



Friends of Belgium - Newsletter

News from the Embassy of Belgium in Nairobi on Belgian relations with Kenya, Somalia, Madagascar, the Seychelles, the Comoros, Eritrea and UN institutions in Kenya.

A word from your Ambassador

Dear Friends of Belgium,

We have had very busy months since our latest newsletter early September. I presented credentials in Eritrea and in the Seychelles and I travelled to Madagascar. In Kenya, we also received a visit of a delegation from the VLIR, the Inter University Council of the region of Flanders in Belgium, from ABVV, a Flemish trade union and another from the Flemish Institute for Maritime Research. All maintain close contacts and cooperation

programmes with Kenyan institutes and universities.

During the last three months, I have focused a lot on the reinforcement of the trade relations between Kenya and Belgium. Our country signed two concessional loans with the Kenyan government providing Belgian expertise in the health sector and BIO-Invest, a Belgian agency focusing on the development of the private sector visited Kenya twice in October and December.

In November, we had the very successful visit of a Trade Mission led by the Walloon and Brussels Regions, in association with the Chamber of Commerce CBL-ACP. The mission had very positive contacts with Kenyan business and the whole programme was wonderfully organized by the Trade Commissioner, Ivan Korsak. Apotheosis of the mission was of course our King's Day reception, where we had a

very numerous attendance of Belgian and Kenyan businesspeople, as well as other compatriots and the diplomatic community, to taste some of our Belgian specialties like shrimp, cheese, fries, chocolate... and beer. For the first time in Kenya we also served Belgian wine, which was highly appreciated!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who support us in these activities and in making our presence in Kenya more meaningful, successful and truly Belgian. We are happy to note that the Embassy has seen a considerable increase of registered Belgians in Kenya. I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and send you my best wishes for a prosperous and Happy New Year.

Warm regards,

Roxane de Bilderling
Ambassador



With President Kenyatta and CS Foreign Affairs Mohamed

Consular News

Number of Belgians abroad — The number of Belgians living abroad reached a new record of 406.288 in September 2014. This number represents an increase of 37% in only 10 years. Our neighbouring countries are among the most popular

destinations for our Belgian citizens, with France leading with 26,3%. Work, relationships and lifestyle constitute the main reasons of these expatriations.

Madagascar — From October 26 to 30, Consul Mrs

Van Inthoudt paid a first visit to Madagascar. During her stay she received Belgians for consular questions and/or passport applications in the new offices of the honorary consulate, Groupe Fraise, Rue Ravonanahitriniarivo,

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In pictures



Saint Nicolas / Sinterklaas visited the Belgian Residence. All children behaved very well this year.



Ambassador de Bilderling had the honour to launch the photo book of the Mwelu Foundation, sponsored by Africalia Belgium



The students of the formation centre of Via Don Bosco in Tulear, Madagascar have a good reputation among local entrepreneurs

Ankorandrano. On Monday October 27, Consul Van Inthoudt organised a drink for the Belgians in the Oasis Bar of the Carlton Hotel. In addition, she had contacts at the ministry of Foreign Affairs with several directors to encourage bilateral relations. Mrs Van Inthoudt also met her French counterpart to discuss consular cooperation, especially visa issues and consular assistance during crises. The next visit for consular assistance to Madagascar is planned at the end of April 2015.

Belgian passports — The Belgian passport is internationally recognised as one of the safest in the world. Our citizens travel visa-free to over 170 countries. However, the Belgian government keeps on improving its product, that has been issued 500.813 times in 2014 to date. An even more efficient chip was introduced in Belgian passports from December 1 onwards. The 'supplemental access control' has been designed to better protect data against any attempt of unauthorised reading.

Diplomatic news

Seychelles — On November 25, Ambassador de Bilderling presented her letter of credentials to the President of the Seychelles James Michel. During her visit to the island group in the Indian Ocean, the Ambassador also met with the Deputy President and several other ministers. The agreement between the highly reputed hotel school of the Province of Namur and the Seychelles Tourism Academy that was signed in September 2014 was warmly applauded by her counterparts. Finally, Ambassador de Bilderling visited the information exchange centre RE-FLECS3 that was established in the fight against piracy and maritime crime in the Indian Ocean.

Médécins sans Frontières Belgique in the Kibera slum.

In Madagascar, Delphine de la Vallée-Pousin travelled throughout the country to visit Belgian NGO's and university cooperation projects like ARES, Louvain Coopération, Entraide et Fraternité, Protos and Via Don Bosco. These Belgian NGO's received a total sum of 1,4 million € in 2013.

Scholarships — Belgium offers several scholarships for advanced masters and training programmes for students from Kenya and Madagascar. Currently, calls for applications from vliuvs.be and cud.be are now open. You are invited to tell your friends from Kenya and Madagascar more about these opportunities.

Belgian development aid in Madagascar — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertook a mission to Kenya and Madagascar to evaluate the Belgian development cooperation in the two countries from October 7 to October 16. In Nairobi, the team visited the healthcare project of

ABVV — Last November, a group of around twenty shop stewards of the Belgian trade union ABVV came to Kenya for a ten day visit. With their partner organization the Kenya

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Engineering Workers Union (KEWU), they visited metallurgic factories and joint projects throughout the country, the UN headquarters in Nairobi, but also the semi-informal metal engineering sector in the Jua Kali neighborhood of Nairobi. During the latter two visits on 10 and 11 November, a team from the Embassy accompanied the shop stewards and also clarified the way Belgium interacts with the UN and with the social partners in Kenya.

ABVV has been working with KEWU for a number of years, but earlier this year also concluded a cooperation agreement in Mombasa with the Dock Workers' Union (DWU) and the Long-Distance Truck Drivers Union (LDTDU). Most of the joint programmes, which are funded by the Belgian Development Cooperation, focus on enhancing trade union membership and organization, gender equality and relations and HIV awareness.

BIO Invest — The Belgian Investment Company BIO supports the private sector in 52 developing and emerging countries to enable them to gain access to growth and sustainable development. BIO has organised two missions in October and December to explore options to extend their portfolio in Kenya. Currently, BIO is already involved in Reltex Tarpaulins, a local tent provider. If you want to learn more about BIO, you can visit www.bio-invest.be.

Did you know...

Did you know that, according to the African Development Bank, Africa's total power capacity is currently

147 GW,

the same amount as Belgium generates?

But that is changing...

Belgian corner

King's Day — The celebrations on the occasion of King's Day coincided this year with the Belgian Trade Mission organised by the Trade Counsellor attached to this Embassy. During this sunny afternoon, all guests had the opportunity to establish social and business contacts in a great atmosphere with a varied selection of Belgian specialties, beer and wine. The Embassy thanks once again all guests, the Mwelu Foundation for taking lovely pictures, the talented Ghetto Classics students for playing the national anthems, the rhythmic Kalabash band and the many sponsors we can always count on.

Safaricom International Jazz Festival — Belgium's participation at last year's Safaricom international jazz festival was a huge success. The music of the Rhythm Junks was well-received and the Belgian tent attracted many spectators to learn more about our country and try its

food. Therefore, the Embassy is currently negotiating with Belgian jazz artists to come over for the 2015 edition on February 22. More news follows on our Facebook page!

Sinterklaas/Saint Nicolas — Sinterklaas or Saint Nicolas and his side-kick Piet visited the Belgian Residence on Saturday December 6. All children registered at the Embassy had the opportunity to come and celebrate this special day this Saturday at the Residence and all of them were very spoiled by Saint Nicolas. It was an afternoon full of presents, fun and laughter.

European champion in whiskey and lager — Belgian beer and spirits are doing particularly well. Belgian lager Maes has recently been elected as the best lager in Europe at the European beer stars awards 2014. The Belgian Owl Single Malt 64 is Europe's best whiskey. The latest rankings by the expert can be found in the new edition of Murray's yearly Whiskey Bible.



Steven de Bruyn of the Nairobi Harmonica Express teaching the harmonica to the students of Ghetto Classics



Ambassador de Bilderling during her speech on the occasion of King's Day



In focus - Matthias Vanheusden, International UN Volunteer

What brought you to Kenya?

My wife Loes and I had been looking for an opportunity to work and live abroad for a while. Through some of my colleagues at the Commissioner General for Refugees Office in Belgium, I found out about the possibility to serve as an "International United Nations Volunteer (IUNV)." I registered and rather soon I got an offer to serve as an Associate Refugee Status Determination Officer in the UNHCR Branch Office in Nairobi. We didn't hesitate for a single moment. We have a baby girl called Louise who was 8 months at the time we left and it seemed like a good idea to try this kind of life while she was still small.

What does your work as a UNV for UNHCR entail?

As an associate Refugee Determination Officer I interview asylum seekers and determine whether or not they fit the refugee definition as defined in the 1951 Geneva convention. Since I had been doing the same kind of work at the Belgian Commissioner General for Refugees Office, I get to do the more complex cases here which is interesting but can be



quite challenging. I get to interview a lot of interesting people and I learn a lot about the conflicts in the region. We mainly get refugees from Eastern DRC, Uganda, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan. A lot of my colleagues are national United Nations Volunteers. We conduct around 4 to 6 interviews a week and try to write as many assessments.

How do you like living in Kenya?

We love Kenya so far! It's a great place to live with small children and nature is absolutely stunning. Although Nairobi has a lot to offer as well, we try to leave the city on weekends and explore the country. The most spectacular place we have been so far is Samburu NP. The landscape is out of the world and driving up there gives

you a good impression of Kenya's diversity. We also particularly enjoyed the South coast with its stunning palm fringed beaches, turquoise waters and fresh seafood. Another great thing of living abroad is that you meet a lot of nice, open-minded and interesting people.

If we have to mention one disadvantage then it would be the limited freedom of movement. Walking and cycling wherever you want is not an option and this is one of the things we miss.

Do you have any advice for new countrymen moving to Kenya?

Take your time to discover the nice restaurants, bars, galleries, parks and forests in Nairobi. Buy a car as soon as you get here and go and explore all the magnificent places this country has to offer!

Friends of Belgium

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If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please send an email to nairobi@diplobel.fed.be mentioning « unsubscribe ». All comments and suggestions are very welcome on the same address. Our ambition is to improve this product taking into account your needs and expectations.

The Trade Commissioner also publishes an Economic Newsletter on a regular basis. If you wish to subscribe, please send an email to nairobi@belemb.eu

News from the Embassy

Emergency number — If you are a Belgian and you are living or travelling in the jurisdiction of this Embassy, then you are advised to add the emergency contact number of the Embassy in your phone contacts. The number +254 733 601 230 can be called 24/7 by Belgians in emergency situations.

However, please note that this does not include urgent visa or administrative requests.

Land lines — In recent months we have experienced some problems with our land lines due to technical problems with our provider. Apologies for any inconvenience. However,

this issue has now been solved.

Embassy closed — The Embassy will be closed in the afternoon of December 11. In addition, the Embassy is closed on December 12 and from December 25 to January 1 including. The Embassy team wishes you a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.