



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,

Time flies! This is already the third newsletter since our arrival in Kenya. As you will be able to read on the next pages, we have certainly not remained inactive these last months: our participation to the Safaricom International Jazz Festival in Nairobi, a joint Belgian-Seychellois Climate conference and last but not least lots of fascinating encounters and visits!

In January, I had the opportunity to visit an excellent community project in Kibera at the Nairobi dam. The local community is developing sustainable projects on the land reclaimed from the dam. Ecological toilets, organic tomato farming and bag making out of water hyacinth all form part of efforts to create an economically and ecologically more sound environment for slum dwellers, and to make them custodians of the riparian catchment area. The aim is thus not only to invest in sustainable activities and crops for example, but also to improve people's daily lives by offering alternative sources of income. We hope to be able to use a few remaining funds given to UNEP on the Nairobi River Basin to support these valuable efforts.

The coming months promise to be very busy as well. We will participate among others in the European Film Festival in Asmara and the week of the Francophonie in Nairobi with plenty of wonderful activities, e.g., our country showcasing our Belgian 'savoir-faire' in comic books. We hope to see you in good numbers at one of the events. I will also be paying a visit to Mombasa and Kwale counties at the end of the month. Several other visits in the jurisdiction are planned. We will make sure to inform you in due time.

I wish you all a wonderful time in one of the beautiful countries of the Embassy's jurisdiction. Enjoy life in this amazing and vibrant region!

Warm regards,

Roxane de Bilderling
Ambassador



Ambassador de Bilderling and Counsellor Leenknecht visited a string of projects around the Nairobi Dam/Kibera Park site

Consular News

Upcoming consular mission to Madagascar — A consular mission to Madagascar will take place before the end of May 2015. Due to external factors, it is not possible yet to set an exact date. The exact date will be sent by e-mail to all Belgians in Madagascar, therefore, it is advised to keep an eye on your

mailbox. Please note that it is possible to do a preregistration of your biometric data up to one year before the actual application for a new passport. All Belgians are invited to make use of this preregistration in order to avoid any problems with outdated passports

Visit to Seychelles — Consul Hilde Van Inthoudt visited the Seychelles from February 26 to March 1. The aim of the consul's first visit was to meet the Belgian community and to offer them the opportunity to register their biometric data for their passport. The Belgians could also

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In pictures



Ambassador de Bilderling in discussion with Minister of Environment of the Seychelles Dogley on the occasion of the visit of Belgian climatologist Jean-Pascal Van Ypersele



*Meeting between Belgian Ambassadors and the Royal Couple .
Who can spot Ambassador de Bilderling? © Belga Photo*



The Belgian tent at the Safaricom Jazz Festival ready to receive the 11.000 jazz fans

discuss any other consular issue, e.g., nationality and civil registry. On Friday night February 26, 25 Belgians gathered at La Plage for a welcome drink offered by the consul. On Monday, she visited two countrymen who are imprisoned in the prison of Mahé. During her stay, consul Van Inthoudt also met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and her colleague of the Embassy of France.

Long-stay visa for Belgium — As of March 2 2015, the processing of

some visa D applications and some residence applications for Belgium will require payment of a contribution. The proof of payment will have to be submitted along with the application at the time of the application. More information can be found on <https://dofi.ibz.be> under 'news'.

DIBISS/ORPSS — DOSZ/OSSOM, social security for Belgian expats, became DIBISS/ ORPSS and moved to Rue Joseph II 47, 1000 Brussels. <https://www.dibiss.fgov.be/>

Diplomatic news

Visit of Jean-Pascal Van Ypersele — From February 22 to March 3, climatologist and Vice-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Jean-Pascal van Ypersele visited Kenya and Madagascar. Next to participating in this 41st IPCC Plenary Session discussing the future of the Panel in Nairobi, he also featured in a joint Belgian-Seychellois public conference on the relation between Blue Economy and Climate Change at the UN headquarters in Nairobi, which was very well attended by a highly diverse audience of climate experts and laymen. On February 27, Ambassador de Bilderling hosted a dinner for Professor Van Ypersele which was attended by Hon. Prof. Judi Wakhungu, Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Hon. Didier Dogley, Seychelles Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Energy and several IPCC delegates. Prof. Van Ypersele consequently visited Madagascar where he spoke for about

200 academics, students and the head of Administration of the Ministry of Environment.

Reorganisation of diplomatic network — The Minister of Foreign Affairs published a list of several Belgian diplomatic and consular missions abroad, mainly in Europe, intended for closure and reorganisation. This decision must be seen in the context of a broader effort of rationalisation of the diplomatic network, based on objective studies. Embassies will be closed in Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Bratislava, Ljubljana, Nicosia, Tripoli and Brazzaville. Consulates General will be closed in Cologne, Lille, Strasbourg, Geneva, Casablanca and Johannesburg. The embassy in Kabul ended its activities in January 2015. Also, the consulate in Toronto closed last December and cooperation offices in Quito and La Paz will follow in the course of 2015.

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Exchange vzw — Have you ever heard about Exchange in Kenya or Madagascar? Exchange is a Belgian NGO active in these two countries which adheres to the principle that successful entrepreneurship is the most sustainable and powerful way to tackle poverty. The exchange of knowledge between entrepreneurs and professionals in the North and the South is exactly what Exchange does. In doing so, the organisation empowers companies in these developing countries and creates measurable growth for them.

Entrepreneurs and socio-economic organisations from Kenya and Madagascar approach Exchange with various issues: a growth strategy, hygiene standards, plans for export, marketing or « hands-on » experience. Does the application fulfil their selection criteria? Then Exchange searches for a suitable expert who can assist the applicant. After the expert has been accepted (it is the entrepreneur in the South who decides), Exchange sends out this volunteer. Both entrepreneurs will then take up the challenge to-

gether, as equal partners. Currently, 17 projects are running in Madagascar. Would you be interested to become a volunteer for one of the many projects Exchange is organising? You can find all information on www.exchangevzw.be. Or if you know any firm in Eritrea, Seychelles, Comores, Kenya or Madagascar that needs additional expertise, you can contact Ms Martine Hustinx (Madagascar) or Mr Stijn Van Bosstraeten (Kenya, etc.) via info@exchangevzw.be. Exchange is supported by the Belgian development cooperation.

Did you know...

Did you know that there is a digital brochure digital brochure providing a light overview of what Belgium is all about?

Belgium at a glance

is available in, e.g., English, French and Dutch and can be downloaded directly from <http://diplomatie.belgium.be>.

Belgian corner

Francophonie — In the context of the week of 'La Francophonie', the Belgian Embassy will showcase an exhibition of Spirou - the famous Belgian comic strip - at the Alliance Française in Nairobi from March 16 to 22. The cartoonist of Spirou, Emile Bravo (March 17 to 20) and the editor of Dupuis Editions will both be present in Nairobi. The latter will hold several conferences at the French School, the UN and during the Francophonie day at the Kenyatta University on Sunday March 22 where more than 2.000 Kenyan students are expected to attend. A pétanque tournament is organized in Diani Beach on March 14 and at Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club in Nairobi on March 21. The week of 'la Francophonie' will end with a charity ball at the Belgian Residence on March 28. Tickets are on sale from next week for 3.000 KES/person (dinner and two bottles of wine per table). More than eight countries will offer their culinary specialties.

European Film Festival in Eritrea and Kenya — Belgium will participate in the European Film Festival in Asmara from March 23 to March 27 with the Flemish movie "Allez, Eddy!" about a young cycling fan and butcher's son wanting to meet his hero Eddy Merckx. Later in May, Belgium will also participate in the European Film Festival in Kenya. Currently, negotiations are ongoing to get two must-see movies from the relevant authorities, one of them an Oscar nominated movie. The Embassy team will keep you informed.

Belgian Jazz in Kenya — 11.000 Kenyan jazz fans enjoyed the Belgian jazz band Nicolas Kummert Voices on a stunning day in February at Ngong Race Course. Many of the fans visited the Belgian tent where a saxophone exhibition was on display, Belgian food could be bought and more information about our country was available. Thank you to Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club and Brussels Airlines for the support.



The Belgian saxophonist Nicolas Kummert performing at the 2015 Safari-com International Jazz Festival



La Francophonie organises a petanque tournament at Windsor Golf Hotel and Country Club on Saturday March 21



In focus - Alix d'Ansembourg, Kangemi Resource Centre

What brought you to Kenya?

We moved to Kenya 10 years ago thanks to a job opportunity for my husband Benoit at the NGO Refugee Education Trust. He had worked in Kenya and Somalia for a few years in the nineties for the UNHCR and I visited him several times. It was then that we really fell in love with the country. After getting married and having had our first child, we were dreaming of moving to Kenya as a family. We have now spent more than ten beautiful years in Nairobi with our three daughters and managed to combine our humanitarian commitment with a fulfilling family life. Benoit currently works for UNICEF as an Education Specialist for the region and I run a Kenyan NGO that I started in 2006.

What does your work at Kangemi Resource Centre (KRC) entail?

Kangemi Resource Centre is a community project that aims to improve -especially through education- the lives of underprivileged children and their families in Kangemi, one of Nairobi's informal settlements.

I personally started the project from scratch because I wanted to contribute to help people to get out of poverty. Through my background as a teacher and a humanitarian worker - and probably through my persistence! - I managed to develop a project and raise funds for it. Currently, KRC supports over 80 - mostly informal primary - schools and thousands Kangemi residents. The centre, has a library, classrooms, a TV room, an early childhood centre, a computer centre, a games and toys library and a sciences laboratory. Furthermore, it provides several services, like a daily feeding program, ICT and



entrepreneurship training, dental check-ups and hygiene and sexual education, a teacher training program, arts, crafts, sports and music activities, a healthy water distribution kiosk and a water and sanitation awareness project.

In addition, KRC hosts the Mama Africa Workshop which is an income generating and women empowerment project that I founded in 2006 and that supports KRC's work financially. The women manufacture beautiful kikoy items sold at KRC and in different fairs and shops in Nairobi.

So my work entails wearing lots of hats; from project development and designing for Mama Africa to fundraising and management. Ten years ago, I never thought I was starting such a buoyant adventure supported by generous donors and volunteers. Together we made it possible and added what might be a drop in the ocean but is really valued by the Kangemi people.

How do you like living in Kenya?

Kenya is heaven for wildlife and countryside lovers like us. We spend as many weekends as we can in the bush. Kenya offers such an amazing diversity of landscapes and cultures, you can endlessly explore. We are passionately fond of people of Kenya and their traditions that cohabit with the modern world. Nairobi might be hectic and stressful to live in, but at the

same time its fast development in the last years has been fascinating. We have seen tremendous progress in the Kenyan society although there is still a long way to go for equality and welfare for all people. We enjoy living in such a vibrant and cosmopolitan place where you interact with different communities either local or expats. I particularly feel for my Kangemi friends and colleagues and all the wonderful people of Kenya whose resilience in the face of adversity keeps amazing me.

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

Don't be afraid of adventure! It is really worth visiting the country despite the long distances. You will be impressed by the hospitality of Kenyans particularly up-country and it is so nice to be out of hectic Nairobi. Get to meet Kenyans and get involved in Kenyan people's life whether it's socially or culturally. Participate in local development's initiatives that support Kenyans. Don't be scared of engaging with people despite a possible cultural and economic gap. Your expatriation in Kenya will be far more rewarding if you get out of the "expat bubble" that tends to characterize Nairobi's expat life.

If you are interested in the KRC project, you can contact Ms. Alix d'Ansembourg alixdanssembourg@gmail.com

Friends of Belgium

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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