



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
BOTSCHAFT DER REPUBLIK DER PHILIPPINEN
BERNE

188 / 17

29 September 2017

Excellency,

I am pleased to submit the report of the Philippine chairmanship of the ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB) covering the period January-September 2017.

Again, on behalf of the ACB, my most sincere gratitude for honoring us with your visit to Switzerland (Berne and Geneva).

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.



JOSELITO A. JIMENO
Ambassador

His Excellency

LE LUONG MINH

Secretary-General

Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Cc: ASEAN Committee in Berne

ASEAN Secretariat

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Ambassador Elizabeth Buensuceso

Philippine Permanent Representative, ASEAN

REPORT ON THE HIGHLIGHTS OF PHILIPPINE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE ASEAN COMMITTEE IN BERNE (January-September 2017)

The Philippines took over the coordinatorship of ASEAN missions accredited to Switzerland in January 2017. Under its coordinatorship, the Philippines endeavored to raise the profile of ASEAN in Switzerland by coming up with activities aimed at promoting awareness of ASEAN among the various sectors of Swiss society – government officials, business, academe, and media.

The highlight of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN under the Philippine coordinatorship/chairmanship was the visit to Switzerland of ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh on 12-14 September and the ASEAN Festival in the Swiss capital, Berne, on 24 September. The visit of Secretary-General Minh was the first visit to Switzerland conducted by an incumbent ASEAN Secretary-General. The ASEAN Festival was also the first of its kind to be held in Berne.

The most significant accomplishment of the Philippine chairmanship of ASEAN in Berne was, perhaps, the formal establishment of the ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB), approved on 28 August 2017 and inaugurated on 13 September 2017. This was made possible by the full support and cooperation extended by the ASEAN Heads of Mission accredited to the Swiss Confederation, the Philippine Mission in Jakarta, the ASEAN Secretariat, and the Philippine foreign ministry, particularly, the Office of European Affairs and the Office of ASEAN Affairs.

I. Interface with Swiss Federal Officials and Members of the Diplomatic Community

The Philippine Embassy in Berne, on behalf of the ASEAN embassies present in Switzerland, and in partnership with the Philippine Mission in Geneva, organized the visit to Switzerland by ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh in September 2017, as part of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN. The details of the visit are found in Part V, “*Visit of ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh to Switzerland, 12-14 September 2017*.”

The Philippines convened three (3) meetings of the ASEAN Heads of Mission accredited to Switzerland under its coordinatorship/chairmanship. The meetings were each followed by lunch during which a luncheon guest was invited to exchange/share views with the ASEAN ambassadors on developments affecting Switzerland-ASEAN relations.

At the 1/2017 ASEAN HoMs’ Meeting, the Philippines invited Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of the Asia and Pacific Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), as luncheon guest.

During lunch, Ambassador Matyassy briefed the ASEAN Ambassadors on Switzerland’s engagement in the region and its Plan of Action as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner.

At the briefing, Ambassador Matyassy discussed Switzerland’s three (3) levels of engagement in the ASEAN region: (a) bilateral, (b) regional with the CMLV,

and (c) ASEAN-Switzerland. He said that with regard to the ASEAN-Switzerland relations, proposals for cooperation should be coursed through the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta. He added that Switzerland is now ready to receive proposals through ASEC.

Ambassador Matyassy also shared Switzerland's 5-year engagement plan with ASEAN, which is divided into:

- Short-term (2017 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ASEAN) – projects for this period include:
 - (a) Conference on International Humanitarian Law which is being co-organized with the International Red Cross;
 - (b) 3rd Phase of the ASEAN-Switzerland Forestry Project to which Switzerland has allotted an additional funding support of CHF4.5MN
 - (c) ASEAN Disaster Emergency Response Simulation Exercise (ARDEX) exercise specifically for capacity building of the ASEAN Humanitarian Center
 - (d) Support for capacity building of the ASEAN Humanitarian Center (AHA)
- Ambassador Matyassy said that he visited the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR) in Jakarta and added that once ASEAN has appointed an executive director for the institute, Switzerland is willing to work with the latter.
- Apart from the AIPR, Switzerland is also considering working with the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR).
- Ambassador Matyassy also said that he visited the SEAMEO Voctech Regional Center in Brunei last year to explore the possibility of supporting the ASEC's voctech program, especially support for SMEs. The visited resulted in Switzerland sponsoring a study tour of the country in December 2016 for officials of voctec institutions across Southeast Asia. (Please see Post's faxes for details)
- Mid-/Long-term – Switzerland has three (3) priority areas for this period:
 - (a) Climate change and disaster risk reduction and management;
 - (b) Economic and development cooperation, in particular, in the field of vocational and technical education and training (TVET) - Ambassador Matyassy added that this could also be a field for South-South cooperation; and
 - (c) Human security – under which falls peace and mediation.
- Ambassador Matyassy also reiterated the FDFA's interest in working with the ASEAN in Berne on the visit to Switzerland of the Secretary-General.

The luncheon briefing provided an opportunity for the ASEAN HoMs to raise some issues/concerns/views with Ambassador Matyassy. Following is a summary of the views raised:

1. The Malaysian Ambassador asked Ambassador Matyassy how Switzerland and ASEAN could work together towards common projects, specifically raising interest in lesser developed countries (LDCs) in the ASEAN region, and working at third-country funding for LDCs to level of the economic development in the region.
2. The Ambassador of Lao PDR said that his country hopes to leave the LDC status by 2030 and to realize this, it will need support for capacity-building, education and human resource development.
3. The Ambassador of Myanmar welcomed Ambassador Matyassy's news that he will be in Myanmar in November and asked if there is a possibility of visiting the vocational technical training center in the country.
4. The Ambassador of Vietnam said that climate change-related capacity-building assistance is needed especially along the Mekong River and will greatly appreciate Switzerland's assistance in this area.
5. The Ambassador of the Philippines expressed that federalism has gained high-level interests in the Philippines, as it is one of the priority agenda of President Duterte's administration. He expressed hope that Switzerland would provide assistance on this field and initiate discussions not just with politicians but also with the executive and academe/think tanks.
6. Thailand said that it needs assistance in the areas of climate change and disaster risk reduction and management. She added that it would be good to have a sharing of experiences and best practices between Switzerland and ASEAN on these areas and in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, on bilateral and regional levels and in relation to South-South cooperation.

At the 2/2017, the Philippines invited Ambassador Henri Gétaz, Head of the Directorate for European Affairs, FDFA, and coordinator of negotiations between Switzerland and the European Union (EU). The exchange during lunch focused on the ongoing negotiations on bilateral issues between Switzerland and the EU, the impact of Brexit on the negotiations, and its possible impact on Switzerland's relations with ASEAN. The ASEAN side also took the opportunity to brief Ambassador Gétaz on member countries' trade relations with Switzerland and the negotiations on free trade agreement with EFTA.

II. Promoting Awareness of ASEAN among the Swiss Business Community, 03 May 2017

The Philippine Embassy in Berne also liaised with the Swiss Asian Chamber of Commerce (SACC) in organizing an ASEAN-centered Business Forum on 03 May 2017.

During the forum, ASEAN Ambassadors briefed the participants on economic developments and priorities in their respective countries, including investment

opportunities. The forum provided an opportunity for an exchange of views between the ASEAN embassies in Berne and the business community in Switzerland about current challenges and opportunities in doing business in the region.

III. Visit to Swiss company, Victorinox, 12 May 2017

The Philippine Embassy in Berne arranged on 12 May a visit to the iconic Victorinox Company, the maker of Swiss Army knives. Mr. Carl Elsener, Jr., Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Urs Wyss, Marketing Officer, welcomed the ASEAN Heads of Mission and the Working Group to the Victorinox headquarters in Ibach in canton Schwyz. They provided the group with an exclusive tour of the company factory. The briefing that followed gave an opportunity for the ASEAN ambassadors to inquire about the possibility of partnering with the company on apprenticeship program.

Please refer to the press release entitled, “*ASEAN Ambassadors visit iconic Swiss brand Victorinox*” (Annex A) for further details on the visit.

IV. Promoting ASEAN among the academic community and think tank/s

1. As part of its multi-sectoral approach to promote ASEAN, an event targeting the academic community was co-organized with *Explore ASEAN*¹ and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) School of Business. The information event, entitled “*ASEAN: One Identity, Multi Traits*”, was held on 06 June 2017 at the FHNW campus in Olten, Switzerland. Details of the event are contained in the press release entitled, “*Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland addresses Faculty Members and students at the University of Northwestern Switzerland*” (Annex B).
2. During the visit of the Secretary-General Minh, a meeting with Ambassador Christian Dussey, Director of the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) was arranged. During the meeting, Secretary-General Minh briefed Ambassador Dussey on developments in ASEAN. He also answered queries relating to ASEAN’s role and/or position on certain security issues and challenges facing the region. Ambassador Dussey briefed the Secretary-General on the mandate of GCSP, its projects and programs, and discussed possible projects on which the institute could partner with ASEAN.

V. Networking with the Media

In cooperation with the GCSP, an interview by Mr. Jon Mettler, editor of major Swiss regional daily, *BZ Berner Zeitung*, was arranged on the occasion of Secretary-General Minh’s engagement at the GCSP.

Attached is the press release on the interview (Annex C).

¹ *ExploreASEAN* is an international students’ project based at the FHNW’s School of Business. It was established to explore tie-ups between business students at FHNW and universities in the ASEAN region. It was conceived in 2016 following the establishment of the Southeast Asia Center at the FHNW.

Another interview was conducted by the Vietnamese media on 13th September after the Secretary-General's meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter.

VI. Visit of the ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh to Switzerland, 12-14 September 2017

A. 13 September 2017

1. Public Discussion at the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP), 11h00-14h00

The Philippine Embassy in Berne co-organized with the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) a public discussion entitled, "ASEAN at 50: Able to Meet the Asian Challenges?" on 13 September 2017. Details on the public discussion are contained in two press releases entitled, "PH coordinatorship in Berne kicks off celebration of ASEAN's 50th Anniversary with Public Discussion at GCSP with ASEAN Secretary General" (Annex D) and the GCSP release "ASEAN at 50: Able to Meet the Asian Challenge?" (Annex E).

2. Meeting with Federal Councillor and Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter²

- Secretary-General Minh appreciated FM Bulkhater's role in forging closer relations between ASEAN and Switzerland, which resulted in the conferment of the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner on Switzerland in 2016.
- FM Burkhalter said he looks forward to the continued enhancement of cooperation between the two sides. He added that Switzerland could play an important role as a mediator in addressing the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and a bigger role in providing humanitarian assistance to the affected people in Rakhine State.

He also expressed Switzerland's interest in participating in ARF activities, particularly in peace and mediation. Noting the current moratorium in admitting new participants to the ARF, Switzerland expressed interest in exploring ways by which it could participate in the activities of the forum.

² Notes shared by Mr. Phanthaly Chantharathip, Assistant Director. External Relations Division, ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC) Department.

Meeting between the ASEAN HoMs and Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of the Asia and Pacific Division, FDFA

The ASEAN HoMs got the opportunity to discuss issues with Ambassador Matyassy while Secretary-General Minh and FM Burkhalter were having a tête-à-tête. Below are the highlights of the meeting:³

- Ambassador Matyassy briefed the ASEAN HoMs and representatives about his positive experience at the recent ASEAN Ministerial Meetings in Manila, and expressed delight that Switzerland was invited to attend. He added that Switzerland is pleased to become a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN, and added that a number of projects have been realized to date.
- H.E. Andrew Chong Siong Toh, non-resident Ambassador of Singapore to Switzerland said that Singapore's focus for its ASEAN Chairmanship in 2018 is ASEAN integration and closing the gap between ASEAN member states (AMS). He added this is where Switzerland could help raise the level of education and economies of AMS so all can be integrated. He realized that this would be difficult to achieve as each AMS has different requirements on issues that they need help with. In that regard, he highlighted the need to identify priority areas on how Switzerland could help individual AMS, as the "same template" cannot be applied to all AMS.
- In response, Ambassador Matyassy said that maybe one or two AMS can help Switzerland and added that not all countries will be the recipients. He stated that Singapore and Brunei Darussalam are not eligible for help due to the countries' GDP. He added, however, that Switzerland would try to do ASEAN project benefiting as many member countries as possible.

3. Inauguration of the ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB)

The ASEAN HoMs accredited to the Swiss Confederation hosted a welcome dinner for Secretary-General Minh at the official residence of the Indonesian Ambassador, during which the ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB) was officially inaugurated. The simple ceremony was witnessed by officials from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs led by Ambassador Johannes

³ Information shared by Ms. Kelly Leong, Second Secretary, Embassy of Brunei Darussalam (based in Berlin but with jurisdiction over Switzerland). Ms. Leong attended as *Charge d'Affaires, a.i.* of her Embassy.

Matyassy, Head of the Asia and Pacific Division, members of the ASEAN Working Group and accompanying officials of the ASEAN Secretary-General.

A press release is attached (Annex F).

14 September 2017⁴

1. Meeting with State Secretary and Director of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), Ms. Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch

- State Secretary for Economic Affairs Ineichen-Fleisch said that Switzerland is looking forward to strengthening relations with ASEAN, particularly in the areas of climate change, humanitarian assistance, disaster management, social forestry, vocational education and training, as well as peace and reconciliation.

She updated Secretary-General Minh on the status of economic cooperation between Switzerland and a number of ASEAN Member States, namely Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Viet Nam, and its plan to engage with other ASEAN Member States.

She also informed the Secretary-General that Switzerland had recently opened a trade representative office in Jakarta, Indonesia.

- The two officials called for both sides to redouble efforts toward realising the untapped potentials to further deepen economic cooperation, particularly in strengthening MSMEs.
- Mme. Ineichen-Fleisch stated that it would be fruitful for European Free Trade Association (EFTA) to pursue free trade agreement with individual AMS and, in the future, explore “closer economic relations with ASEAN.” In the meantime, she proposed for the EFTA Secretariat to establish contacts with the ASEAN Secretariat.

2. Meeting with the President of the Parliamentary Friendship Group, Mr. Thomas Aeschi, MP

- Mr. Aeschi informed Secretary-General Minh of the ongoing negotiations on Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) between Switzerland and a number of ASEAN Member States, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, and Viet Nam, and inquired about the possibility of an FTA between EFTA and ASEAN.
- In response, Secretary-General Minh said that ASEAN’s current focus is on concluding the negotiations of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

⁴ Information on the results of the Secretary-General’s meeting with Swiss officials were shared by the former’s accompanying officials, Messrs. Bala Kumar Palaniappan and Phanthaly Chantharathip, respectively Director and Assistant Director, of the External Relations Division of the Political-Security (APSC) Department.

- Mr. Aeschi also proposed the establishment of contacts between the EFTA Secretariat and the ASEAN Secretariat.
- Commenting on the Secretary-General's statement that there are many layers of integration among the ASEAN member states, Mr. Aeschi mentioned Switzerland's strength in capacity building, particularly in vocational training. He explained that not everyone goes to university and the solution is to integrate these young people into the labor market coupled with theoretical training. He added that Switzerland can support ASEAN on this model which can create strong SMEs. He stated that 95% of Swiss SMEs are specialized in producing textile and small machine parts. Secretary-General Minh said that under the Philippines' ASEAN Chairmanship, SMEs development, innovation and connectivity are its priority areas. He expressed hope that both ASEAN and Switzerland can look at enhancing cooperation in these areas.⁵

Following the meeting, the ASEAN Secretary-General, ACB members and accompanying officials from the ASEAN Secretariat were invited to visit and observe the Swiss Parliament in session, where Secretary-General Minh was officially addressed by the President of the Parliament, H.E. Jürg Stahl, and was given a standing ovation by the members of the Parliament. Mr. Stahl said that Switzerland values its partnership with ASEAN, and added that said partnership would serve as an anchor and springboard for Switzerland's strengthened presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

3. Meeting with State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mme. Pascale Baeriswyl

- Both sides stressed the importance for ASEAN and Switzerland to develop concrete project proposals to implement the List of Priorities for Cooperation under the ASEAN-Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Relations for 2017-2018.
- Mme. Baeriswyl expressed Switzerland's interest in pursuing bilateral FTAs between the EFTA and ASEAN Member States as a building block towards a free trade agreement between ASEAN and the EFTA in the future. Switzerland also expressed keen interest in participating in activities of the ARF, as well as engaging the ASEAN Economic Ministers.
- In response to the humanitarian situation in Rakhine State in Myanmar, Switzerland offered humanitarian assistance to the affected people in the area and encouraged access on the ground to provide such support.

The meeting was also attended by H.E. Andrew Toh, Ambassador of Singapore to Switzerland, and H.E. Pham Hai Bang, Ambassador of Viet Nam to Switzerland. On the Swiss side, State Secretary Baeriswyl was accompanied

⁵ Information shared by Ms. Kelly Leong, Second Secretary, Embassy of Brunei Darussalam (Berlin-based), who was *Charge d'Affaires, a.i.*, the Embassy at the time of the meeting.

by Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of Asia-Pacific Division at the FDFA; Ambassador Livia Leu, Head of Bilateral Economic Relations Division of the SECO; and Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Delegate for Humanitarian Aid and Head of Swiss Humanitarian Aid of the FDFA.

4. Conference Organised by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA)⁶

The conference was opened by State Secretary Baeriswyl and participated in by Secretary-General Minh, Ambassador Livia Leu, Delegate of the Federal Council for Trade Agreements and Head of the Bilateral Economic Relations Division at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), and Ambassador Manuel Bessler, Head of the Department of Humanitarian Aid, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

- State Secretary Foreign Affairs Pascale Baeriswyl underscored the important role of regional organisations, such as ASEAN, in providing platforms for dialogue and peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as in maintaining geopolitical security architecture in the region. She welcomed the adoption of the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity (MPAC) 2025 that she believed would bring about infrastructure development, greater mobility and people-to-people contacts, and poverty reduction, among others. She also expressed Switzerland's readiness to support ASEAN Vision 2025.
- Secretary-General Minh discussed the success story of ASEAN Community building, particularly in maintaining peace and security in the region that had allowed economic growth throughout the years, and its on-going efforts to forge greater regional integration with the support from its external partners, including Switzerland.
- Ambassador Leu's presentation was focused on ASEAN's economic potential, particularly in light of the conclusion of the negotiations of the RCEP. She said Switzerland supports ASEAN's integration in the global market and toward this end, extends assistance to ASEAN. She cited Switzerland's projects in a number of countries in the region, to wit, sustainable trade in Myanmar, economic development programmes in Vietnam and Indonesia, and is bilateral economic dialogues with the Philippines, Indonesia and Myanmar. She also mentioned projects that can provide value added to ASEAN's economic development such as SMEs where Switzerland can assist.
- Ambassador Bessler underscored the role of regional organization in contributing to sustainable development and addressing climate change and natural disasters. He added that Switzerland's assistance is geared towards the provision to beneficiaries of access to international opportunities. He also said that Switzerland is committed to support ASEAN's skills development program.

⁶ Some of the notes were shared by Messrs. Palaniappan and Chantharathip.

Some of the questions raised from the floor include possible Switzerland's support in narrowing the development gap in ASEAN, implementation of Switzerland's skills development program in the region; possible role of Switzerland in helping improve the perception in some ASEAN countries about the importance of vocational-technical education; complementarity of ASEAN economies so as to lessen dependence on foreign investments; role of ASEAN in the security challenges in the region such as in managing the tensions in the South China Sea, helping find solution to the Rohingya issue, and nuclear testing in the North Korean Peninsula.

VII. ASEAN Festival in Waisenhausplatz, Berne, 24 September 2017

An ASEAN Festival was held in Waisenhausplatz, in the heart of Swiss capital Berne on 24th September as the culminating activity under the Philippine chairmanship of the ACB to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN.

The festival, which aimed to promote awareness of ASEAN in Switzerland, showcased cultural performances featuring songs, traditional dances, martial arts from the region. There were also thirty (30) stalls presenting the best of ASEAN cuisines and delicacies, native products, and a lot more. An ASEAN tent was also installed featuring visual tours of the countries that comprise the ASEAN region.

The festival was the first ever ASEAN festival of its kind held in Switzerland. Guests consisted of the ASEAN community members in Switzerland, members of the Diplomatic Corps, Swiss officials, locals, and tourists.

Details on the festival are contained in the press release entitled, "ASEAN Festival held in Berne to celebrate its 50th Anniversary" (Annex G).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the foregoing activities and of the observations made in the conduct of said activities, the Philippine chairmanship of the ACB recommends the following:

Recommendations to the ACB –

1. Maximizing benefits through the ACB

The Philippine chairmanship deems that the ACB is a very good platform for promoting awareness of ASEAN among various sectors in Switzerland – Swiss government officials; business; diplomatic community; academe; think tank; media, and the general public. Hence, an active ACB would greatly achieve this objective.

2. More interface with the ASEAN-Switzerland Parliamentary Group

There have only been three (3) partnership projects between the ASEAN in Berne and the ASEAN-Switzerland Parliamentary Group since its establishment in 2014. This includes the activities in connection with the visit of the ASEAN Secretary-General, a luncheon networking event in 2015, and the networking event on the

occasion of the launch of the Group. The ACB should interface more regularly with the Parliamentary Group and encourage the latter to help advocate for the ASEAN cause.

3. More activities geared toward promoting awareness of ASEAN among the Swiss – federal officials, media, think tank, academe, public

The Philippine chairmanship observed that the attendance at the conference organized by the FDFA on 14 September 2017 was not really as diverse and top-level; there was lack of representation from other regions, particularly from Europe, Africa and Latin America. Similarly, ambassadors from the European countries and even from the Latin American and African regions were noticeably absent. While a few sent their representatives, most of them were of mid-level rank. Moreover, there were only few questions fielded from the audience, which could either be due to the lack of information/knowledge about ASEAN as a whole or that the audience was more on a listening mode given their lack of knowledge about the region.

In view thereof, the Philippine chairmanship recommends that more informational activities about the Association be conducted in the future targeting various sectors, particularly the influencers and decision-makers.

4. More activities aimed fostering ties among ASEAN communities in Switzerland

The Philippine chairmanship was not able to hold activities that would promote more interface among various ASEAN communities in Switzerland, except through the ASEAN Festival. It would be good to foster closer ties among ASEAN communities in Switzerland to advance the concept of an ASEAN community and identity. The activities could be more informal in nature to allow greater interaction in an informal environment.

Recommendations for the ASEAN Secretariat –

The following recommendations are proffered with the objective of increasing the visibility of ASEAN in third countries such as Switzerland:

1. Consider more visits from the ASEAN Secretary-General, particularly in third countries, including partners at different levels;
2. Provide more support (including helping source funds, if possible) for increased promotional activities even in third countries;
3. Pursue cooperation with Switzerland along the three (3) areas of importance to the region:
 - (a) Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (CC/DRRM),
 - (b) Vocational-technical education and training (TVET) under economic and development cooperation, and
 - (c) Human security – peace and mediation

4. Enlist Switzerland's assistance in promoting people-centered and rule-based ASEAN community, and in achieving the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 goals and in implementing SDGs, particularly in the areas of:
 - (a) Sustainable consumption and production; and
 - (b) Sustainable energy and climate change.
5. Explore the possibility of expanding its current forestry projects in ASEAN under the ambit of CC/DRR to include early warning system, dam management, etc.
6. Explore the possibility of expanding Switzerland's current assistance on peace and security-related projects on bilateral level to an ASEAN-wide level, and linking its assistance on TVET to peace-related initiatives:
 - Swiss sector-based approach should not be totally compartmentalized, eg, TVET, while part of its development and economic cooperation with ASEAN, could also be a component of peacebuilding initiatives. This gels well with Switzerland's campaign on preventing violent extremism (PVE), which finds resonance in a number of ASEAN's initiatives to prevent the spread of violent extremism in the region. Similarly, this is in keeping with Switzerland's human rights-based approach to issues.
7. On the future direction of ASEAN- Switzerland Sectoral Dialogue Relations
 - Raise the possibility of Switzerland extending assistance to South-South cooperation projects in the ASEAN region. This will help ASEAN reduce the development gap among its members.

Note:

- The Philippines, for instance, through the Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines (TCCP), extends assistance to other developing countries in the region through capacity building projects.
 - Thailand has a similar program and has expressed interest in working with Switzerland on South-South cooperation.
 - During the 1/2017 ASEAN Heads of Mission's Meeting in Berne on 15 February 2017, Ambassador Matyassy mentioned that TVET could be a possibility of South-South cooperation. ASEAN could explore the possibility of Switzerland partnering with selected number of countries in the region to help ASEAN LDCs.
 - Lao PDR hopes to leave from the LDC Status by 2020 and will, therefore, need support for capacity-building and human resource development.
8. Recommendations arising from the Visit of Secretary-General Minh to Switzerland:
 - (a) Establish contacts between the EFTA Secretariat and the ASEAN Secretariat; and

- (b) Follow up Switzerland's expression of support for the development of ASEAN SMEs either under the SECO or the SDC program.⁷

⁷ As mentioned by Mr. Thomas Aeschi, MP, and Ambassador Livia Leu, and to a certain extent, by Ambassador Manuel Bessler when he said that Switzerland is committed to support ASEAN's skills development program.

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE ASEAN COMMITTEE IN BERNE (ACB)
(as of September 2017)

1. H.E. Mme. Rakiah Hj Abd Lamit, Ambassador of Brunei Darussalam⁸
2. H.E. Mr. Ney Sam Ol, Ambassador of Cambodia⁹
3. H.E. Mme. Linggowaty Hakim, Ambassador of Indonesia
4. H.E. Mr. Kham-inh Khitchadeth, Ambassador of Lao PDR¹⁰
5. H.E. Mr. Htin Lynn, Ambassador of Myanmar¹¹
6. H.E. Mr. Joselito A. Jimeno, Ambassador of the Philippines
7. H.E. Mr. Andrew Toh, Ambassador of Singapore¹²
8. H.E. Mr. Kittiphong Na Ranong, Ambassador of Thailand
9. H.E. Mr. Pham Hai Bang, Ambassador of Vietnam
10. Ms. Deborah Tan Sue-Yuen, Second Secretary and *Charge d'Affaires, a.i.*, Embassy of Malaysia

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

1. Indonesia – Mr. Timbul Situmorang, Minister Counsellor
2. Lao PDR – Ms. Bounphady Insisienmay, Second Secretary
3. Malaysia – Ms. Deborah Tan Sue-Yuen, Second Secretary
4. Myanmar – Ms. L. Nan Moon, Second Secretary
5. Philippines – Ms. Maria Theresa S.M. Lazaro, Minister and Consul General
6. Thailand – Ms. Jaithai Upakarnitikaset, Minister Counsellor/
Ms. Sutthathip Vathitphund, Counsellor
7. Vietnam – Mr. Dinh Ngoc Linh, Minister Counsellor

⁸ Based in Berlin, Germany.

⁹ Based in Geneva.

¹⁰ Based in Geneva.

¹¹ Based in Geneva.

¹² Based in Singapore.

ASEAN AMBASSADORS VISIT ICONIC SWISS BRAND VICTORINOX

Schwyz, 12 May 2017 – Ambassadors of the member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) accredited to Switzerland visited on Friday the iconic Swiss company Victorinox. The visit was upon the invitation of Mr. Carl Elsener, Jr, Chief Executive Officer of Victorinox, and an initiative under the Philippine coordinatorship of ASEAN.



Photo (L-R): Philippine Ambassador Joselito A. Jimeno, Victorinox CEO Carl Elsener, Jr., Thai Ambassador Kittiphong Na Ranong, Indonesian Ambassador Linggowaty Hakim, Lao Ambassador Kham-Inh Khitchdeth, Vietnamese Ambassador Pham Hai Bang

Mr. Elsener and Victorinox's Marketing Officer, Mr. Urs Wyss, welcomed the ASEAN group to the company's headquarters in Ibach in canton Schwyz, and conducted an exclusive tour of the Victorinox factory where the ASEAN group was treated to the production of the iconic Swiss knives and fine cutlery.

The tour was followed by a briefing by Mr. Elsener on the company's fascinating history, its corporate culture and the development of the iconic Victorinox' Swiss knives and the company's other products.



During the succeeding discussions with the company's officials, Ambassador Jimeno inquired about the implementation of the apprenticeship program at the company.

The officials informed the Ambassador that Victorinox takes in ten (10) trainees every year for a four-year period, during which time trainees get to hone their skills, depending on the areas/skills the company needs while receiving their salary and enabling them to acquire higher skills that will help them increase their employability at the end of their apprenticeship with the company.

Photo: Ambassador Jimeno receives a Victorinox souvenir from CEO Carl Elsener, Jr.

The ASEAN group was also treated to a visit of the Swiss Knife Valley Visitor's Center which houses a museum containing various kinds of Swiss knives that the company has produced through time, and to a video showing the milestones in the history of the knife factory.

Victorinox is the manufacturer of the well-known Swiss Army knives. Founded in 1884, the company derived its name from "Victoria", the name of the mother of its founder, Karl Elsener, and "inox" (stainless steel).

Since the company's acquisition of its rival Wenger in 2005, Victorinox has become the sole supplier of multi-purpose knives to the Swiss army.

It is the biggest manufacturer of pocket knives in the world with a daily production of 60,000 Swiss Army knives and other pocket knives. Apart from knives, Victorinox also produces watches, fine cutlery, apparel and travel gears.

The visit of the ASEAN group to Victorinox was arranged through Ms. Theresita Gauckler and Andreas Schaub of the Gauckler Travel Agency. END

PHILIPPINE AMBASSADOR TO SWITZERLAND ADDRESSES FACULTY AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHWESTERN SWITZERLAND

Olten, 06 June 2017. Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland Joselito A. Jimeno addressed the faculty and students and members of the business community at an event entitled, “ASEAN: One Identity, Multi Traits”. The event was organized by the *ExploreASEAN* and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW) School of Business.

Prof. Dr. Markus Freiburghaus, Head of Education of FHNW’s School of Business, welcomed the delegates from the ASEAN embassies in Berne. In his message, he outlined the development of the Southeast Asia program at FHNW’s School of Business and expressed hope for the continued growth of the program in the future.



Ambassador Joselito Jimeno delivers his message to the faculty and students of the University of Northwestern Switzerland

In his keynote address, Ambassador Jimeno stated that ASEAN has many faces and despite its diversity, the region strives for unity. “This diverse but complementary background is what has enabled ASEAN to weather the odds amidst the flux in the global system.

He said that the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is expected to further boost the region’s trade and make it more attractive to foreign investors.

“While ASEAN has achieved so much in 50 years, it continues to be a work in progress. As a partner, we seek Switzerland’s support to help us in our community-building efforts to realize our vision of a politically cohesive, economically integrated community,” added Ambassador Jimeno.

Ambassador Jimeno's speech was followed by a video presentation celebrating ASEAN's 50th Founding Anniversary. The presentation was then followed by a panel discussion facilitated by Prof. Dr. Freiburghaus.



Prof. Dr. Markus Freiburghaus (center) facilitates the panel discussion

During the panel discussion, Ambassador Jimeno was joined by Ambassador Linggawaty Hakim of Indonesia, Ambassador Pham Hai Bang of Vietnam, Counselor Sutthathip Vathitphund of Thailand, and Second Secretary and Charge d'Affaires, ai., Deborah Tan Sue-Yuen of Malaysia. The group shared their views on topics such as benefits from membership in ASEAN, challenges for ASEAN, free trade within the region and its trade relations with Switzerland, and prospects for ASEAN-Switzerland collaboration, among others.

The event provided an opportunity for the ASEAN group to promote ASEAN among the faculty members and business students of the FHNW, whose School of Business has a Southeast Asian Center. It also enabled the Philippines to inform the participants of the activities and priorities of its chairmanship of ASEAN.

At the closing ceremony, Prof. Dr. Crispino Bergamaschi, President of the University Board, joined the ASEAN officials and in his speech, outlined the activities of the FHNW in fostering relationships between Switzerland and the ASEAN region through university tie-ups and inclusion of ASEAN on the agenda of FHNW and its multi-degree programs with ASEAN universities.

ExploreASEAN is an international students' project based at the FHNW's School of Business. It was established to explore tie-ups between the business students at FHNW and universities in the ASEAN region. It was conceived in 2016 following the establishment of the Southeast Asia Center at the FHNW. END

«Asean lässt kein Mitglied im Stich»

LE LUONG MINH Atomkrise mit Nordkorea, territoriale Konflikte im Südchinesischen Meer, Rivalität zwischen den Grossmächten: Das 50-Jahr-Jubiläum des Verbands der Südostasiatischen Nationen (Asean) ist getrübt. Im exklusiven Interview antwortet Generalsekretär Le Luong Minh auf die drängenden Fragen.

Herr Generalsekretär, die Asean wurde 1967 ins Leben gerufen. Wegen der offensichtlichen Verschiedenheit der Gründungsmitglieder galt die Organisation damals als kaum überlebensfähig. Warum hat die Asean diesen Prognosen getrotzt?

Le Luong Minh: Vergessen wir nicht, dass die Asean zur Zeit des Kalten Krieges gegründet wurde. Südostasien war gespalten, selbst unter den fünf Gründungsmitgliedern gab es Konflikte und Spannungen. Die gemeinsame Vision einer Vereinigung aller südostasiatischen Nationen hat uns zu dem gemacht, was wir heute sind. Erreicht haben wir das mit dem Abkommen, das die Prinzipien des gegenseitigen Respekts, Unabhängigkeit, territoriale Integrität, Nichteinmischung und gegenseitige Hilfe festhält. Diese Vorgaben sind seit 2008 in der Charta der Asean fest verankert. Der malaysische Handelsminister Mustapa Mohamed rechnet damit, dass die Asean

wirtschaftlich die Europäische Union bis zum Jahr 2030 überholt. Wie hat die Organisation diese Schlagkraft bekommen?

Oft verglichen die Leute die Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft der Asean mit der EU. Es gibt Zweifel, ob wir je ein Wirtschaftsraum wie die EU werden. Das ist auch nicht das Ziel der Asean. Vielmehr wollen wir einen Einheitsmarkt und einen einheitlichen Produktionsstandort schaffen, die besser integriert und miteinander verbunden sind, aber ohne Rahmen eines supranationalen Gebildes. Die Asean ist deshalb eher eine informelle Wirtschaftsgemeinschaft, die auf Konsens beruht. Das oberste Gebot lautet: Die Gruppe lässt keinen Mitgliedsstaat im Stich. Die Asean hat im Westen den Ruf einer diskreten Organisation, die Konsens statt Taten bevorzugt. Ist das eine faire Bewertung?

Konsens ist ein fundamentales Prinzip, auf dem die Asean beruht. Die Medaille hat aber zwei Seiten: Manchmal ist es anstrengender und schwieriger, eine Übereinkunft zu finden. Auf der anderen Seite ist so sichergestellt, dass alle diesen Entscheid mittragen.

Das 50-Jahr-Jubiläum ist getrübt durch die aktuelle Nuklearkrise mit Nordkorea. Wie ernst ist die Lage für Asien und die Welt?

Unsere Haltung zur Koreanischen Halbinsel ist beständig und klar: Wir setzen uns für die Deeskalation der Spannungen ein, für die Entmilitarisierung und für die Wiederaufnahme von Gesprächen, um eine Lösung für den Konflikt zu finden. Wir haben immer Provokationen von beiden Seiten verurteilt. Und wir sind gegen Atom- und Raketenentst. Im vergangenen April hat das nordkoreanische Aussenministerium die Asean in einem Brief um Unterstützung gebeten. Wie gedenken Sie in der aktuellen Krise Ihren direkten Draht zu Pyongyang zu nutzen?

Mitgliedsstaaten der Asean unterhalten Botschaften in der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea. Als Gruppe führt die Asean Gespräche mit der Demokratischen Volksrepublik Korea im Rahmen des regionalen Forums, dem das Land angehört. Die Schweiz bietet Vermittlung im Konflikt an. Wie steht die Asean dazu?

Wir begrüssen jede Initiative oder jeden Lösungsvorschlag, der hilft, den Konflikt friedlich beizulegen.



Le Luong Minh ist seit 2013 Generalsekretär der Asean. Jean Revillard / Rizzo

Eine weitere Herausforderung im Jubiläumsjahr sind die territorialen Dispute im Südchinesischen Meer. Wie geht die Asean damit um?

Auch hier vertritt die Asean eine klare Haltung: Respekt vor internationalem Recht, eine friedliche Lösung von Konflikten, Respekt vor dem Status quo und der Verzicht auf Aktionen, die den Konflikt weiter anheizen könnten. Zudem: effiziente und volle Anwendung der Erklärung von Verhaltensregeln, welche die Asean und China im Jahr 2002 unterzeichnet haben. Und schliesslich: Abschluss eines neuen Verhaltenskodex.

Was erhoffen Sie sich davon?

Spitzediplomaten von Asean und China haben soeben die Rahmenbedingungen für einen solchen Verhaltenskodex verabschiedet. Wir wünschen uns, dass er rechtlich bindend wird. Denn wir mussten feststellen, dass es in der Erklärung Schlupflöcher gab und weitere Zwischenfälle nicht verhindert werden konnten. Die geopolitische Rivalität zwischen den USA und China in Südostasien bedroht den Zusammenhalt ebenfalls. Was erwarten Sie von den USA mit Blick auf Präsident Donald Trump – und was von China?

Die Asean als regionale Architektur ermöglicht eine Reihe von Partnerschaften, darunter mit Grossmächten wie den USA und China. Auf dieser Grundlage müssen wir unsere zentrale Bedeutung für Südostasien bewahren. Die innenpolitischen Zustände in einigen Mitgliedsstaaten werden zunehmend chaotisch und führen aus westlicher Sicht zu Verletzungen der Menschenrechte. Was tut die Asean dagegen?

Wenn wir mit unseren Partnern ausserhalb Südostasiens sprechen, sind wir oft mit einem Mangel an Informationen oder Fehlinformationen über unsere Mitglieder konfrontiert. Wir setzen uns für gegenseitige Unterstützung ein. Fordert ein Mitgliedsstaat Hilfe an, so bietet die Asean diese gern an. Wofür möchte die Asean in den kommenden fünfzig Jahren stehen?

Wahrsagen ist keine genaue Wissenschaft. Ich kann nicht die Zukunft in fünfzig Jahren prognostizieren. Aber ich kann Ihnen verraten, was die Asean bis zum Jahr 2025 vorhat. Bis dahin wollen wir eine Gemeinschaft aufbauen, die politisch kohärent, ökonomisch integriert und sozial verantwortungsvoll ist. Wenn uns das gelingt, dann wird die Asean-Gemeinschaft regelbezogener und widerstandsfähiger sein. Interview: Jon Mettler

«Japan wird versenkt»

PYONGYANG Nordkorea hat gestern erneut seinen «Feinden» gedroht. «Mit einer Atombombe» werde man Japan «versenken», teilte das nordkoreanische Friedenskomitee für Asien und Pazifik, das für Diplomatie und Propaganda zuständig ist, mit. Auch gegen die USA sollen Vergeltungsmassnahmen zum Einsatz kommen: «Lasst uns das Kernland der USA auf Asche und Dunkelheit reduzieren.» Nordkorea forderte auch die Auflösung des UNO-Sicherheitsrats, bei dem es sich um ein «Werkzeug des Teufels» handle. Der UNO-Sicherheitsrat hatte am Montag schärfere Sanktionen gegen die Diktatur in Pyongyang beschlossen. Unter anderem sollen Öllieferungen eingeschränkt werden. Japan reagierte empört auf die Drohungen. Die Erklärung sei extrem provokativ und ungeheuerlich. Sie erhöhe die Spannungen in der Region, sagte Chefkabinettssekretär Yoshihide Suga gemäss der DPA. chh

Aktivist verurteilt

HAMBURG Nach einem G-20-Protest in Hamburg Anfang Juli warf ein junger Zürcher zwei Flaschen auf Polizisten. Gestern wurde der 29-jährige Schweizer vom Hamburger Amtsgericht zu einem Jahr Haft auf Bewährung verurteilt. Der Richter sprach den Mann der versuchten gefährlichen Körperverletzung und des tätlichen Angriffs auf Vollstreckungsbeamte schuldig. Der Angeklagte hatte den Vorwurf gleich zu Beginn der Verhandlung gestanden und Reue gezeigt. Er sei am 5. Juli von Zürich nach Hamburg gefahren, um friedlich gegen den G-20-Gipfel zu demonstrieren, sagte er vor Gericht. Er sei kein Gewalttourist, gab er zu Protokoll. Am Abend nach der Demonstration sei er betrunken gewesen und habe in einer Situation die Kontrolle verloren. Der Staatsanwalt forderte eine Strafe von anderthalb Jahren auf Bewährung, die Verteidigerin sprach sich dafür aus, wegen der zweimonatigen Untersuchungshaft von einer Strafe abzusehen. sda

ZUR PERSON

Das Interview mit Le Luong Minh fand am Genfer Center für Sicherheitspolitik statt, wo der 65-jährige vergangenes Mittwoch an einer Diskussion zum 50-Jahr-Jubiläum des Verbands Südostasiatischer Nationen (Asean) teilnahm. Der vietnamesische Spitzediplomat ist seit 2013 dessen Generalsekretär.

Die Asean wurde am 8. August 1967 als Reaktion auf den Vietnamkrieg von Indonesien, Malaysia, den Philippinen, Singapur und Thailand gegründet. Seither haben sich auch Brunei, Kambodscha, Laos, Burma und Vietnam angeschlossen.

Die südostasiatischen Mitgliedsstaaten repräsentieren zusammen 625 Millionen Menschen. Die Wirtschaftskraft der Asean beträgt 2,5 Billionen oder 2500 Milliarden US-Dollar. Wäre der Verband ein Land, wäre es die sechstgrösste Volkswirtschaft hinter den USA, China, Japan, Frankreich und Deutschland.

Die Asean hat sich in den vergangenen fünfzig Jahren einen Ruf als unvoreingenommene Organisation erarbeitet, mit der sich Grossmächte wie China, Indien, Russland und die USA auf Augenhöhe austauschen. Jedoch gilt der Verband als wenig durchsetzungsfähig, da er vor allem auf Konsens aus ist. met

ZENTRALE KRAFT IN SÜDOSTASIEN



Kurden vor Abspaltung?

IRAK Die Kurden im Nordirak wollen darüber abstimmen, ob sich ein kurdischer Staat vom Land abspalten soll. Nicht nur Bagdad ist dagegen.

Das Parlament der autonomen Kurdenregion im Nordirak will heute über ein Unabhängigkeitsreferendum abstimmen. Das irakische Parlament hatte das Referendum am Dienstag abgelehnt. Gestern setzte Bagdad ein weiteres Zeichen gegen die Sezessionsbestrebungen: Es setzte den Gouverneur der Provinz Kirkuk ab, nachdem sich dieser hinter das Referendum gestellt hatte. Die 173 anwesenden Abgeordneten stimmten einstimmig für die Amtsenthebung von Najm Ed-

dine Karim. Die Teilnahme von Kirkuk an der Abstimmung ist besonders umstritten. Die östliche Provinz untersteht der Zentralregierung, wird aber auch von der Kurdenregion beansprucht.

Die Türkei warnt

Neben Bagdad lehnen auch die Türkei und der Iran das Referendum ab. Sie fürchten, dass sich ihre eigenen kurdischen Minderheiten ermutigt fühlen könnten, ebenfalls die Abspaltung anzustreben. Das türkische Aussenministerium rief das kurdische Parlament gestern erneut auf, Abstand von diesem «fehlerhaften Vorgehen» zu nehmen. Das Beharren auf dem Referendum werde «einen Preis haben». sda

Kritik an «unwürdigen» Lagern

BRÜSSEL Bundesrätin Simonetta Sommaruga kritisiert die Unterbringung von Migranten in Libyen. Sie fordert raschen Zugang für das UNHCR.

Bundesrätin Simonetta Sommaruga hat gestern beim Treffen der EU-Innenminister in Brüssel von ihren Amtskollegen gefordert, sich für den Zugang der UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe UNHCR zu den Flüchtlingslagern in Libyen einzusetzen. Denn dabei handle es sich «zum Teil um gefängnisähnliche Unterbringungen».

«Zwar sei es tatsächlich so, dass die «gefährlichen und zum Teil tödlichen Überfahrten übers Mittelmeer» in der letzten Zeit

stark zurückgegangen seien, sagte die Schweizer Justizministerin weiter. Dies sei aber nicht die Lösung. «Im Gegenteil: Wir haben sehr viele Menschen in Libyen, die unter unwürdigen Bedingungen leben.» Die europäischen Staaten hätten somit die Verantwortung, «sofort etwas für diese Menschen zu tun».

Für legale Wege nach Europa

Sommaruga begrüsst zudem die verstärkten Bemühungen um Neuansiedlungen von Schutzbedürftigen, die vom UNHCR in Drittstaaten vor Ort als Flüchtlinge anerkannt wurden, wie das Eidgenössische Justiz- und Polizeidepartement (EJPD) in ei-

nem gestern verschickten Communiqué verlautbarte. Man müsse vermehrt über solche und andere Wege der legalen Migration von Afrika nach Europa reden, sagte die Justizministerin hierzu.

Aktuell läuft ein Resettlement-Programm der EU, wodurch 40 000 Schutzbedürftige in die EU gebracht werden sollen. Noch bis Ende Woche können die EU-Staaten melden, wie viele Flüchtlinge sie aufnehmen wollen. Die Schweiz hat ebenfalls ein solches Resettlement-Programm gestartet und nimmt regelmässig Flüchtlinge auf. Bis Ende August 2017 waren es laut dem EJPD rund 2000 Personen. sda

In Kürze

IRAK Dutzende sterben bei Anschlägen

Bei einem Doppelschlag im Süden des Irak wurden gestern mindestens fünfzig Menschen getötet. Die Terrormiliz IS bekannte sich zu den Attacken. Gemäss Angaben der Regierung ereignete sich der erste Angriff in der Nähe eines Restaurants am Rand von Nassirya, anschliessend gab es einen Autobombenschlag an einem Kontrollposten. sda

BURMA Viele Geflohene sind Kinder

Die Anzahl der geflüchteten muslimischen Rohingya aus Burma steigt immer weiter. Laut der UNO befinden sich rund 400 000 Rohingya in teils völlig überfüllten Lagern in Bangladesch. Jeden Tag kämen Tausende hinzu, teilte das Kinderhilfswerk Unicef mit. Rund 60 Prozent der Geflüchteten seien Kinder. sda

PH Coordinatorship in Berne kicks off celebration of ASEAN's 50th Anniversary with Public Discussion at GCSP with ASEAN Secretary General

Geneva, 13 September 2017. ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh was Guest Speaker at the Public Discussion entitled "ASEAN at 50: Able to Meet the Asian Challenges?" co-organized by the Philippine Embassy in Berne and the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP) on 13 September 2017.



ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh with GCSP Senior Fellow and Senior Programme Advisor under Emerging Global Security Challenges, Dr. Christina Schori Liang as moderator during the Public Discussion

In his presentation, Secretary-General Minh provided a brief history of ASEAN, shared ASEAN's secret to its success and its continued relevance in the face of challenges and continuously evolving geopolitical and economic landscape in the Asia-Pacific region. He outlined ASEAN's achievements under the three pillars and the challenges facing the region. He also touched on ASEAN's external relations and its engagements with its partners. He said that the biggest success of ASEAN is the maintenance of peace and stability in the region which allows ASEAN to focus on economic development. Shifting power structures and translating ASEAN's geopolitical significance into power; navigating through its relations with regional powers for constructive engagement; responding to threats of terrorism and cybersecurity; and ensuring compliance and implementing decisions agreed upon were some of the challenges he identified facing ASEAN.

Most of the questions raised during the open discussion relate to security issues such as cybersecurity, ASEAN's position with regard to the Korean Peninsula, the South China Sea issue; and handling rivalry between the US and China, among others.

Secretary-General Minh was also interviewed by major Swiss regional daily, *BZ Berner Zeitung* and the Inter Press Service (IPS).

The event is one of the activities lined up by the Philippine Embassy in Berne under the Philippine chairmanship of ASEAN, which also coincides with the 50th Founding Anniversary of the association. END

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On 13 September 2017, The Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) warmly welcomed H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of the Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) to the Maison de la Paix.

The Secretary-General participated in a Public Discussion entitled: "ASEAN at 50: Able to Meet the Asian Challenge?" (<http://www.gcsp.ch/Events/ASEAN-at-50-Able-to-Meet-the-Asian-Challenges>) GCSP Senior Fellow and Senior Programme Advisor under Emerging Global Security Challenges, Dr Christina Schori Liang served as moderator.

This year ASEAN marks its 50th Anniversary. During his remarks at the 90-minute event, the Secretary-General discussed a number of topics including the organisation's history, current structure and goals for the future. However, he also outlined some of the threats that pose challenges to the region, namely, the rise of terrorism, extremism, shifting power structures and cyber issues.

Before opening the discussion up to the audience, the Secretary-General closed his remarks by reiterating ASEAN's main goal since its foundation 50 years ago, to be "...working on becoming a powerful contributor to peace and security in Asia and beyond".

>> Read Remarks by Secretary-General of ASEAN, H.E. Le Luong Minh, at the GCSP (/download/72

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ASEAN Committee in Berne established under PH coordinatorship and on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN

Berne, 13 September 2017. The ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB) was officially inaugurated on 13 September 2017 during the welcome dinner for ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh hosted by the Heads of Mission from member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) accredited to the Swiss Confederation.



Ambassador Joselito A. Jimeno reads the Formal Endorsement of the Establishment of ASEAN Committee in Berne signed by the ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh

In a simple ceremony, Philippine Ambassador Joselito A. Jimeno read the letter by ASEAN Secretary-General H.E. Le Luong Minh to the ASEAN Ambassadors to Switzerland informing the group of the approval by the ASEAN Foreign Ministers of the establishment of the ACB. The inauguration of the ACB was also witnessed by officials from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs led by Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of the Asia Pacific Division.

The establishment of the ACB comes on the occasion of the 50th Founding Anniversary of ASEAN, which coincides with the Philippine chairmanship of the association and the 1st-year Anniversary of Switzerland as a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN.

The establishment of the ACB is one of the major landmarks in ASEAN-Switzerland relations, which include the establishment in 2014 of the ASEAN-Switzerland Parliamentary Group, also under the Philippine coordinatorship.

The visit of ASEAN Secretary-General Minh to Switzerland is also the first visit to be conducted by an incumbent ASEAN Secretary-General.



Swiss Foreign Minister Burkhalter with ASEAN Secretary-General Minh and the ASEAN Representatives to Switzerland linking arms for the ASEAN handshake

Before the welcome dinner, ASEAN Secretary-General Minh was received by Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for a tête-à-tête. They were joined later by the ASEAN representatives to Switzerland. END

ASEAN Festival held in Berne to celebrate its 50th Anniversary

Bern, 24 September 2017. The newly-formed ASEAN Committee in Berne (ACB) held an ASEAN Festival in Waisenhausplatz, in the heart of Swiss capital. The festival was the culminating activity under the Philippine chairmanship of the ACB to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN.

The long-day event was opened by the Swiss Military Band playing a mix repertoire of modern classic pieces. It was then followed by speeches from Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland Joselito A. Jimeno, as chairman of the ACB, and a reply from Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of the Asia Pacific Division of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Swiss government.



Ambassador Joselito A. Jimeno and Ambassador Johannes Matyassy delivering their speeches

“Today is all about celebrations – as we mark our 50th birthday as a community, we, in ASEAN, wish to celebrate with our old and newfound friends, our being a family amidst our diversity,” opened Philippine Ambassador to Switzerland Joselito A. Jimeno, welcoming members of the Diplomatic community and other guests to the event.

Ambassador Jimeno added, “ASEAN has many faces. Our region embodies an interesting mix of ancient culture and progressive outlook. This diverse but complementary background is what makes ASEAN unique.”

Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, in his reply, spoke about the growing importance of ASEAN in the world today and the deepening bilateral relations between ASEAN and Switzerland. Switzerland also celebrates this year its 1st-Year Anniversary as ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Partner.



ASEAN Representatives to Switzerland and Ambassador Matyassy during the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony

The festival, which aimed to promote awareness of ASEAN in Switzerland, showcased cultural performances featuring songs, traditional dances, martial arts from the region. There were also thirty (30) stalls presenting the best of ASEAN cuisines and delicacies, native products, and a lot more. An ASEAN tent was also installed featuring visual tours of the countries that comprise the ASEAN region.



The festival was the first ever ASEAN festival of its kind held in Switzerland. END