



## 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,

This is issue number 10 of our Newsletter and this will be my last opportunity to write you as your Ambassador. This summer I will leave Nairobi to take up a new job with Foreign Affairs in Brussels.

My three years in Nairobi came at an exciting time for Africa and Belgian relations with the East-African region. The world now perceives Africa as the rising continent and it was not a coincidence that I concentrated much of my efforts on economic diplomacy. I am very grateful to the Belgian business community for their excellent cooperation and remain confident we will see more

growth and investment during the coming years. As your Ambassador I have also worked hard to improve services to Belgians and all our African clients and I'm confident that we have one of the more user friendly visa services in Nairobi. Political relations were up to date with both HE President Kenyatta going to Brussels for an EU-Africa summit and a bilateral visit by the President of the Senate, Honorable Ekwee Ethuro. We have also established strong relations with civil society, academic institutions, media and cultural actors. Both my wife and myself will leave Kenya reluctant-

ly and with the intention to come back from time to time to catch up with our many friends here.

Let me conclude with a word of caution, taking into regard the increasing number of security incidents. Our travel advice still allows tourism in all of Kenya, with the exception of the large border region with Somalia. But the combined threat of terrorism and rising criminality means I have to request you more than ever to take care and to follow up our security advice. Provide us with your contact details, follow our regularly updated travel advice and read our messages via SMS, Facebook and Twitter.

Thanks to all who assisted me over the past three years, asante sana & kwaheri!

Bart Ouvry



### Consular News

**Federal elections 2014** - About 100 people have been in touch with the Embassy to vote in one way or another. The Embassy team organised an Election Day on Wednesday 21 May and on Thursday 22 May our Embassy turned into a regional

counting centre as the ballots of 7 of our Embassies in this region were counted. We recognize the worldwide organization of these elections abroad experienced some hiccups due to stringent legal clauses, nevertheless we wish to thank all contribu-

ting to a smooth election day.

**New passports** - As from 1 June 2014 the price for a passport for a Belgian adult decreases from 79 € to 75 €. Let us also draw your attention to the fact

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## In pictures



*A group of Belgian INISOL students visited Kenya to carry out market studies and identify opportunities for Belgian firms in the region.*



*One of the Belgian voters who came to cast his vote at the Embassy*



*The Ambassador and his collaborator tasting honey after a visit to ICIZE, African insect science for development.*

that it is now also possible to do a preregistration of your biometric data up to 1 year before the actual application for a new passport. In addition, passports can only be issued to Belgian citizens who are registered at the Embassy. Those who are registered in another Embassy or a Belgian municipality need to get the approval first of their respective Embassy or municipality before they can apply somewhere else. Belgian citizens who are not registered anywhere can apply for a temporary passport only.

**Security** - Terrorist groups have in the recent past targeted areas with busy human traffic to detonate explosives. So how do we keep ourselves safe? The best defense against such heinous attacks would be awareness

and being in touch with our surroundings. Take note of emergency exits in malls and other public establishments; pay attention to conspicuous and unusual behavior by other patrons in public places; comply to security checks in public areas and keep emergency numbers to contact relevant authorities in the event that you notice any potential threats. By all means, avoid crowded areas and do not overstay at bus terminals, board the first bus and leave. Above all be responsible, do not spread information that is not from credible sources. Keep the Embassy informed about your contact details and do not hesitate to call our emergency number if you are confronted with any grave security incident.

## Diplomatic news

**A first UNEA** - Federal Secretary of State for the Environment Melchior Wathelet will participate in the first ever held United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) of UNEP, which takes place between 23 and 27 June. UNEA was created in the aftermath and as a direct result of the Rio+20 Summit in 2012, where it was decided that the governing body of UNEP would henceforth meet in universal composition and as a directly subsidiary body to the UN General Assembly in New York. This year's edition will primarily focus on the place of the environment in the post-2015 development framework (successor to the Millennium Development Goals) and in a set of Sustainable Development Goals (which

is also part of the Rio+20 legacy), both currently being elaborated in New York, and on combating illegal trade in wildlife. Other new initiatives by UNEP Member states to be discussed include air quality, marine plastic litter and ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.

**Visit to Moi University** - Ambassador Bart Ouvry visited Moi University which is involved in a long term scientific cooperation with VLIR, the agency which takes care of international cooperation of all universities in Flanders. The cooperation has now been ongoing for several years and both for Belgian researchers and their Kenyan counterparts this is a win-win-situation. A striking example is the assis-

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tance to the quality control laboratory of the Rivatex textiles plant. This company had been dormant for 10 years and has now been revived and provides jobs for 400 workers. The factory allows students to have onsite experience and training during their studies as a textile engineer. Other fields covered in this cooperation are Civil and Structural Engineering , Agriculture and Biotechnology and finally Health. There is also specific emphasis on the promotion of gender equality as women do not yet have equal opportunities in university education or careers in Kenya today.

**Visit Seychelles** - From 11 to 15 May, Counsellor Pieter Leenknecht visited the Seychelles with a combined consular and political mandate. He collected biometric data of about one quarter of the Belgian community on the archipel in order to produce new biometric passports, paid a visit to a Belgian detainee, met extensively with our Honorary Consul and also had a few high-profile bilat-

teral contacts on Mahé Island with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, with resident EU Member States' diplomats and with a prominent opposition leader. Discussion topics with the Seychellois authorities included bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime security, hence a visit to the RE-FLECS3 regional center for maritime intelligence gathering and sharing was included in his program.

**Human Rights in Somalia** - One of the fields in which Belgian diplomacy adopts a high profile is the promotion of human rights. In this context, the Belgian Embassy assumed the co-chairmanship of the Human Rights Working Group (HRWG) Somalia in June 2013. The Spanish Embassy is the other co-chair and the Secretariat is assured by the European Delegation. The HRWG is based in Nairobi and brings together members of Embassies from the EU member states, Norway, Switzerland and the US (all donors to Somalia). Its goal is to follow up on the

human rights situation in Somalia, which is one of the worst in the world, through regular meetings to coordinate positions, field missions, letters to Somali authorities and press statements. Under the Belgian and Spanish co-chairmanship, the HRWG organized two field missions to Mogadishu, one to Hargeisa in Somaliland and one to Garowe in Puntland. It also drafted about half a dozen letters on human rights issues and issued as many press statements. Among the top concerns over the past twelve months were women's rights, with the fight against sexual violence and against female circumcision, and media freedom. The HRWG spoke out against rape by armed forces and helped to formulate an action plan against sexual violence endorsed by the Somali government. It lobbied actively for a better protection of freedom of expression through the various instruments at its disposal.

**Did you know...**

*Did you know that the surprise of the Belgian selection for the FIFA World Cup*

**Divock Origi**

*has Kenyan roots?*

*His father is Mike Origi, a Kenyan football star who played for KRC Genk in Belgium.*

**Belgian corner**

**Belgium-Algeria** - Are you also looking forward to this year's FIFA World Cup? With the first participation in twelve years of our talented generation of Belgian Red Devils, the enthusiasm for the World Cup in Brazil is reaching unprecedented heights. The Ambassador therefore kindly invites all Belgians and their families to a screening of the first game against Algeria on June 17 at 7pm at his residence. You probably already received a save-the-date. An invitation will follow soon. This event is made possible by Soulco, Brussels



Airlines, CBA Group, Johan Mistiaen, Rampel Designs,

Kenfreight, Socabelec, Lamu House, Better Globe Forestry, Thomas & Piron and Fidelity Shield Insurance. The Embassy looks forward to seeing you there.

**Ivory Crush** - Every day, more than 100 elephants are killed by poachers. In April, Belgium sent a strong signal by destroying 1,5 metric ton of its ivory stock as a clear commitment in the international community's war against poaching. The Ivory Crush was organised by Belgian custom services, IFAW and CITES.



## In focus - Carine Ouvry-Bormans

*Ambassador Bart Ouvry and his wife Carine Ouvry will leave Kenya this summer. Time to say goodbye!*

**Carine, can you tell us a bit more about your three years here in Kenya? How did you experience it?**

I had a wonderful experience in Kenya and really feel very sad to leave this lovely country with its lovely and smiling people.

**Which projects have you visited/were you involved in?**

As a history teacher, I was involved in a Secondary School in an informal settlement near Runda, called the New Dawn Educational Center. After some time I started to help to put up the library in that particular school. Recently, I started to set up a library in a social/art project in the Lunga Lunga Slum in Wajukuu, together with the artist Shabu Mwangi. My last project is to assist one of the former history teachers of the New Dawn Educational Center to start up a library in the school he started recently in Kawangware. For the fundraising of these projects, I organized a charity dance party each year in the Belgian Residence with the help of my friends of the



Diplomatic Spouses Association. This allowed us to support more than 10 projects every year. Unfortunately my time was limited and I could not visit all of them!

**How do you like living in Kenya? What do you like most/what do you like less?**

What I most like about Kenya are the smiling faces of the Kenyans, the beauty of the nature and its people and the appreciation you get from those you help. I learned to understand how vast the African continent is and came to understand Kenyan art, which was new for me. Most challenging for me was that I had to start looking at history from an African perspective. Also

difficult for me was the confrontation with extreme income inequality between rich and poor and the stress for families when school fees are due. Especially as a teacher, I see free education as such an important aspect of the development of a country: young people are the future of this country.

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

Try to learn some Kiswahili. It is the language of the people in the street and learning the language allows you to understand culture and habits. By the way, Kiswahili is also a lovely language, with elements from Arabic and Bantu cultures. Kwaheri !

## Friends of Belgium

**Friends of Belgium is a three-monthly publication of the Embassy of Belgium in Nairobi.**

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

## News from the Embassy

**Goodbye** - The Embassy team will lose a couple of their key team members this summer. The Ambassador and his wife will move back to Brussels, while the Consul leaves to Lima, Peru. Earlier, we said goodbye to Danelly Gonzalez.

**... and welcome** - The Embassy welcomed Lut Laenen as Danelly's successor. Mrs Lut Laenen, who is well known by the Belgians in Kenya, will be in charge of the facilities management of the Embassy. We wish Lut Laenen all the best in her new job.

