission.

Léo Trembley
Deputy Head of Mission



Small Scale Human Rights and Sustainable Development Projects in Belize

An important pillar of the Swiss foreign policy is the promotion of the respect of human rights, peace and social welfare in all societies. For this reason, every year, the Embassy supports several Belizean NGOs by financing small-scale projects related to human rights and social development.

This year we support four very diverse and exciting projects in different parts of Belize:

- *Adopt a Child With a Disability's* project seeks to provide free physiotherapy therapy to children with disabilities that are unable to afford this much needed therapy. Furthermore, the projects aims at raising awareness and engagement around this topic.
- *Humana People to People* implements with the help of the embassy a project that aims at improving access for rural community members to proper sanitation facilities in Red Bank, Stann Creek District.
- *Julian Cho Society* is implementing a project that strengthens local governance in the 39 Maya villages of Southern Belize.
- The *Young Women Christian Association* aims at women's and girl's empowerment by providing them access to reliable day-care support and access to economic opportunity.

Our next call for projects opens at the beginning of November. Non-governmental organizations working in human rights and development related fields that are officially registered are very welcome to contact the Swiss Embassy (mexicocity@eda.admin.ch) to present their organization.



Reefkeeper Belize during their marine education activities – A project the Swiss Embassy supported last year. (Foto Credit: Reefkeeper Belize)

Message from the Honorary Consul

Dear Swiss Residents and Friends,

It is an honor to represent Switzerland in Belize as your Honorary Consul. For the most part my duties are straight forward, but at times the job presents challenges. The reward however is the greatest, as over the years I've gotten to know each one of you and your families and have developed true friendships.

As you have read in other contributions in this newsletter, there are quite a few projects and initiatives that the Swiss government contributes to in Belize. The one that comes immediately to mind is the renewable electricity project for La Gracia Village that was Swiss funded, and Swiss installed by Solar Electric Solutions Belize -SESB.

However, there are a number of other projects that, in typical Swiss fashion, are not as high profile, but are very meaningful and effective contributions to the promotion of human rights issues here in Belize. It is always very rewarding for me when I accompany the Ambassador or other Embassy representative to the meetings with the NGOs that are recipients of funding. They are always very grateful and appreciative of the assistance provided by the Swiss government.

This year, for the first time, I have been asked to help organize a celebration for your National Day, August 1st. As you are all aware, I am not Swiss, and therefore I am counting on and grateful for your input and assistance in helping to make the event a success. Preliminary consultations with some of you have indicated that the weekend of July 27-28 is suitable for most of you. Also, since most Swiss residents live in the Cayo District, it will be convenient for the majority to choose a venue in Cayo. Please email me with your input and suggestions so that we may together finalize the plans for an enjoyable Swiss National Day celebration.

I look forward to celebrating with you and I thank you all for the support you give me as your Honorary Consul.

With warmest regards,

John Searle
Honorary Consul

Meet the Embassy Staff: Romano Horn, Intern January-June 2019

You worked for 6 months from January to June as an academic intern at the Swiss Embassy in Mexico. Before you leave, I would like to ask you a few questions about your time here.
(Interview by SSA)

What were your main tasks at the Embassy?

I've done a lot of correspondence for the different departments of the Embassy. In doing so, I communicated with a wide variety of partners, from government officials to civil society and cultural partners. I was also responsible for the *Boletín*, which is written every two weeks, as well as for social media, and last but not least, I was responsible for the operational implementation of FICA (Feria de las Culturas Amigas) which sometimes made me feel like a wedding planner.

Were you nervous about this job in advance?

I was worried I would have to speak perfect French, since it is the diplomatic language and my two superiors are from the French part of Switzerland. Fortunately, that was not the case. When the Ambassador declared Spanish as the working language, I was quite relieved.

What were your personal highlights during your time as an intern?

The Consul of our Embassy, Ueli Haug, invited me to a Tennis tournament for diplomats. That is how I ended up playing on the roof of the Hyatt Hotel with a Russian diplomat against the Russian Ambassador and the number two of the US Embassy. Without my job at the Embassy, I would never have made this experience. Also, the FICA was one of my highlights, as it was the project where I put a lot of work into: handling the whole project from start to finish was demanding but also very satisfying and rewarding. In the end, it was fulfilling to see the result of my work, and to see that huge number of people were interested in my work. The fact that we won two prizes from FICA was the cherry on top.

What were the biggest challenges?

As an intern you are at the bottom of the food chain, that's clear. At times you receive tasks from all sides, and it is a challenge to structure the work in an efficient manner and set priorities. It is about maintaining one's own autonomy juggling the different requirements in order to be able to work productively. In terms of cultural experience, I experienced the Mexicans as exceptionally charming, *cariñosos* and open-minded. However, sometimes I found the collaboration rather difficult, especially because at times communication can be complicated, indirect and cumbersome. **Cultural differences are very evident in how people tend to communicate.** Nevertheless, I believe one has to adapt and be tolerant – especially in the diplomatic field. Since I am more of a harmonious type that was my natural way of dealing with this kind of situations.

How did you imagine life in Mexico and how did it surprise you?

Given the immense size of the city, I imagined life to be incredibly chaotic and exhausting. I thought a lot of my energy would go into mastering this monster. That was not the case at all. I enjoyed the time here a lot, I had the privilege to live in quiet and green areas of the city and it almost felt like in a village on the weekends, very relaxed.

How were your contacts to the Swiss Community?

I was only in touch with the community because of work. The cooperation with the Swiss providers was great.

What will you miss most?

The Mexican food. And the endless possibilities the City of Mexico has to offer. There is an abundance of cultural and social events. You can go to the Cineteca to watch big, non-commercial movies, go dancing and then eat tacos late at night. All during the same evening.

How was the work in the team?

Very pleasant. I was very lucky to have had great colleagues. Of course, there were less exciting days or weeks, but it was a very enjoyable collaboration, in which I received a lot of support from all sides. The superiors also expressed an encouraging mixture of professional distance and collegiality.

What is your next career move?

I have a job at the Swiss School in Santiago de Chile as a teacher for History and Geography at high school level.

What part of the practice from the Embassy will you take with you into your future professional life?

More structure: As a teacher, your days are often less structured. I have always been a bit scared of those 9-to-5-jobs. Now I realized that it is not too bad.

What aspect of life in Mexico will continue to accompany you?

My love for Latin America. There is a reason my next stop will be Chile. I am grateful for another half a year life experience on this continent, and for having the chance to broaden my horizons in many ways: culinary, interculturality, socially...naming only a few.

Any words for the future interns?

Be sure to eat tacos from the street right from the start ... And be open to everything: make the most of your life in the big city; be adventurous, discover new places and new things six months go by fast! The same goes for work: Be aware that it is a very versatile work, try to open yourself to the multiple demands. Be prepared for criticism and for incorporating your own considerations. Don't be afraid to articulate your own opinion.

Any words for your colleagues?

The whole team is highly dedicated. Every single one does his or her job out of passion and conviction. Everyone is exactly in their right place and has the appropriate skills. **Take care and don't forget to visit me in Santiago!**



Romano Horn with Ambassador Mayoraz in front of the Swiss stand at the FICA.

Useful links for Swiss abroad

Dear compatriots,

Many times people are in search of urgent information and call this Embassy by telephone or establish a contact by e-mail in order to get answers. Often, however, it would be easier to click on the appropriate link to access the information needed. Therefore, we herewith feature some electronic links of great utility that could be beneficial for you and aim towards a more concrete and accessible solution-finding. Thereafter, you will find some of the proposed links:

Of general utility:

The Law for the Swiss Abroad, which contains the rights and obligations of the Swiss outside their homeland (Auslandsschweizergesetz ASG):

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20133127/index.html>

Emigration: For Swiss considering emigrating or returning to Switzerland:

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/de/services/consulate/Auslandsschweizer-Information%20und%20-Institutionen/Swissemigration>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/leben-im-ausland/auswandern.html>

Information and advice for independent travelers by country

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise.html>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise/belize/reisehinweise-fuerbelize.html>

Taxes and legal information

(For questions about the requisition of taxes):

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/leben-im-ausland/auswandern/ruhestand-im-ausland/steuern.html>

<https://www.sif.admin.ch/sif/de/home/themen/internationale-steuerpolitik/doppelbesteuerung-und-amtshilfe.html>

Journeys

Itineris: Online platform for Swiss who want to register in order to assign their location and contact for the purpose of maintaining a communication with their relatives in case of incidents during the trip:

<https://www.collaboration.eda.admin.ch/de/services/consulate/Reisen%20und%20Hilfeleistungen%20im%20Ausland/Itineris>

Military Service

Families and young Swiss who are interested in knowing details about military service in Switzerland:

<http://www.vtg.admin.ch/de/mein-militaerdienst/allgemeines-zum-militaerdienst/doppelbuerger.html>

In economic or other difficulty?

Compatriots who are in a difficult situation and who require assistance:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/schweizer-in-not.html>

Consular questions / consular register / civil status

If any particular questions regarding the registration of civil status events taking place in Belize, and the legalization of such documents by the Embassy of Switzerland in Mexico (for the purpose of transmitting them to the authorities in Switzerland) arise, please do not hesitate to contact the following e-mail address: mex.vertretung@eda.admin.ch. The following links give an answer to the specific situations:

Compatriots who change directions or move to another country:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/immatrikulation-adressaenderung.html>

Swiss citizens who need to apply for a passport or an identity card:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/pass-id.html>

Swiss citizens who want to register the birth of a child or another person:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/geburt.html>

Swiss who want to register a marriage or a legal partnership:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/heirat-eingetragene-partnerschaft.html>

Swiss citizens who need to register a divorce:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/scheidung.html>

Swiss citizens who need to register the death of a family member:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/todesfall.html>

Swiss citizens who need to request a Swiss Civil Status document, a certificate of origin or an excerpt of the family register:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/zivilstand/zivilstandsokumente.html>

Legalizations, attestations

Swiss citizens who need information about the definition and possibilities of a legalization:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/beglaubigung.html>

Swiss who need information on the definition and possibilities of an attestation:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/bestaetigung-bescheinigung.html>

For Swiss who want to be linked to the "Online Schalter" for Swiss abroad:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/dienstleistungenundpublikationen/dienstleistungen-schweizer-ausland/online-schalter.html>

Vehicles

For Swiss who need to obtain a driver's license, obtain number plates or require information about the importation of vehicles:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/fuehrerausweis-fahrzeug.html>

Social insurance

For compatriots who want to find out about Swiss social insurance matters:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/dienstleistungen/sozialversicherung.html>

www.ahv.ch

www.soliswiss.ch

Economy

For Swiss who are interested in the promotion of the economy:

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mexico/de/home/bilaterale-beziehungen/wirtschaft-export.html>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/vertretungen-und-reisehinweise/belize/bilaterale-beziehungen-schweiz-belize.html>

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