



News letter

December, 2023

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Dear Swiss compatriots and friends of Switzerland,

Another eventful year is nearing its end. A year that has not been without its challenges, but that has also been filled with countless memorable moments, shared with some of you.

As you will gather from this newsletter, the Embassy has not been idle in the past months, working tirelessly to increase Switzerland's visibility and strengthen the bilateral relations between Switzerland and Ghana. We have organized a series of events covering diverse areas such as cocoa, climate change, recycling & upcycling, culture, security, consular and visa issues, international cooperation, as well as women empowerment & gender equality. A highlight was certainly the well-attended national day celebration on 30 August, which brought together numerous high-profile guests from government, the private sector, civil society, and the creative sector. Another, rather unexpected highlight was the visit of Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis to Accra on 3 November, underlining the strength of the relations between Switzerland and Ghana.

Whenever an opportunity arose, I tried to venture out of Accra in order to get to know the country better. By now, I have managed to visit 10 out of Ghana's 16 regions on duty trips (and 2 more on holidays), and I hope to pay an official visit to the remaining 6 – Oti, Bono East, Central, Western, Western North, Ahafo – in the coming months. In the past year I also had the opportunity to present my credentials to President Talon in Cotonou (in July) and President Gnassingbé in Lomé (in October). With this, I am now fully accredited in both countries and ready to pay official visits to Benin and Togo. I am thus looking forward to interacting with you either in Accra or on one of my upcoming missions.

Season's Greetings to all of you, your families and loved ones!

Simone Giger

Ambassador to Ghana, Benin and Togo



If you want to have more just-in-time information on the activities of the Embassy, you may follow us on [Facebook](#) (@SwissEmbassyAccra) or [Twitter](#) (@SwissAmbAccra and @SwissEmbAccra).

Contents

P. 1
Ambassador's Note

Pp. 2 - 4
Embassy News

P. 5
Consular matters

Where can I get news on Switzerland?

[Swissinfo.ch](https://www.swissinfo.ch) is providing news on Switzerland in ten different languages.



Additionally, you may be interested in a number of publications or newsletters provided by the various Federal Departments such as:

[Federal Department of Foreign Affairs \(FDFA\)](#)

[Federal Office of Public Health \(FOPH\)](#)



In 2023, the Swiss Ambassador and her economic team hosted five business lunches for Swiss companies in Ghana. The concept is to invite high level public officials and experts as keynote speakers, addressing issues critical to our businesses. This year's topics included: Leveraging carbon financing by KliK Foundation Switzerland; Perspectives on Ghana's banking sector by Mr. John Awuah, CEO of the Ghana Association of Banks; Mobilizing capital using the Ghana Stock Exchange by Ms. Abena Amoah, Managing Director of Ghana Stock Exchange; Enhancing trade across the continent by making use of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement by H.E. the Secretary General of AfCFTA, Mr. Wamkele Mene; Current tax reforms, policies and procedures by Dr. Ammishaddai Owusu-Amoah, the Commissioner General of Ghana Revenue Authority.



In March, Ambassador Giger undertook a four-day working visit to the Northern, North-east, and Upper East Regions to acquaint herself with the area. The purpose of this visit was to observe projects partially funded by Switzerland through SECO under the Decentralized Budget Support Program and assess their impact on the local population. Additionally, Ambassador Giger engaged with local authorities, various organizations, and citizens to gain deeper insights into the distinctive features of the region.



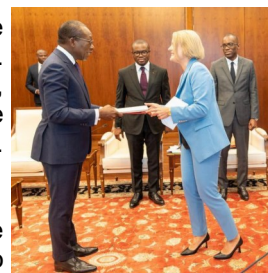
The visit served as a valuable opportunity for Ambassador Giger to fulfill not only official duties but also to foster a connection with the communities and individuals affected by the projects.

Switzerland celebrated the successful closure of a ten-year collaboration with the National Pensions Regulatory Authority in June 2023. The NPRA is the authority overseeing Ghana's pension system and pension funds. Through the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO, Switzerland supported the NPRA in becoming a well-functioning supervisory authority with a solid governance, management and oversight capacity. Together we have made significant progress in strengthening Ghana's pension system and ensuring a brighter future for the country's elderly.

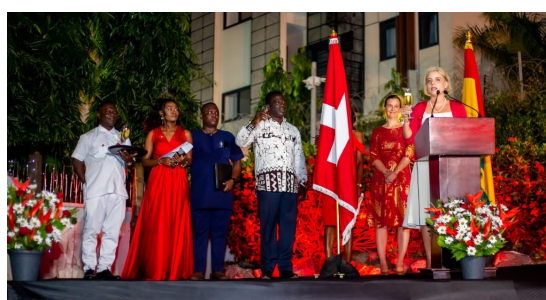


the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, SECO, Switzerland supported the NPRA in becoming a well-functioning supervisory authority with a solid governance, management and oversight capacity. Together we have made significant progress in strengthening Ghana's pension system and ensuring a brighter future for the country's elderly.

Ambassador Simone Giger presented her accreditation letters on 13th July in Cotonou to the President of Benin, H. E. Patrice Talon. She also met with the Foreign Minister Shegun Bakari. This offered the opportunity to hold substantial conversations on the bilateral relations, including economic ties, between Switzerland and Benin. The representatives of the government of Benin voiced their appreciation for the Swiss cooperation work in the country. Ambassador Giger was able to witness the strong positive trend in economic development.



On 20th October, Ambassador Giger also had the opportunity to present her letters of accreditation to the President of Togo, H. E. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé. This was an occasion to exchange with several members of government and prepare for a longer visit to Togo in 2024. Ambassador Giger was able to count on the valuable support of the Swiss Honorary Consul in Lomé, Mme. Myrna Tabchoury.



We thank everyone who celebrated our Swiss National Day with us in August and contributed to a marvelous evening. Relations between Swiss and Ghanaians, between our two countries, are friendly and strong. The National Day Celebration showed that Ghanaian music and Swiss Raclette are indeed a good combination!



Switzerland successfully concluded a program called Global Quality Standards in August 2023. The program supported the development of quality standards in the cocoa, cashew and palm oil sectors. Adherence to international standards is key, if SMEs in emerging economies want to export to international markets. After 15 years of solid partnership between SECO, UNIDO, the Government of Ghana and the private sector, notable results were achieved: seven labs with 120 trained staff are capable of performing the tests necessary for international markets; a first group of 63 farmers attained sustainable palm oil certification. Better practices have increased their yield from six tons to 18 tons per hectare. Additionally, two chocolate making companies, both owned by women (see picture), were certified so they can sell their high-quality chocolates to the EU and USA.



Together with the UN Resident Coordinator, H.E. Charles Abani, Ambassador Giger invited stakeholders including from the private sector, NGOs, associations and foundations engaged in recycling and upcycling in Ghana. The event, which took place on 13th October at the Swiss Residence, provided a platform to meet for these actors whose paths normally do not cross. Coming from diverse backgrounds, they exchanged on challenges and promising practices from other contexts. The aim was to foster a solution-oriented thinking on how to advance Ghana's circular economy and tackle waste pollution and its impact on health and the environment.

On 31st October, Ambassador Giger hosted the quintet of the HEMU Jazz Orchestra African Vibes at her Residence. About 100 guests enjoyed the cross-disciplinary program influenced by jazz, classical music, Ghanaian highlife and traditional West African music. For the second time, the Haute École de Musique, a Swiss educational institution, selected ten students to travel to Ghana to immerse themselves in the country's music and culture. During the residency, students discovered West African music, visited the country, met a number of artists and craftspeople, exchanged ideas with students from local music universities and, above all, created several musical projects. This project, called "The Ghana Experience", includes numerous Masterclasses and concerts in Switzerland and Ghana.



On 1st November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration welcomed a Swiss delegation in Accra for the 8th round of political consultations between our two governments. Our new head of the Africa Division in Berne and former Ambassador to Ghana, Assistant State Secretary Philipp Stalder, led the Swiss delegation. We exchanged on the whole breadth of relations between our two states. Once again, we reaffirmed how strong and friendly our connections are and that we wish to continue this way in the future.

Did you attend a Swiss university or school? Contact us for our upcoming alumni networking events.

On 3rd November we said "Akwaaba" to Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, who visited Ghana for the first time. He was received by President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and Foreign Minister Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey. The Chocolatiers at Bioko then showed him how they produce high-quality chocolate with local flavors and ingredients. The Federal Councillor went on to visit the memorial monument of the Basel Mission in Accra. In the evening, he was impressed by local Ghanaian food and drinks and the warmth of the people he met in Accra.



SWITZERLAND
UNITED NATIONS
SECURITY COUNCIL
2023–2024

A Plus For Peace

Priorities for Switzerland's seat on the UN Security Council:

- **Building sustainable peace**
- **Protecting civilians in armed conflict**
- **Addressing climate security**
- **Enhancing effectiveness**



In November, Ambassador Giger visited the Northern, Savannah, and Upper-West Regions. She met with local and regional authorities, overlord-chiefs, cultural actors and female entrepreneurs in the Shea Butter production. Our Swiss Embassy team was impressed by the warm welcome and substantial interest in exchanges. The trip offered an opportunity to strengthen relationships with relevant actors in the North and to better understand the situation and challenges in those regions and districts. We could



witness how relevant the SECO Decentralized Budget Support program is. We visited several projects that were financed through the District Assembly Common Fund: a maternity ward, a girls and a mixed school, a public library and market infrastructure and another.



Moreover, we were able to meet with three female-led enterprises in the shea butter production, which had benefitted from workshops by the International Labour Organization financed by SECO. They were able to remarkably increase their productivity and strengthen their labour standards through those trainings. The womens' energy and motivation was contagious.



Monday, 13th November, Ambassador Giger opened the second session of the Protection of Civilians Course (POC) at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) for this year 2023. The POC is among four other courses funded by the Government of Switzerland. 12 women and 15 men from nine different West African countries participated in the POC23-2 course. All three pillars of peace operations – police, military, and civilian – were enrolled on the course.

The aim of the training is to enhance the capacity of participants to effectively implement Protection of Civilian mandates in peacekeeping operations to mitigate the effects of conflicts on civilians.

In her speech, Ambassador Giger promised that Switzerland will push their priorities set for the period 2023-24 as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. The priorities are (1) Building sustainable peace, (2) Protecting civilians in armed conflict, (3) Addressing climate security, and (4) Enhancing the effectiveness of the Security Council. She emphasized that Switzerland is committed to the protection of civilians and to the respect for international humanitarian law and human rights.



Contact the Swiss Embassy in Ghana when you want to [register or deregister](#) as a Swiss abroad, when you need a passport, have moved or wish to apply for citizenship.

Swiss citizen and their spouses living abroad must report to the Embassy or Consulate any change affecting their [civil status](#) (marriage, divorce, birth, death, change of name, etc.). To ensure that you can be reached quickly if necessary, it is important that your [contact information](#) (address, phone number, email) is kept up to date.

The Consular Directorate of the FDFA, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) and the Soliswiss Cooperative have been hosting a series of webinars on issues of interest for Swiss nationals living abroad. They are being held as part of the Consular Directorate's wider "Ageing Abroad" project and is aimed at Swiss nationals who are either planning to emigrate or are already living abroad and intend to spend their retirement abroad. The last webinar will take place on December 13 on the topic "Banking issues for the Swiss abroad" in German and French.

Please visit the website of the [Organisation of the Swiss Abroad \(OSA\)](#) for further information on the upcoming webinar. Recordings of the past seminars can be found [here](#)



FDFA's online desk offers Swiss nationals abroad the opportunity to request services from the comfort of their homes. It allows to enter personal details in the Register of Swiss Abroad, order confirmations, announce civil status matters and subscribe to publications. FDFA's online desk simplifies correspondence between Swiss nationals residing abroad and their Swiss representation.

Since April 15th 2023, driving licences issued in Switzerland have a new layout and have up-to-date security features that meet the requirements of the European driving licence. The Swiss driving licences that are currently in circulation, either on blue paper (issued until 31 March 2003) or in credit card format (issued between 1 April 2003 and 14 April 2023), are still valid unless otherwise stated on the licence. The blue paper licence will no longer be valid after 31 October 2024.

The cantonal road traffic offices are the responsible authorities when it comes to Swiss driving licenses: they can provide information and answer your questions. The Swiss representations abroad can only provide general information and translate valid Swiss driving licenses for the acquisition of a foreign driving license. Further information on the website of the Federal Roads Office ([FEDRO](#)) or [here](#).



Approximately 780'000 Swiss citizens abroad currently benefit from the wide range of services provided by a global network of representations offering advice and support.



The FDFA Helpline is also on hand to answer queries 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Now there's a new app that makes staying in touch even easier: SwissInTouch keeps Switzerland at your fingertips.

The 24h Helpline FDFA deals as central contact point with matters relating to consular services. **365 days a year around the clock**

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