



## Friends of Belgium - Newsletter

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

### A word from your Ambassador

Dear Friends of Belgium,

The past three months were once again a very intense and productive time for our Embassy. We had a major event with the commissioning of the Mtafiti research vessel by HE Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta. In this issue we come back on this but I wish to mention this as an excellent symbol for our diplomatic efforts in Kenya.

Good bilateral relations are based on the creation of win-win situations. This research boat will allow Kenya and the East-African region to reach the full scientific and economic potential of the Indian Ocean but likewise it will help Belgian maritime scientists to broaden their field of research and knowledge.

Good bilateral relations are also the result of direct and pragmatic relations with decision makers. Over the past year I had excellent cooperation and friendly relations with dif-

ferent Kenyan and Belgian decision makers in the field of Fisheries and Maritime Sciences and this permitted us to realize this project in less than one year.

Good bilateral relations in conclusion are built on contacts in a variety of disciplines: diplomatic, economic, scientific and cultural relations are mutually reinforcing. As Belgian Embassy we wish to be present on all these fronts, we want to be a source of reliable information for all our clients but we also have the ambition to be an actor at the heart of a network of decision makers and shapers. With the help of you and all our Friends of Belgium we can do this.

This newsletter is testimony to progress in different fields: new Advisors in Economic Diplomacy, extra direct flights between Nairobi and Brussels, our participation in the Safaricom International Jazz Festival, etc. I particularly mention the bilateral visit to Brus-

sels by Honorable Ekwee Ethuro, the Speaker of the Kenyan Senate. He visited the Belgian Senate and discussions were very useful. The comparison of our Belgian experience - since the nineteen seventies we have an evolving federal system - with the more recent Kenyan devolution brought new and constructive ideas. In sharing our experiences we can both improve the functioning of our institutions and ensure a stable political climate.

Let me finally thank my Embassy team for their dedicated work fostering both better diplomatic relations with the six countries and two international organisations in our jurisdiction and serving our consular clients, facilitating travel from here to Belgium and providing services to our fellow countrymen. I'm glad to publish in this issue the picture of my team mates - without them I could not make much of a difference!

Bart Ouvry

### Consular News

**Federal elections 2014** - The registration for the federal elections 2014 has been finalized. The Embassy has registered 126 voters in this jurisdiction. Those who will cast their vote personally at the Embassy on Wednesday 21 May 2014 will be cordially

welcomed with some pastry and coffee between 9 and 12 am.

In the future, the registration process for the elections will be simplified. People who register at our Embassy will from now on also systematically fill out the registration form for

the next federal elections following the one in 2014. Also, people who are registered for the elections in 2014 will not have to repeat the election registration again. For your complete information: the federal elections will nor-

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## In pictures



*On January 23, the Belgian flag was temporarily waving along side the Kenyan flag as Pieter Leenknecht, counsellor at this Embassy climbed the Mount Kenya*



*President Uhuru Kenyatta commissioning the former Belgian research vessel Mtafiti*



*Steven de Bruyn from the Belgian jazz band The Rhythm Junks entertaining the crowd during the first Safaricom International Jazz Festival*

mally be organized every 5 years instead of 4 years.

**eID** - Your Belgian identity card issued as from March 1 will have a validity as follows: for applicants aged 12 to 18 years: a six-year validity period; for applicants aged 18 to

75 years: a ten-year validity period; for applicants over the age of 75 years: a thirty-year validity period.

Check out the website [www.eid.be](http://www.eid.be) to learn more about the possibilities of your electronic ID-card.

## Diplomatic news

**Mtafiti** - H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta, in the presence of the Belgian Ambassador to Kenya Bart Ouvry and the Governor of West Flanders Carl Decaluwé, commissioned the first research vessel for Kenya. The RV Mtafiti – which means 'researcher' - is a gift from the Belgian region Flanders to Kenya and will be used by the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI) to carry out marine studies to the benefit of the local population and for several regional tasks in the Western Indian Ocean. RV Mtafiti was previously the Zeeleeuw, operated by KMFRI's Flemish partner institute VLIZ (Flemish Marine Institute), of which Governor Decaluwé is the President.

### **Mission of the Governor of West-Flanders**

- On the occasion of the commissioning of the Mtafiti, a mission led by Governor Carl Decaluwé visited the Kenyan Coast from January 26 to 30. The mission provided a unique opportunity to highlight and promote a number of projects supported by Belgian institutions and individuals. On January 28, Governor Decaluwé visited the University of Mombasa, where a medical faculty is being created in collaboration with the University of Ghent, and the renowned International Centre for Reproductive Health founded by Professor Marleen Temmerman.

The next day, the focus was on the long-standing collaboration between the Flemish Marine Institute VLIZ and KMFRI. The delegation visited two projects realized in close collaboration with VLIZ and Flemish universities. The first is the aquaculture of artemia (brine shrimps) in the salt fields north of Malindi: artemia improves the quality of the salt, and its eggs are harvested as fish fodder. The second is the mangrove conservation project in Watamu: as storerooms of carbon dioxide, mangroves are essential to the conservation of the coastal environment and local communities are closely involved in projects.

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The last day, the delegation visited Ukunda near Diani beach, where Belgians support about a dozen schools and their pupils with school fees, equipment, infrastructure and also through internships of Belgian students. Governor Decaluwé was very warmly welcomed in a new primary school built by project Sunshine4kids with funding of the Province West-Flanders, and in the Lightmoon Academy for girls. The mission was concluded by a dinner with Senate Speaker Ekwee Ethuro.

**Advisors in Economic Diplomacy** - Within the framework of the continued commitment to economic diplomacy as one of

the key pillars of Belgian diplomacy, the Embassy in Nairobi can pride itself on two new Advisors in Economic Diplomacy. Pierre Declerck is the country manager of Brussels Airlines, which plans to further extend its Kenya operations in the field of both cargo and passenger flights. Paul Bletterman is the CEO of Kenfreight, a logistics and transport company based in Mombasa but active in all of East Africa with 400 staff. Pierre Declerck and Paul Bletterman will reinforce the network of the Embassy in the economic world and help it to identify opportunities for Belgian companies. The diploma of economic advisor was awarded to Pierre on the occasion of a busi-

ness lunch in Nairobi, and to Paul at a reception in Mombasa the day after the commissioning of the research vessel Mtafiti.

**Business lunch** - The Ambassador organised a business lunch for the Belgian and Kenyan business community. Guest of honor was Philippe Saeys from Brussels Airlines who was proud to announce a substantial increase of the frequency to and from Nairobi. A 4th frequency is added as from March 21st and a 5th frequency as from April 2nd. Flights on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. Only in May will there be no Friday flight.  
<http://kenya.brusselsairlines.com/>

### Did you know...

*Did you know that it is now*

**200**

*years ago Adolphe Sax, the inventor of the saxophone, was born in Dinant, Belgium?*

*This 200th anniversary is marked by the exhibition SAX200 in Belgium.*

## Belgian corner

**Safaricom International Jazz Festival** - Did you experience the Belgian rhythm at the first-ever International Jazz Festival on February 23? The Belgian band The Rhythm Junkies performed twice in Nairobi and what a success it was! The turnout was amazing and the Belgian tent on the festival site was the most attended of all hospitality tents. Probably the Belgian fries and beers have something to do with it.

**Semaine de la Francophonie** - From Saturday March 22 to Sunday March 30, the French-speaking community in Kenya organises a "Semaine de la Francophonie". On the occasion of this week, the community organises a series of activities to celebrate the French language as well as bringing together the diversity of Francophone cultures that continues to enrich the

language. Schools, universities and 'les Alliances françaises' are involved in different projects and activities, among others on Sunday 23 March, Belgium will have a stand at Kenyatta University. Furthermore, the second edition of a 'petanque' tournament will take place in the Windsor Hotel on Saturday March 22 and a ball will be organised at the French Residence with some traditional Belgian dishes on Saturday March 29. In attachment to this newslet-

ter, you will find more information. You can also write an email to [nadine.desmedt@diplobel.fed.be](mailto:nadine.desmedt@diplobel.fed.be) and mention 'Semaine de la Francophonie' in the subject line.

**European Film Festival** - From May 13 to 31, the European Film Festival will take place at the Alliance Française in Nairobi. The Embassy of Belgium is committed to participate with a Flemish and French-speaking movie. Later, the festival will move to other cities in Kenya.



*The Jazz Festival as the ideal Sunday trip for all ages*



## In focus - Coralie Piron, CEO Thomas & Piron G.L.

### What brought you to Kenya?

I live in East Africa since 2004. Before I came to Kenya in June last year, I lived in Kigali where I was managing Thomas & Piron GrandsLacs Rwanda, a Belgian company active in construction and property development. The first time I visited Kenya was in early 2011 when a Kenyan friend took me to Nairobi in order to assess the opportunities in real estate and construction. It is then that I decided that we would extend our activity to Kenya. By the end of 2011, we had set up the company and my financial director in Rwanda, compatriot Marie Vandenaabee moved to Nairobi in order to become the country director of our newly established company. Only later, when the amount of work decreased in Rwanda and so many opportunities in Kenya came up, I decided to move to Nairobi with my family in order to support Marie in the development of our business.

### What does your work as CEO of Thomas & Piron G.L. entail?

In Kenya, I define the overall strategy of the company, what type of construction contracts we are looking for, the type of

property developments we are going to invest into and the time schedule. I define the speed of the growth of the company as we must be able to manage it properly and set the yearly targets in terms of turnover and performance that our various departments, our directors and managers must achieve in order to be able to sustain that growth. In addition, I support the country director in the daily management of the company using the experience I have acquired in Rwanda. As the aim of Thomas & Piron GrandsLacs is to become one of the main regional actors in the construction industry and a recognized property developer, I look for opportunities in other African countries. Finally, almost half of my time is still dedicated to our company in Rwanda because we still have various contracts ongoing that we must finalize properly.

### How do you like living in Kenya?

I love living in Nairobi. It is a beautiful and lively city. There are many great shopping malls where you find most things. There is always something to do during the weekend; restaurants are good as well as plays and cinemas.



There are many activities for children. Our 3 year old daughter takes drama and swimming classes during the weekend. Schools, although very expensive, offer a very wide range of activities and kids can try out many sports which is not self-evident in Belgium. In addition, Kenya is a beautiful country so you can't fail to find great places to go to over the weekends or for holidays. Finally, I find the Kenyans very welcoming. Nairobi is so cosmopolitan that you never feel like a stranger when walking around. It did not take us very long to feel at home.

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

Choose your place to live not too far from your working place and/or from your children's school as traffic can be very bad in Nairobi. Nairobi is a beautiful city but it is also very big and can be dangerous. So one has to be careful when moving around, especially at night.

## 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

**Embassy team** - You might have spotted this picture on Facebook already but we kindly re-present you our team. First Secretary Vincent Viaene and consular agent Gisèle Christiaen are missing on the picture. Accounting coordinator Maaïke Ghyllbert took the picture.

