

Swiss National Day Celebrations 2021 for Heads of Multilateral Missions, Vienna, of 15 July 2021 (Zoom meeting, ensured via the Swiss Mission, Vienna)

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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentleman

Dear friends of Switzerland and, above all, dear friends of Graubünden

Guten Abend, bonsoir, buona sera, buna sera

I.

On behalf of the Government of the Canton of Graubünden, I cordially welcome you to the Swiss National Day 2021 for Heads of Multilateral Missions in Vienna. And I would also like to thank the Swiss Mission for allowing the Canton of Graubünden to be the guest of honour for the celebration 2021.

Or in my native language, the minority language Romansh: Jeu selgrel d'astgar beneventar vus da tut cor el num dalla Regenza dil Cantun Grischun tier vies 'Swiss National Day 2021' a Vienna. Buna sera e seigies – era sin moda virtuala – beinvegni.

II.

Both Ambassador Brühlhart and Ambassador Laggner have pointed this out: Compared to other cantons in Switzerland, the Canton of Graubünden has at least one topic that particularly affects you as part of your work in an international context: The diversity of three cantonal languages and several cultures and the associated daily endeavours of the state and its population to understand, develop and ultimately also implement the sense of togetherness with success and conviction on a day-to-day basis.

III.

200,000 people live in the Canton of Graubünden. They live in three different linguistic areas on the basis of their cultural origins. Today, two-thirds speak German, 15% Romansh and 11% Italian as their main language. Our linguistic and cultural areas are very much shaped by the topography of our canton as a mountainous canton with numerous valleys and Alpine passes north and south of the Alpine ridge. Multilingualism is also cultivated in the schools and the administration.

The Canton of Graubünden covers one-sixth of the national territory of Switzerland, but is at the same time the most sparsely populated. There are 27 people per square kilometre in the canton, compared to 5,261 in Basel-Stadt – the other extreme. 41% of the people live at an altitude above 1,000 metres above sea level. 90% of the area of our canton is above 1,200 metres above sea level. 40% is unproductive. Our streams and rivers empty into three seas –

the Black Sea with the Danube, the North Sea with the Rhine and the Mediterranean with the Po.

IV.

The diversity of languages and cultures is therefore cultivated on only a very small territory. Because of the topography as a mountainous canton with many valleys, it nevertheless remains supported in a natural way, and the various languages and cultures also find strong, partly dominant support in part because their territories border on regions in Switzerland and abroad where the same language is spoken and thus, for example, the media from the neighbourhood also have their power of attraction and their influence.

V.

Ultimately, however, a decisive factor for the preservation and cohesion of our linguistic and cultural communities is also our societal and governmental contribution in general. We are willing to network with each other – for example through the promotion of languages, especially minority languages, or through our infrastructural network – and we are also willing to cooperate in economic matters across linguistic and cultural borders.

The dominant example of this is tourism. Our existence in the mountain region has been and continues to be shaped by tourism. Winter tourism began its global conquest 150 years ago in St. Moritz, and therefore in the Canton of Graubünden. It has gained complementary pillars in congress tourism – for example through the World Economic Forum (WEF), which has been held in Davos since 1971. And tourism continues to be developed with conviction throughout the canton – in societal as well as political terms.

Hydropower offers another example of consolidated understanding across all linguistic and cultural areas. Around 15% of the electricity consumed in Switzerland is produced in the Canton of Graubünden, electricity also for the pulsating business centres of Switzerland such as Zurich, Basel and Geneva. The electricity comes from hydropower, a form of renewable energy production that is valuable in the context of climate policy and whose exploitation is also of common interest to all of us and should be further developed.

VI.

Thank you, dear Excellencies, dear friends, for the opportunity to welcome you briefly this evening, from Graubünden. There is still much to tell you about the Canton of Graubünden. For example,

- that Alberto Giacometti was a native of Graubünden;
- that Ernst Ludwig Kirchner left the bulk of his works worldwide to his museum in Davos; or
- that with our mountain railway – the Rhaetian Railway – we operate a railway line as part of our basic infrastructure that is also, along with two railways in the Far East, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We would in any case be delighted if you and your families could visit us.

Have a great time and enjoy the rest of your evening.

Many thanks.