

Newsletter

Embassy of Switzerland in Madagascar, Comoros and Seychelles

Antananarivo, November 2017

The Ambassador's address

Dear compatriots

The year is drawing to its close very fast and time has come to look back at a rich and full year for the Embassy.

The current plague outbreak in Madagascar, which is upsetting agendas, is of course on our mind. Our thoughts go to the victims and their families first. Luckily and after a false alarm, Seychelles and Comoros have been spared by the disease so far. Switzerland is supporting the Malagasy government and its international partners, first of all the WHO, in their efforts to stop the chain of contamination and the epidemics. In order to show its solidarity, our country will provide a financial assistance to the fight against this terrible disease. Moreover, I urge all of you, dear compatriots, to keep yourselves posted about the latest developments and to strictly follow the recommendations issued by the government and those institutions which provide the necessary expertise (p.7).

The celebration of the Swiss national day on 28 July 2017 was a great success. Attendance has been very important and I had the pleasure to meet many Swiss, visiting or residents. The presence of a large number of government representatives, with **the Prime Minister** himself, bears witness of the excellent bilateral relations between our two countries.

In principle, I have planned to visit both **Comoros and Seychelles** within the next weeks in order to pursue our dialogue with local authorities and meet Swiss nationals living on these archipelagos. Given the situation with the plague outbreak and other circumstances, dates cannot be confirmed yet. But I will keep you posted as soon as the situation allows me to travel.

As usual, you will find in this newsletter useful pieces of information regarding consular affairs in our region (p.7). Do not hesitate to contact us, should you need any assistance. Furthermore, part of our staff has changed, and our new colleagues will introduce themselves in this edition (p.4-5-6). I wish them a warm welcome and would like to thank their predecessors for their very valuable work.



Celebration of the Swiss national day 2017, Prime Minister Olivier Mahafaly Solonandrasana and Ambassador Philippe Brandt

The Embassy continues to support the most vulnerable groups of people with its modest means. Against this background, I had the honor to inaugurate on 6 October 2017 three water pump systems in **the Miandrivazo district** (p.3). Also, I paid a visit mid-October with the World Food Programme **in the deep south** of Madagascar with the goal to assess the achievements of this UN body and funded by Swiss humanitarian aid. Finally, the Embassy presented the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Madagascar, HE Mr Henry Rabary-Ndjaka, with twelve laptops as a token of friendship and goodwill between our two institutions



In the deep south with the World Food Programme (WFP)

In the cultural life, we continue to organize and support a variety of events: jazz, slam and classical music are on the programme. You will find more information on p. 8.

In Switzerland, a ballot relating to the reform of the state old age pension system took place on 24 September, which was eventually rejected by voters and cantons. The Federal Council will now have to work with the Parliament in order to find a sustainable solution for our social security.

Finally, I would like to invite you to the traditional celebration of Saint-Nicolas Day at the Swiss Residence, on Saturday 9 December 2017. I hope to see you in great numbers, including children, so as to share with the Embassy team a friendly day.

I wish you a pleasant reading of this newsletter.

Kind regards

Philippe Brandt
Ambassador

Mission of the Ambassador to the district of Miandrivazo

The lack of water is a crucial issue in Madagascar. Mayors in the district are actively working on solutions to this important problem in order to enable people to get satisfactory access to water. Because of non-functioning infrastructures, the commune of **Anosimena** in the district of **Miandrivazo**, benefited from a project of water supply. The project has been **implemented by Helvetas** and **co-financed by SDC (Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency)**.

The Ambassador, warmly welcomed by all the local and regional authorities, has inaugurated 3 of the 5 water supply projects. Additionally, he has seized the opportunity of this visit to exchange views with the representatives of the region of Miandrivazo on the impact of the projects and the future cooperation.

Malek Sid Ahmed
Academic Intern



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Miandrivazo district: children with Ambassador Brandt and the Director of Helvetas Swiss intercooperation, Christian Steiner.

Message from the new Consul and Counsellor

Dear Compatriots,

As you are probably aware, new colleagues have started at the Embassy, our new colleague at the chancery, Mrs. Line Ramanambelo and our new academic intern, Mr. Malek Sid Ahmed. We are welcoming them to our team.

I am also new to the team, I arrived here mid-July from our Consulate General in Cape Town, South Africa. After more than 30 years working for the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, I have had the privilege to work in many diverse and interesting countries. I have to confess having strong feelings for the African continent. So I am particularly happy to be here in Madagascar. My husband, Nick, is accompanying me in this new adventure.

I was fortunate to be here to celebrate our national day at the Ambassador's residence at the end of July. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet many of you so soon after arriving here.

We look forward to discovering this magnificent country in the coming years and where ever possible to take the opportunity of visiting the many Swiss living all over this island.

Mr. Istvan Koscis, my predecessor, was posted to Budapest. He left me an efficient team who have welcomed me with the Malagasy smiles and kindness. I thank them all for their support in my new job. We will do our utmost to offer you a service of quality and we are of course at your disposal for administrative and consular questions.

I recommend you to visit our website which contains information on all matters.

With best regards.

Sabine Jenkins
Consul

Welcoming a new academic intern

Dear Swiss compatriots!

My name is Malek Sid Ahmed and I am from the beautiful bilingual city of Bienne (Canton of Berne). I studied the International Relations at the University of Geneva with an exchange in Sciences Po Paris. After graduating, I decided to take a gap year worked as a Project Assistant for an NGO based in Neuchatel that supports youth's education through sports and arts. This allowed me to get a general idea of the development cooperation that I wanted to learn more about. As I am deeply interested in International Relations and development, an internship at an embassy in the South couldn't have been better. I really wanted to understand how governments work together and that is why I chose Madagascar.

What interests me in the diplomatic career is that it gives you the opportunity to travel all around the world. And we all know that working abroad brings professional and personal benefits. For example you get the chance to explore new cultures and work in partnership with different governments.

After two months working here, I can say that this internship meets all my expectations. Particularly the small structure gives the interns the opportunity to touch the different areas of the embassy's work (diplomatic and consular tasks).

Finally, I would like to thank Ambassador Philippe Brandt who gave me the opportunity to work with him and who made one of my biggest wishes come true. I also would like to thank the rest of the team who welcomed me with their biggest smile.

I hope to see you for the Saint Nicholas Day which will take place in early December at the residence of the Ambassador.

Malek Sid Ahmed
Academic intern



Chancery

My name is Line Ramanabelo and I have the pleasure of replacing Mrs. Fabienne Burban since mid-August at the chancery.

My tasks at the Embassy are the following: Civil-status matters and Swiss scholarships.

I am looking forward to welcoming you at our counter or by telephone and to responding to your enquiries with professionalism.



From left to right: Line Ramanabelo – Malek Sid Ahmed – Sabine Jenkins

Consular affairs

Please do not forget to inform us of any changes of civil status and addresses, telephones and e-mail so that we can contact you at short notice if necessary.

Useful links:

Application for a new passport: www.schweizerpass.ch

Application for criminal record excerpts: www.casier.admin.ch

Central Compensation Office – (Old-age pension etc.):

<https://www.zas.admin.ch/zas/fr/home/la-cdc/organisation/caisse-suisse-de-compensation/contact-csc.html>

Plague outbreak in Madagascar :

We urge you to remain vigilant with regard to the current plague outbreak in Madagascar. Keep yourself informed about the development of the epidemic and strictly follow the recommendations from the Ministry of Health and other organizations who have the necessary expertise in the matter (WHO, Institut Pasteur for instance). The Embassy cannot provide medical advice. You can find useful information on the following websites:

L'Institut Pasteur in Antananarivo :

<http://www.pasteur.mg/>

The World Health Organization WHO :

<http://www.afro.who.int/fr/countries/madagascar>

The Ministry of Health of the Republic of Madagascar :

<http://www.sante.gov.mg/home/n>

For people who intend to travel to Madagascar, the following site offers medical travel advice :

www.safetravel.ch



Cultural Events

The most popular Jazz Festival cancelled because of the plague

Since its creation in 1992, the international jazz festival “Madajazzcar” is a staple for jazz lovers. Every year, Madajazzcar welcomes artists not only from the country but also from abroad. For some years, the Embassy is proud to be part of the partners through the participation of a Swiss artist.

For the 28th edition, the committee decided to invite **Stephan Kurmann**, a contrabassist who made a big mark on the jazz music in Switzerland. His reputation spread far beyond Swiss borders.

After a decision by the Malagasy Government putting a ban on public demonstrations because of the pneumonic plague outbreak, the Madajazzcar committee had to cancel the festival and postpone it to a further date. Fortunately, Stephan Kurmann could perform at a few closed-door events in Antsirabe and Fort-Dauphin.

Madagaslam presents the 8th edition of the National Slam of Madagascar

The national slam is the largest event of its kind in Madagascar. With workshops, exhibitions, concerts and open scenes where slamers share their art with the public, this event brings together poets from all the regions of the country. The aim is to elect the slamer who will represent Madagascar at the Slam World Cup.

Several international artists are also invited to participate in the National Slam, which will take place **from 2 to 9 December in Antananarivo**. This year, it will be the turn of Narcisse, an artist coming from Lausanne, to present his talents to the Malagasy public in a workshop named “slam media”. It will take place on 6 December at the Institut Français de Madagascar (IFM). Simultaneously he will also be patron of this 8th edition.

It is always with pleasure and enthusiasm that our embassy supports these kind of events, because it allows to highlight a particular cultural domain and to bring people together from all parts of the island around a beautiful project. Additionally, it gives us the opportunity to be a reliable and strong sponsor.



Narcisse, parrain de la 8^{ème} édition

Quatuor Chrysaetos and Mozarteum

It is the Embassy's great pleasure to announce the visit **to Antananarivo in May 2018** of the string *Quatuor Chrysaetos*, formed by Swiss musicians. This major cultural project has been placed under the auspices of the partnership between the Mozarteum and the Embassy. A very rich week is planned, with concerts, a conference dedicated to *Tragedies in music composed by Lully and Rameau* and, sherry on the cake, a Master Class led by members of the Quatuor for young talented Malagasy musicians. We encourage you to honor with your presence the exceptional events that will be available to the public.

Celebration of Saint Nicholas Day

Keeping up with our tradition, the Swiss community will celebrate Saint Nicholas Day **on Saturday 9 December 2017** at the Residence in Ambohibao.

You will find enclosed your invitation from Ambassador Brandt.

As usual, the Embassy kindly requests you to confirm your participation with the attached reply coupon until **30 November**.

We hope to see you all!

(This invitation is subject to cancellation depending of the developments with regard to the health situation. However, without any further notice from the Embassy, the party will be maintained.)

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