



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
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**Embassy of Switzerland in the Netherlands**

EXHIBITOR AT



## **Speech by Ambassador Heinz Walker-Nederkoorn at the National Day ceremony**

**Almere, 30 July 2022**

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Geachte Vice-Commissaris van de Koning in de Provincie Flevoland, beste Cora Smelik,  
Geachte waarnemend burgemeester van Almere, Ms. Roelie Bosch  
Geachte Commissaris-Generaal van de Floriade, beste Annemarie Jorritsma,  
Geachte waarnemend CEO van de Floriade, beste Yoel Schuller,  
Geachte medewerkers van de Provincie Flevoland, stad Almere en van de Floriade,

Sehr geehrte Frau Präsidentin der Neuen Helvetischen Gesellschaft, liebe Marlies,  
Chers et chères membres des clubs suisses aux Pays-Bas,  
Care concittadine, cari concittadini,  
Beste bezoekers uit Nederland en Zwitserland, dear guests,

Wat een genoegen om u vandaag allemaal samen te zien en samen te zijn op de Floriade. Ik wil mijn oprechte dankbaarheid uitspreken voor deze unieke gelegenheid en uitzonderlijke locatie om onze Nationale Dag te vieren. Ik dank u hartelijk voor uw gastvrijheid.

Ik woon nu al vele jaren met mijn gezin in het buitenland. En om eerlijk te zijn verwachtte ik dat mijn plaatsing als ambassadeur van Zwitserland in Nederland, een lidstaat van de EU, zeker een uitdaging zou zijn, maar ik twijfelde er niet aan dat het een posten op een vreedzaam Europees continent zou worden. Wel, ik had het mis.

You and I have been living in a different Europe since 24 February. Russia's military aggression against Ukraine is causing immeasurable suffering for its people and is a blatant violation of international and humanitarian law. It represents also a serious risk to security in Europe as a whole.

Switzerland therefore strongly condemns the Russian aggression and we support Ukraine and its people. We took in over 60,000 refugees from Ukraine and are providing humanitarian aid on the ground. At the same time, Switzerland adheres militarily to neutrality as defined in the Hague Agreement of 1907.

This war affects me and the employees of the Embassy directly. The Hague "de stad van vrede en recht", and the city of Geneva, "la capitale de la paix", stand for diplomacy, multilateralism and international law. Both cities remind us daily of these central European achievements after the Second World War, which must now be resolutely defended in alliance with like-minded people and countries.

That is why Switzerland is actively engaged in the prosecution and conviction of war crimes in Ukraine, including by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague and we organized the first Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano, on 4 and 5 July. Switzerland will continue to be engaged for peace, dialogue and finding constructive solutions together, in the next two years, for the first time, also as a member of the UN Security Council.

I would like to speak now to my Swiss fellow citizens in the Netherlands. A delegation of the 6 existing Swiss Clubs came here from all corners of the country.

Chères concitoyennes et chers concitoyens, care concittadine, cari concittadini,

Was bedeutet die Schweiz für Sie? Für mich hat die Europafrage Priorität, gerade vor dem Hintergrund des Krieges in der Ukraine und der Bedrohung der Sicherheit in Europa: Die Schweiz ist ein europäisches Land und gestaltet den europäischen Lebensraum in vielfältiger Weise mit. Das gilt in guten und schlechten Zeiten. Dies gelingt am besten mit einer positiven Grundeinstellung, indem wir zu unserem Land Sorge tragen und mit einem geordneten Verhältnis zur Europäischen Union. Es gibt genug Gemeinsames, auf dem sich aufbauen lässt.

Der Bundesrat hat im Februar 2022 eine allgemeine Stossrichtung eines Verhandlungspakets mit der EU festgelegt. Auf dieser Basis führen die Schweiz und die EU zurzeit Sondierungsgespräche. Ziel ist die Abklärung, ob eine ausreichende gemeinsame Basis für die Aufnahme von Verhandlungen besteht

Ce jour, notre Fête nationale est particulier : Les drapeaux suisses sont hissés non seulement en Suisse et ici à Almere, mais aussi dans le monde entier, puisque près de dix pour cent de la population suisse vit hors de la Suisse. Cette présence importante et croissante de la communauté suisse à l'étranger reflète la forte interconnexion de la Suisse avec le monde.

Savoir que nos concitoyens, leurs familles et leurs amis célèbrent notre Fête nationale dans pratiquement tous les autres pays du monde comme nous le faisons aujourd'hui, me donne la sensation de partager une identité nationale, intégrée au niveau mondial. Chers concitoyens: vous, vos familles et vos amis, vivant ici dans ce merveilleux pays, les Pays-Bas, vous êtes de véritables ponts importants entre nos deux pays.

This brings me to our bilateral relations.

Switzerland and the Netherlands are like-minded countries, one located at the source and the other at the estuary (*river mouth*) of the majestic and beautiful river Rhine. Our two countries are enjoying excellent relations in a wide range stretching from flourishing business relations, over intensive research cooperation to a vivid cultural exchange.

Our countries stand up for and promote common values like human rights, democracy and rule of law. These values are threatened today and together with other like-minded countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland must, can and will defend them.

We also face similar challenges in our interconnected world. One of these challenges, directly related to the theme of this Floriade "Growing green cities" is the housing market.

On 6<sup>th</sup> July, together with the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (responsible for housing and spatial planning), our Embassy organized the "Swiss-Dutch Dialogue on Sustainable Housing". The event provided an overview of housing policy and operations in the Netherlands and Switzerland and facilitated a rich exchange between Swiss and Dutch practitioners, investors and experts.

Switzerland is widely known for its picture-post-card scenery, shaped by mountains, clear lakes and rivers, cows and green meadows, alphorn and yodeling... Behind this idyllic backdrop lies a country wholly committed to cleantech. I invite you all to visit the permanent exhibition on Swiss Cleantech solutions called "Can Tech save the World" in the Greenhouse of the Floriade.

Dear fellow citizens, dear Dutch friends, dear guests of the Floriade,

We are currently going through a difficult phase where peace and security can no longer be taken as granted. And to be honest with you, this difficult situation will not change anytime soon. All the more we should not only be grateful what we achieved in Switzerland, in the Netherlands and in Europe after the

second World War, we also must invest more in our security and in the defense of our rules based multilateral system.

No European country can cope with the challenges ahead of us alone, but together, we can overcome the attempt to undermine our business model, our common achievements and make Europe more resilient.

Let us celebrate the Swiss National Day in this spirit. Thank you.

Ik dank u zeer voor uw aandacht!