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AMBASSADOR'S MESSAGE



Dear fellow citizens, partners and friends,

As the year 2019 comes to its end, we are excited to share its highlights with you in the 5th newsletter of the Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia.

Throughout 2019, the bilateral ties between Switzerland and Armenia have grown closer. On the political level we have witnessed several high-level exchanges between the two countries, taking place in Switzerland and

Armenia. The Embassy is looking forward to the political consultations, which are planned to take place in Bern at the beginning of 2020. This will allow to take stock of the ongoing relationship and further explore new possible areas of cooperation.

As an increasing number of Swiss businessmen, tourists and artists come to Armenia, the Embassy has organized a broad spectrum of events to facilitate their exchange with the Armenian society and authorities. Two personal highlights were the business luncheons with the Armenian and Swiss business community, as well as the sand art performance of Swiss artist Lorenzo Manetti during the Italian Language Days 2019. I am pleased that several of you have attended many of our events.

2019 was also a successful year for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation in Armenia. The Swiss Government extended its support to the Government of Armenia in delivering public services to the population in a more efficient, transparent, and democratic manner. In fall, we launched the second phase of the “Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia” program. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation approved a grant of around US\$ 7.9 million for this project for the period 2019-2022.

While these are only a few highlights, I invite you to see more about our activities in this Newsletter. Ending this year on a positive note, the Embassy team is looking forward to the great opportunities of 2020!

You can find more about our activities and events in the articles below. You can also stay in touch with the Embassy by visiting our website www.eda.admin.ch/armenia, as well as by following us on social media: Embassy of Switzerland in Armenia, Swiss Cooperation South Caucasus.

On behalf of my entire team, let me wish you and your families a Merry Christmas, a peaceful holiday season and all the best for a successful year 2020!

Sincerely Yours,

Stefano Lazzarotto
Ambassador of Switzerland to Armenia

POLITICAL COOPERATION

Ambassador meets PM Nikol Pashinyan



Meeting on February 15, Ambassador Stefano Lazzarotto and RA Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan discussed issues related to the Swiss-Armenian cooperation agenda, in particular in view of the new Swiss cooperation strategy in the South Caucasus.

Ambassador meets the RA Head of the Legislative Body Ararat Mirzoyan

Meeting Ambassador Lazzarotto, Ararat Mirzoyan, the head of the legislative body of Armenia, assured that the newly-elected parliament is ready to further expand the Armenian-Swiss partnership as far as relations between parliaments are concerned.



Ambassador meets RA Minister of Education and Science Arai Harutyunyan



On April 17, meeting the RA Minister of Education and Science Arai Harutyunyan, Ambassador Lazzarotto underlined that while education is not among the two main domains of intervention in Armenia, it still carries important elements contributing to the realization of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy in the South Caucasus 2017-2020. He also enquired about the interest of RA in vocational training.

In addition, Lazzarotto was happy to inform the Minister that this year two Armenian students have been awarded Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships to pursue their postgraduate studies in Swiss Universities.

In his turn, Minister Harutyunyan outlined his visions about reforms in the Educational sector and was confident that the ongoing process in the field of education in RA will provide new opportunities for Armenian-Swiss educational cooperation.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Sheep Shearing Festival 2019

On June 8, the Animal Market of the Syunik Region welcomed the guests of the annual Sheep Shearing Festival from Armenia and abroad. Attending the festival, the delegation of the Swiss Embassy got exposed to the traditional sheep shearing practices of Armenia, the outstanding culture of the region and the wide variety of national foods. The festival was organized in the framework of the Swiss funded economic development project “Livestock Development in the South of Armenia”, implemented by the Strategic Development Agency NGO.



LSG Program Phase II Launched

The Swiss Government extends its support to the Government of Armenia in delivering public services to the population in a more efficient, transparent, and democratic manner. It approved a grant of around US\$ 7.9 million for the period 2019-2022. Upon invitation of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure of the Government of Armenia (MTAI), the launch of the “Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia” program’s second phase took place in Yerevan on September 26, 2019.



Werner Thut, Deputy Regional Director of the Swiss Agencies’ Regional Program South Caucasus, stressed the fact that “under the guidance and with the support of the program, Armenia now disposes of a sectoral policy on “Territorial Development and Decentralization”. He further stressed that the Government’s policy in this area is guided by a realistic and long-term oriented political strategy, which is jointly agreed between the international community and a GoA which showed reliable leadership over many years.

The overall investment of funds in the reform amounts to more than US\$ 70 million. The event was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps in Armenia, international organizations, regional governments, municipalities and civil society, as well as local media. The “Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia Phase II” program is co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. The program will be implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Council of Europe (CoE).

International Veterinarian Day in Yerevan



From April 25-26, on the occasion of the International Veterinarian Day, by the joint efforts of the Strategic Development Agency NGO and the Food Security Inspectorate, a conference in Yerevan, as well as seminars, lectures and discussions were organized in the regions of Armenia.

The events were made possible with the support of the Swiss funded "Livestock Development in Armenia, South-North" project implemented by the Strategic Development Agency NGO with the financial support of the Austrian Development Agency and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

Veterinary Service Point Opening

On June 7, the Tegh community of Syunik province welcomed the attendees of the opening ceremony of Veterinary Service Point, established in the framework of a Swiss funded livestock development program. Ambassador Lazzarotto and the Head of the SCO's Yerevan Office Zara Allahverdyan were honored to inaugurate the vet-point, which will provide a variety of services to the farmers including artificial insemination, agro-input shop and a sheep dipping facility.



After the opening ceremony in Tegh community the Swiss Embassy's delegation continued his trip with a visit to the Milk Collection Point in Kornidzor village. There, the participants learned about the prehistory and development of the point and got acquainted with the features and conditions of the milk collection process. The next stop was "Elola" factory itself. During the tour at the workshop and warehouses, the attendees were introduced to the whole chain of milk processing; from milk collection to the final products. After the tour, "Elola" organized a tasting of dairy and cheese products. The last point of the tour was Qarahunj rural settlement. The administrative representative of the rural settlement Mrs. Lusine Avetyan presented the Project interventions, results and impact of the project. "Livestock Development in the South of Armenia" project is implemented by "Strategic Development Agency" NGO with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC).



Lead Farm and Veterinary Service Point Established



«Lead Farm» and Veterinary Service Point Established in the Margahovit Community, Lori Region, Armenia. On October 23rd, the official opening ceremonies of the “Lead Farm” and the Veterinary Service Point took place in Margahovit. Established by the Strategic Development Agency, in the framework of a livestock development program jointly funded by the Swiss and Austrian Development and Cooperation Agencies (SDC & ADA), the two premises will provide a variety of earlier unavailable services to the local farmers. The “Lead Farm” will provide consolidation

services in terms of milk collection from Margahovit and nearby located communities to improve milk collection and supply process. The vet-point, on the other hand, will provide services such as artificial insemination, agro-input shop and a sheep dipping facility.



The official opening ceremonies were attended by the RA Minister of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure Suren Papikyan, Ambassador of Lazzarotto, the Head of the Swiss Cooperation Office in Armenia Zara Allahverdyan, the Head of the Austrian Development Agency in Armenia Nora Alanakyan, the Governor of Lori region Mr. Andrey Ghukasyan, and the Margahovit Community Leader Samvel Ananyan. Representatives of the private sector, producers and processors, were present at the inauguration of the premises. Notably representatives

of “Spayka” LCC, the leading agricultural holding in the region, which is the biggest exporter of the Armenian agrarian production, attended the ceremonies.

Citizen Office Openings

As the "Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia" program continues, the 30th and 31st Citizen Offices open their doors to the residents of the Yeghvard and Tashir communities. Being the interface between the citizens and the municipality, these one-stop-shops now deliver high quality municipal services to the local communities. The offices are established within the framework of the “Improvement of the Local Self-Governance System in Armenia” program, implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ jointly with the Armenian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, and co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).



ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Business Community Luncheon at the Swiss Residence



On October 11th about 20 members of the high tech and Swiss business community based in Switzerland and Armenia were present at the business luncheon organized at the Swiss residence. The discussions evolved around the opportunities and challenges of the Digital Economy in Armenia. Our special guest was the vice minister of the High Tech Ministry of Armenia Mr. Armen Abroyan, who brought his insights about the Armenian IT sector and introduced its priorities. Among the participants we had the pleasure to have with us Mr. Mike Baronian, the president of Swiss Armenian Chamber of Commerce and the World Bank representatives.



Swiss GSP Awareness Raising Campaign

To conclude the awareness raising campaign for the Swiss GSP, we have initiated an interview with Armenian exporter Artush Yeghiazaryan, Founding Director of Herbs and Honey Tea Shop. We thank Artush for sharing with us his experience and useful insights which will come in handy for the future Armenian exporters to Switzerland.

Click on the photo for watching the interview!



CULTURE

Swiss Movies “Win Win” and “Les Dames” Screened

On March 13th, our guests joined us at the screenings of the two Swiss movies “Win Win” and “Les Dames” organized in the framework of the Festival du cinéma francophone 2019.

We started this cinematic day with presenting the film “Win Win” by director Claudio Tonetti. The movie told the comedic story of two friends Paul Girard and Liu, who had the ambitious plan of organizing the Miss China semifinal in Switzerland. In between the screenings, the Embassy held a reception, offering a wide selection of dishes, enriched with a variety of Swiss cheese and wines, to the film enthusiasts of Yerevan. Exploring the touching stories of five Swiss ladies through the documentary “Les Dames” concluded the day with a success.



Photo Exhibition "Life of Mine"

On the International Day of Mine Awareness, April 4, we launched the photo exhibition "Life of Mine", which was on display, near the entrance of the Embassy for more than a month.

This exhibition showed the manifold impact that explosive remnants of war have on communities, shedding a light on the people whose lives have been impacted by explosive hazards or who dedicate their lives to eliminating them.



The exhibition is created thanks to the efforts of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining - GICHD. GICHD works towards keeping communities safe from the risks stemming from explosive ordnance. They support their partners around the world to save lives and restore livelihoods. By offering workshops and training courses, developing concepts, methods and tools and promoting the effective and efficient use of resources, the Centre supports the ultimate goals of mine action: saving lives, returning land to productive use and promoting development. The GICHD is located in Geneva, Switzerland.

“Transformation of Time Through Art”

To get the audience detached from reality during the performance “Transformation of Time Through Art” was the main idea of Anna Harutyunyan, the mastermind behind this Swiss funded cultural project.

Based on ancient traditions of the world, the honored artist of Armenia Anna Harutyunyan combined her previous artworks with textile design, creating a new collection of clothes with elements of ancient Armenian culture. The one-of-a-kind fashion show, which took place on April 26, was enriched with the use of graphic animations and emerging techno music.



Deutschlehrertag 2019

On September 27th & 28th, the Deutschlehrertag took place in Yerevan. This year's conference focused on how German, as a pluralistic language, can translate the diversity of Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Lichtenstein into the classroom. The Embassy of Switzerland held a reception for the opening of the conference at the Ambassador's Residence. While enjoying Raclette and Swiss wine, the German network of Armenia discussed the newest linguistic developments of the German language. For the conference, the Embassy of Switzerland has invited Susanne Paul, lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences ZHAW located in Winterthur. In her two workshops she explained the teachers how to include the Swiss culture and literature, as well as the variety of Swiss-German dialects into their German lessons.



Restauration and Digitalization of Armenian radio's archive



"A small miracle happened in the Public Radio of Armenia" – executive director of the Public Radio of Armenia Garegin Khumaryan. The archive of the Armenian radio will be digitalized with the technical assistance from Switzerland (courtesy of Mr. Jürg Schopper and Eng. Joachim Juengst), which was made possible also with the support of the Swiss Embassy in Armenia and the generous contribution of Susan Rybicki Varga, the daughter of famous Maestro and violinist Tibor Varga.

This is a project of great relevance for the huge musical and artistic legacy of the Armenian Public Radio and Armenian rich culture. On 27.09 Ambassador Stefano Lazzarotto and the executive director of the Public Radio of Armenia signed a statement summarizing the technical cooperation.



Masterclasses with Swiss Sand Artist Lorenzo Manetti



In the scope of La Settimana della Lingua Italiana (the Italian Language Days), the Embassy of Switzerland has organized two Masterclasses with Swiss sand artist Lorenzo Manetti, at the State Academy of Fine Arts in Yerevan. On October 23rd and 24th, Lorenzo explained art students and pupils different techniques and methods of sand art. After an introduction and some illustrations, the students could try to create their own sand compositions. Their responsiveness was impressive.

After the two masterclasses, the Embassy of Switzerland invited the public to the Swiss sand artist's performance on Friday 25th October, at Boheme Theatre. The audience was mesmerized by the creativity and skills Lorenzo brought to the stage. Afterwards, the Embassy invited all guests to a reception. Che bella serata per terminare la Settimana della Lingua Italiana 2019!



Art Therapy Mandala



Brand Time Production, together with the Embassy, created a social program aimed at supporting children and adolescents. The Art Therapy packages, produced by the project, include mandala ornaments which can have a benefit for the nervous system and the internal state of mind in general. The launch of the project was attended by Ambassador Lazzarotto, National Program Officer Sergey Hovhannisyanyan, and the Founder of Arabkir Medical Complex Ara Babloyan.

Create Your Own Rights!



Learning and understanding human rights through art! Starting from November 27th MIHR Creative Union NGO organizes the "Create Your Own Rights" installation-exhibition. This Swiss funded Arts and Culture project incorporates the artistic expression of school kids on human rights learnt through lessons delivered by the MIHR Creative Union and human rights experts in their schools.

“Die Runde”

On April 24, Ambassador Lazzarotto welcomed over 40 members of “Die Runde” (the roundtable) to a reception held at the Swiss residence. Not even the storm, which unexpectedly hit us right in the middle of the gathering, could drown the enthusiasm of our guests. Not being discouraged by the weather conditions, this group of prominent Swiss academicians, diplomats, businessmen and journalists enjoyed their interaction with local guests, including members of the Armenian authorities, foreign ambassadors and the Swiss, Armenian business community, with Swiss wine and delicious catering. Gathering once a year in different locations of Europe and Middle East, this “mobile” think-tank focuses on current developments in economy and international policies. Some of the previous destinations of “Die Runde” have been Muscat, Athens, Kiev, Tbilisi, Doha and Dublin. In addition, the reception served as a closing event for the “Life of Mine” exhibition, which we have proudly displayed over the course of the past month, starting from April 4, the International Mine Awareness Day.



SWISS NATIONAL DAY



The Embassy celebrated the Swiss National Day in Yerevan on the 1st of August! We welcomed our guests to a whole journey on a virtual “Swiss Train”. Taking our guests on a ride we passed through the Stations: Cheese Land where the Swiss National dish Raclette was served, Tennis Photo Zone dedicated to the Swiss Champions Roger Federer and Stan Wawrinka, “Sweetserland” which offered wide selection of Villars Swiss chocolate and Swiss Caffè Chicco d’Oro.



CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Apps:

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We are pleased to inform you that the FDFA's new travel app is available for free in the [App Store](#) or in [Google Play](#).



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VOTEinfo

The Federal Chancellery has unveiled a new App for [tablets](#) and [smartphones](#) with official information in French, German and Italian about federal and cantonal votes, and continually updated results from midday on polling days.

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