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REGIONAL NEWS

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Editorial

Dear readers,

2019 started with a high-ranking visit: Swiss Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis traveled to South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe where he not only met with other politicians but also had the opportunity to get first-hand impressions of interesting local projects – see article.

Happy reading,

Gisela Piercey



GISELA PIERCEY,
EDITOR SWISS REVIEW
SOUTHERN AFRICA

SWISS FEDERAL COUNCILOR IGNAZIO CASSIS VISITS SA

The Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs, Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis, visited South Africa from 9 to 11 January 2019, following stays in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

During his visit, Federal Councilor Cassis travelled to the capital Pretoria, the port of Durban and Cape Town, where he participated in meetings and events. After visiting the Embassy of Switzerland in Pretoria, the Minister met with Hon Mr Pravin Gordhan, Minister of State Enterprises, and Hon Dr Zweli Mkhize, Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, in Durban.

SWISS INNOVATION IN KHAYELITSHA

Cassis' last stop in South Africa was Cape Town, where the delegation visited a development

project of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ) in the field of sustainable urban living in the township of Khayelitsha. The project aims to reshape the approach to informal settlement upgrading by offering an innovative and inclusive methodology for the fair distribution of public space, delivery of basic services, and an urbanization scheme that combines housing upgrades with a safer urban environment and new economic and social possibilities. The approach moves beyond turn-key housing solutions by focusing on the construction of living environments that integrate livelihoods programs that encompass micro-financing, renewable energy, water management, and skills training.



Structured community workshops, enumerations, affordability assessments and microfinance contracts provide the framework for upgrading existing single storey to double storey units. The resulting densification offers efficient land use to infrastructure



ratio, provides cross finance possibilities through additional rental and sales stock and most importantly fulfills the need to

Federal Councilor Ignazio Cassis with Pravin Gordhan, Minister of State Enterprises

Meeting with Minister Zweli Mkhize



FAR LEFT: Federal Councilor Cassis congratulated the winners of a competition at the "Spice Islands" exhibition in Cape Town.

LEFT: The Councilor visited the Empower Shack Project in Khayelitsha.

guarantee all residents the right to remain on site.

Additionally, the readjusted building stock, new land plot sizes and allocation of public space are designed to integrate with municipal planning frameworks. This integrated approach to planning follows principles of land-readjustment by which a structured methodology for negotiation allows the interests of all stakeholders to be addressed. Customised digital planning tools have been developed to synthesis user inputs and preferences with micro-finance obligations and municipal planning frameworks. The building units are priced to meet meaningful financial contributions from recipients by designing generous but robust living spaces and service cores that meet building code obligations through fit-for-purpose bridge contracts.

The long-term goals are to influence a new direction in housing policy and offer much needed diversity and access to housing for the gap market.

More information about the Empower Shack Project: <http://utt.com/project/empower-shack/>.

The Federal Councilor also welcomed the crew of the research vessel *Fleur de Passion* in the port of Cape Town. The ship of the Geneva-based Fondation Pacifique is on a four-year circumnavigation of the world conducting several scientific research projects. With its 33 meters, it is the largest sailing ship under the Swiss flag.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

In order to offer the best services and a comfortable reception area for the Swiss community, please be informed that renovation work will be in progress at the Embassy of Switzerland in Pretoria in the next months. Kindly note that during the renovation period, there may be longer waiting periods for consular services.

Should you have any questions in this regards, kindly contact us by e-mail at:

southernafrica@eda.admin.ch

We do apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your patience and understanding.

We are looking forward to welcoming you soon in the renovated Embassy. In the meantime, we invite you to follow us on www.instagram.com/switzerland_southafrica.



ABOVE: On 18 February, Helene Budliger Artieda, Ambassador of Switzerland to South Africa, held a presentation at the Swiss Social & Sports Club in Cape Town about "Investment and Business Climate for Foreign Direct Investors in South Africa", organized by the Swiss Connection. From left: Michael Hauser (Swiss Connection), Helene Budliger Artieda and General Consul Andreas Maager.

ASO

The 2019 March session of the ASR was held in Berne, as usual, on 23rd March. The ASO Conference is going to take place in Montreux from 16 – 18 August 2019.

E-Voting is currently a very hot topic in Switzerland and we will stay on top of it. Any new developments will be communicated in this publication. The banking saga remains an ongoing concern.

Together with my ASR colleague Marcie Bischof, we wish all Swiss Compatriots in Southern Africa all

the best going forward!

Hans-Georg Bosch, Delegierter des Auslandschweizerrats (ASR) für das südliche Afrika.

SWISS DRONE PROJECT IN AID OF CONSERVATION

After a promising first run in Namibia, a Swiss project could aid savanna conservation using drones and automatic image analysis.

To get a sense of how many animals live in a given area, game counts are typically done in real time by sharp-eyed people in vehicles. The Savmap project, started at Swiss federal technology institute EPFL and involving scientists in Switzerland, Namibia and the Netherlands, uses drones and artificial intelligence (AI) to count wild animals more efficiently.

“Human eyes are very good at detecting animals, but not at screening countless images. Computers can process a lot more data,” explains Swiss geo-information specialist Devis Tuia, who received a personal grant from Swiss National Science Foundation to form a lab to develop data science-based solutions for the use of remote sensing data in the environmental domain. This can be used to improve wildlife monitoring methods in places like Namibia, for example.

During the four-year project, which wrapped up last month, Tuia and his team built an AI system to study urban and natural environments, including extensive study on detecting animals photographed by cameras mounted on drones.

ROCKS OR ORYX?

Savannah grasslands are too dry to sustain many trees, which makes them well-suited for drone exploration. Despite the annual wet season, overgrazing and unsustainable water usage can exacerbate droughts – causing

wildlife to suffer.

The Kuzikus Wildlife Reserve in Namibia served as the test site for the Swiss project, and student researchers flew drones overhead to photograph the entire reserve in 2014 and 2015. The drones collected about 150 photos per square kilometre; the next step was sorting the images featuring animals like oryx, kudu and zebra.

“Crowdsourcing really allowed us to get started with the AI work,” says Tuia, explaining how the MicroMappers team at the Qatar Computing Research Institute provided a platform that allowed volunteers to look into the images and gather the data necessary to help the computers identify everything that looked like a large animal.

This initial phase of elimination and sorting was the longest and most painstaking. Now, with a high level of accuracy, an algorithm can flag images containing animals and discard those without.

“For the AI system to do this effectively, it can't miss a single animal. So there has to be a fairly large tolerance, even if that means generating more false positives, such as bushes wrongly identified as animals, which then have to be manually eliminated,” he says.

“In the beginning we were rather sceptical,” says reserve director Friedrich Reinhard. “The drones produce so many images that I thought it would be difficult to use.” But in fact the system made it possible for a single person to do a full count of the reserve –

which measures 100 square kilometres – within a week. Normally a team of people would have to do the job by helicopter, which is more expensive and less accurate.

“It's simple for a ranger to go through the pre-selected images and say 'yes' or 'no'. It's easing their workload rather than eliminating their job,” says Tuia.

FEAR OF POACHERS

Initially, rangers were worried about sharing images of critically endangered black rhinos out of fear that poachers would try to find them. However, the researchers were able to persuade them that the animals would have moved on by the time the images were released.

“Knowing where the animals are and how they move helps you protect them,” Tuia says, pointing out that this knowledge of wildlife behaviour was helpful for conservation. “For example, the rangers were interested to see whether they had enough food for grazing so that they could provide supplementary food if not.”

Being able to find the animals for safaris is another way of generating tourism income that can boost the local economy as well as conservation efforts. Using drones to do a wildlife census – or to detect poachers – also reduces the risk of a ranger being killed by illegal game hunters, who tend to be heavily armed.

NEXT STEPS

What needs tweaking is the AI system's ability to work with

images from different times of the day or year, taking into account longer shadows or thicker vegetation. “The system is still at a prototype level. It would also need a user interface to get onto a ranger's desktop. We're eager to see how this could be adapted to other places, like Kenya,” says Tuia, noting that there's interest in South Africa as well.

Now the Ol Pejeta Conservancy in Kenya is testing a similar system using alternating drones, one of which flies and takes photos while the other is re-charging.

Tuia, who still collaborates with his former colleagues at the University of Zurich and EPFL, is now a professor at the Laboratory of Geo-information Science and Remote Sensing at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands. He's currently working on various geodata projects to do with urban planning and land use, with a view towards shaping better cities and coping with deforestation and crop disease. www.swissinfo.ch

SWISS CLUB INFO

SWISS CLUB IN JOHANNESBURG:

Swiss Society Helvetia, 31 Moerdyk Ave, Vorna Valley, Midrand, Chairman: Mario Valli, 082 451 8040; office: Max Waspe 083 412 0161, T 0118053039, office@swissclubjhb.co.za, www.swissclubjhb.co.za, Swiss Country Club Rest. «The Courier», Wolfgang Wollauz, T/F 0118053040, C 0825610063, Tue-Sat 11-21h30 Rest./kitchen, 11-24h Bar, Sun 10-17h, T/F 011 805 3040, C 082561 0063, www.dining-out.co.za «The Courier». Please visit our website for information. Our Clubs of Society: Afro Gugge, Amicale Suisse Romande,

IMPRESSUM

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NEXT DEADLINES - 2019

| Issue | Next Deadline | Distribution |
|----------|---------------|--------------|
| SR 03/19 | 18/04/2019 | 28/05/2019 |
| SR 04/19 | 22/08/2019 | 29/11/2019 |

Boccia, Skittling Club. Associated Groups: Swiss Choir, Swiss Rifle Club, Swiss Golf, G.S.N.A. Senior Swiss Circle meets every 2nd Saturday of the month for Lunch. Swiss Ladies meet every 4th Thursday of the month for lunch. Swiss Rifle Club Johannesburg: We shoot every 4th Sat of the month, from 9am. We normally shoot two different programs, with Swiss rifles, provided by the club. Visit our Facebook site or call Daniel: 082-5699146.

SWISS CLUB IN PRETORIA:

Swiss Society Alpina, Hans-Georg Bosch, President, T 0123478310, C 0825510222, swissclub.pta@hbosch.com, Biffy van Rooyen, Secretary bvrooyen@gmail.com Facebook group: Swiss Club Alpina.

Dear Swiss Compatriots living in the greater Pretoria Area. 2019 has started well and by the time that you will read this, the AGM will have been held on 1 March. The Fondue evening will take place on 1 June, the National Day on 3rd August and the Year End Function will be on 2. November. Please diarise these dates. Looking forward to seeing many of you at the various events. The committee and I wish you all the best for 2019. Hans-Georg Bosch, President.

SWISS CLUB IN CAPE TOWN:

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C 083 297 3803. SECRETARY/ASO Representative: Marcie Bischof secretary@swissclub.co.za, aso@swissclub.co.za, catering@swissclub.co.za . C 076 389 7824. To receive the "newsflash" contact the club at catering@swissclub.co.za or on 0214348405.

The Swiss club Cape Town is open for dinner every Thursday evening. Every 1st Thursday of the month is Pensioner's Lunch. Join the Swiss Jass players every LAST thursday of the month. There is much more happening at our club, meeting friends, host a party, club events etc. For more information, please send an email to: info@swissclub.co.za . The independent Swiss Rifle Club can be found on the Swiss Club Cape Town club's website www.swissclub.co.za under rifle club and on Facebook. President: Dierk Lüthi, hdluthi@gmail.com & dierk@telkomsa.net; C 0834414626. Shooting takes place mostly at the SA Navy 'Klawer Valley' range off Red Hill road above Simon's Town. Shooting dates and times are listed on the website and on the 2 Facebook pages.

SWISS CLUB NATAL:

President Philippe Lanz C 082 4932673, T 031 765 1625, p.lanz@absamail.co.za JASS EVENINGS held second Friday of every month at the LAPA, Ethelbert Village, 5 Park Road, Malvern at 7pm. SPORT TARGET SHOOTING – held on the 4th Saturday of every month (weather permitting) at 0830 am. April 14th either Tala Game Reserve or a Breakfast at Makaranga, Kloof. BEACH BREAKFAST – May – exact date to be confirmed. CHEESE FONDUE EVENING – 13th July 2019, Augusta Estate, Gillitts. SWISS NATIONAL DAY – 28th

July 2019 at Chicken Farm, Drummond. BENVIE GARDEN, HOWICK – 29th September 2019. END OF YEAR BRAAI – 8th December 2019, AMANZIMTOTI. PRIZE JASSEN – 13th December 2019. CULINARY & FILM OR MUSIC EVENING – 25th January 2020 – Augusta Estate, Gillitts. 66th AGM – 8th March 2020. IMPORTANT NOTICE *** As certain circumstances change, it is imperative to obtain up-to-date information regarding times/venues/directions etc. Therefore, do please visit our informative WEBSITE to avoid disappointment. www.swissclubnatal.org.za

SWISS CLUB PORT ELIZABETH:

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