

Speech by the Ambassador of Switzerland

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Speech by the Ambassador of Switzerland

On the occasion of the Swiss National Day 2013 (2 July 2013)

Honourable Simon Bridges, Minister of Energy and Resources, Minister of Labour and Associate Minister for Climate Change Issues, Honorable Tim Groser, Minister of Trade and Climate Change Issues, Dr. Cam Calder and Hon. Maryan Street, Co-Chairs of the New Zealand-Swiss Parliamentary Friendship Group, Other Members of Parliament, The Honorable Justice Susan Glazebrook Excellencies, President of the Swiss Society, Presidents of the Swiss Clubs Auckland, Hamilton, Taranaki and Wellington, Fellow Swiss citizens, Ladies and gentlemen,

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa. Guten Abend, bon soir, buona sera, buna sairo, [Sign language], good evening and welcome to this year's celebrations of the 722nd anniversary of the founding of Switzerland!

That was a rather long greeting: the three official New Zealand languages, English, Maori and sign language and the four official Swiss languages: German, French, Italian and Rumantsch. That's right, four languages. Accordingly, we call Switzerland depending on the language: Schweiz, Suisse, Svizzera and Svizra.

However, if you look at your invitation card for tonight, or at my business card or the Embassy's letter head, you will not find any mention of Switzerland. Instead it will say: Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft - which is to an English speaker probably as hard to say as it is to translate. The closest in English would probably be Swiss Confederation, the phraseology also used by French, Italian and Rumansh. In reality, Eidgenossenschaft means something more like "the brotherhood of men who stood in a field and swore an oath of eternal cooperation and friendship."

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Confédération Suisse, Confederazione Svizzera and Confederaziun Svizra, these formal names are all a bit of a mouthful, and that's why in everyday life we use the more informal version, the equivalent of Switzerland: Schweiz, Suisse, Svizzera, Svizra.

So for one single country we have eight different names, half of them far too long to be used in the Eurovision Song Contest or in football matches. What to do? We needed to find a single official name. But which one? Well, the solution - and I think Minister Finlayson would like this one - ... use a dead language, Latin! Confoederatio Helvetica, this is Switzerland's ninth, proper, official, name. Hence "ch" for our country code, in case you did not know. And please, do not ever again take the "ch" as an abbreviation for chocolate or cheese. It is Confoederatio Helvetica, Helvetic Confederation!

And this Confoederatio Helvetica - to call my country once by its proper, formal name - and New Zealand took up bilateral relations in 1963. In 1963, New Zealand had a population of about 2.5 million, Switzerland of about 5.3 million. Martin Luther King held his famous speech "I have a dream" and John F. Kennedy was assassinated. In 1963, New Zealand entered the jet age, getting a twice-weekly jet service to London. Philips introduced the music cassette and the Beatles achieved their first number 1 hit single, "Please, Please, Me". The Nuclear Test Ban Treaty entered into force and Switzerland held a referendum on whether the Swiss Army should have nuclear weapons (just for the record: the Confederates, at the time only men, wisely rejected). Fifty years have since passed, and today and during this whole year, we celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations; 50 years of excellent relations. Swiss-Kiwi official relations, however, date back much further.

In 1912, a hundred years ago, a Swiss Consulate was opened in Auckland. Eventually this Consulate moved to Wellington, became a Consulate General and finally an Embassy. We can indeed say that our relations are not only excellent, but also long-standing.

No other country could be further away from Switzerland than New Zealand, and therefore New Zealand and Swiss ministers tend to meet for bilaterals at multilateral events, certainly always at the World Economic Forum in Davos. But this year, to celebrate our 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the Swiss Foreign Minister, Didier Burkhalter, will be traveling all the way to New Zealand. While New Zealand Foreign Ministers have visited Switzerland before, and other Swiss ministers have visited New Zealand, this will be the very first visit of a Swiss Foreign Minister to New Zealand.

For many decades, New Zealand has been an attractive destination to Swiss. Today, there are about 7,000 Swiss living in New Zealand. That is for Switzerland quite a sizeable number. These Swiss settle all over the country, and many of them have become New Zealand citizens as well. Some of them are quite outstanding personalities. Did you know that Wynton Rufer, New Zealand's most successful football player and Oceania player of the Century, and tonight present with us, had a Maori mother and a Swiss father? Or that the jewellery maker Kobi Bosshard, who is often labeled the grandfather of New Zealand contemporary jewellery, is Swiss? Or his daughter, Andrea Bosshard, the filmmaker, equally here tonight? Or Nadine Jaggi, winner of the 2008 WOW Supreme Award, who is also here? Did you know that Valerie Adams' trainer is Swiss and that she trains in Switzerland? There are so many wonderful people to people links between our two countries.

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From the Embassy

Ambassador's speech continued

Swiss love New Zealand, not only to come here and set up a new life, but also for tourism. On a per capita basis, there are two and a half times more Swiss tourists coming to NZ than from Germany or Italy, and two times as many compared to France.

This love for New Zealand is reflected when we look at investments: Switzerland constantly ranks among the top ten investors in New Zealand.

[There are about 45 Swiss companies in New Zealand. These Swiss companies create about 5,000 jobs, mainly for skilled workers.]

Switzerland is – you might be surprised to hear this – a big country. Why big? It is certainly a big country when we talk finances: Switzerland is the seventh largest financial centre worldwide. But Switzerland is also a medium-sized country. Medium-sized, if we talk about the economy: Switzerland, with its population of 8 million is the 19th biggest economy worldwide, only a few places away from Indonesia with its 240 million people. But Switzerland is above all a small country. Small in size, both in geography and population, but also small with regards to political influence.

New Zealand is a big country, too. It has the 5th biggest EEZ in the world. But above all, like Switzerland, it is a small country.

As small countries, we have much in common. For small countries, the rule of law is extremely important, as we cannot engage in power play. It is therefore crucial for both our countries that there is a legal system that is binding to all, and this is what both our countries fight for.

It will therefore not come as a surprise when I tell you that both New Zealand and Switzerland would like to see a UN Security Council that is more effective, more transparent, and more democratic. That both our countries would like to see a world with less weapons in the wrong hands. Just a few weeks ago, on 3 June, New Zealand and Switzerland signed the Arms Trade Treaty; a treaty that was incredibly hard to negotiate. Both our countries also want to see nuclear weapons delegitimised, and we work hand-in-hand to decrease the level of alertness of nuclear weapons.

I could mention many more initiatives and topics, in which our two countries work together, [the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases, the Friends of the Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform, the Nansen Initiative on disaster induced cross-border migration, and so on.]

But let me finish with a topic that I had started with: multiculturalism. Both New Zealand and Switzerland are, as the greetings have shown, multilingual countries. And to showcase

this multiculturalism as well as to celebrate our 50th anniversary, the Embassy together with the Victoria University did a translation of the opening paragraph of Margaret Mahy's "The Three Legged Cat" into the four official Swiss and the two official New Zealand written languages. You will find a sample of the booklet in your goodie bag on your way out and I hope you enjoy it.

I would now like to propose a toast to Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, Queen of New Zealand. To the Queen!

By Marion Weichelt Krupski, Swiss Ambassador

Swiss Kiwi Stories

A celebration of outstanding personalities

The Swiss Embassy in Wellington has begun production of a series of YouTube videos on the occasion of this year's anniversary of 50 years of diplomatic relations between New Zealand and Switzerland. The videos showcase outstanding Swiss Kiwis in the fields of the arts, sport, design and business.

Our first video about Oceania player of the Century, Wynton Rufer, is proving a big hit, with over 700 people already watching it. So if you too would like to find out about Wynton's Swiss dad and Maori mum and watch those incredible goals that secured the All Whites a World Cup spot, please follow the link below.

Please put your YouTube settings to HD (high definition:) to see the video's full effect.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGgSs3osK-o>

By Sarah Bradley, Event Manager, Embassy of Switzerland

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