Minutes of the General Assembly
Niederwangen (BE), 23rd March 2013, at the Landguet Ried

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**Special Guests**

Chief Guest H. E. Ambassador Daw Penjo could not attend the General Assembly due to other pressing engagements.

- Mr. Rinchen Kuentsyl (Counsellor, Bhutan Embassy Geneva)
- Ms. Chening Peldon (Counsellor, Bhutan Embassy Geneva)
- Ms. Pema Tshomo (Second Secretary, Bhutan Embassy Geneva)
- Mr. Pradeep Itty (Head East Asia Division SDC/DEZA)
- Mr. Walter Hofer (Deputy Head East Asia Division SDC/DEZA)
- Mr. Hansruedi Pfeiffer (SDC/DEZA, new Country Director Bhutan HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation)
- Dr. Hugo Bigi (Panel Moderator)
- Ms. Thinley Lhamo (Panelist)
- Mr. Dragyl T. Dorjee (Panelist)
- Mr. Gyamtsho Tshering (Panelist)
- Mr. Tshering Dhendup (Panelist)

- Dr. György Hetényi (ETH Zurich)
- Prof. Dr. Cristina Scherrer-Staub (Universities of Lausanne and Paris)
- Ms. Regula Hanimann
- Ms. Tshering Deki Zürcher
- Mr. Sam Zürcher
- Mr. Youri Bodeux
- Ms. Donatella Riccardi

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome Address by the President, Nomination of Vote Counters and Minutes Taker
2. Minutes of General Assembly 2012
3. Annual Report by the President (verbal/approbation)
4. Presentation of Accounts 2012 and Audit Report
5. Amendments to bylaws
7. Programme and Activities 2013
8. Budget 2013, confirmation of Membership Fees and Fundraising Target
9. Additional motions by members (are to be submitted in writing to the Board at least two weeks before the date of the General Assembly)
11. Miscellaneous

**Decision 1:**

*As no additional motions were submitted to the Board, point 9 of the agenda can be skipped. The agenda is approved.*
1. **Welcome Address by the President, Nomination of Vote Counters and Minutes Taker**

   - Welcome address by Marianne Frei, President SSB
   - Welcome address by Heinz. M. Buhofer, Chairman RIPA Council and Board of Trustees Ripa Foundation as the main sponsors of Landguet Ried
   - Nomination of the Vote Counters and the Minutes Taker
     - Proposed vote counters: Rudolf Fischer and Dragyel T. Dorjee
     - Proposed minutes taker: Fabienne Grossenbacher

   **Decision 2:**
   *The proposed vote counters and minutes taker are appointed by acclamation.*

2. **Minutes of the General Assembly 2012**

   **Decision 3:**
   *The minutes of the General Assembly 2012 are approved unanimously. The President thanks the minutes taker Patrick Vogel.*

3. **Annual Report by the President**

   **Activities 2012 in Bhutan:**
   - Financial Support of two Primary Schools (Tradjiong and Barpong) in the Kheng area
   - Contributions to the Kidu Fund for the reconstruction of the Wangdueprodhang Dzong
   - Contribution to the Bhutan Nuns’ Foundation
   - Contribution to the Production of the CD “Rituals. Sacred Music and Chants” by the monks of the central monastic body from Punakha Dzong
   - Several meetings SSB board members with BSS board members
   - VII Meeting of European Friendship Associations in Thimphu by the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA, www.mfa.gov.bt). Week 1: formal meetings with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Tourism Council of Bhutan, reception of H.E. the Prime Minister Lyonchen Jigme Y Thinley, presentations of civil societies organisations, lecture by Ashi Kunzang Choden on Bhutanese cuisine. Week 2: touring to Punakha, Phobjika, Wangdi Phodrang as a sad burned out shell, Basochhu, and Royal Audience by their Majesties the King and Queen of Bhutan.

   **Activities 2012 in Switzerland:**
   - General Assembly in Lucerne with lecture by Prof. Dr. George van Driem: «The languages of Bhutan – Language family Trees and biological ancestry»
   - 2 lectures in Zurich by Dr. Françoise Pommaret
   - Obwald Kulturfestival
   - Excursion to the Tibet Museum in Gruyères
   - Presentation in Zurich and Vevey by Dr. Tashi Zangmo (Bhutan Nuns’ Foundation)
   - Photo exhibition about Leveraging and Preservation of Bhutan’s Cultural Diversity (LCD) www.bhutan-cultural-diversity.bt
   - Meetings and special programmes with a number of Bhutanese visitors
   - 14 new members (total: 208)
   - 2 Newsletters in June and December
   - 3 Board Meetings
   - Farewell lunch with H.E. Ambassador Yeshey Dorji who was leaving Geneva to go back to Bhutan
Decision 4:
The General Assembly unanimously approves the President’s annual report by acclamation.

4. Presentation of Accounts 2012/ Audit Report

The Treasurer, Rosemarie Frey, presents the Annual Accounts for 2012.

- Accumulated profit of CHF 461.42, as compared to a budgeted loss of CHF 10'505.
- Overall reduced expenses due to less money spent on representation, events and other projects than the Schoolchildren-Projects.
- The posts “Schoolchildren-Projects”, “Disaster Relief”, and “Initiative Fund” were not fully used.
- On the income side, increased member fees were adding to the good result, more books were sold, and more donations were received tied to some purposes like the production of the CD of the monks, the Bhutan Nuns’ Foundation, the medical project in Bumthang (refrigerator for blood transfusions)

Christian Rohrbach presents the Audit Report: The Auditors have checked and verified the accounts of 2012 and can state that all transactions and bookings have been done in a correct way. Therefore, no objections from the Auditors’ side were raised. The Auditors would like to thank Rosmarie Frey for a perfect job done.

Decision 5:
The General Assembly unanimously approves the annual financial statements for the year 2012. The Board is fully discharged.

5. Amendments to bylaws

The qualified majority is here necessary for the approval.

The proposed modifications (Art. 2 V amended, Art. 2 VI new, Art. 4 III amended, Art. 10 II added, and Art. 17 amended) concern the three following points:

- The charitable purpose of the society
- An update regarding the sister organisation in Bhutan BSS
- A clarification concerning the vote count of couple/family members

Decision 6:
The General Assembly approves the proposed modifications to the bylaws.


The strategy 2013 – 2015 will serve as guiding principles to the board.

Main concepts:

- Increase direct contact and personal relationships
- Avoid redundancies and duplications
- Promote direct financial effects
- Develop projects in cooperation with BSS (Civil Society Organisation) or other local organisations
- Helping people to help themselves
- Support local people's own initiatives
- Strengthen entrepreneurial groups and communities
Working concepts:
• Voluntary, honorary participation
• Team-oriented
• Gender-balanced
• Transparent
• Sustainable
• Support proactivity both in Bhutan and in Switzerland (bottom up)

Focus:
• School programme in remote areas
• Small scale businesses (community-based tourism; (local) hiking trails; dual education system)
• Cultural exchange (lectures, events, film projects, film shows)
• Networking
• Supporting the further development of the democratisation process, particularly of the participation of women
and also: Special interventions and fundraising in case of disaster

Fundraising:
• Both societies will engage in fundraising according to their preferred methods, without harming or tarnishing each other’s image.

Projects in Bhutan 2013 - 2015
• Expand the school programme
• Pilot project “Hiking Trails in Bumthang”
• Women in politics in cooperation with SDC and Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW)

7. Programme and Activities 2013

School Programme 2013:
• 3rd Request of Tradijong Community Primary School, Pangkhar Gewog, Zhemgang: CHF 2110
• 2nd Request of Barpong Community Primary School, Bijoka Gewog, Zhemgang: CHF 2110
• new: Request of Kagtong Community Primary School, Zhemgang: CHF 6516
• new: Request of Tashibi Community Primary School, Zhemgang: CHF 4811 (priv. donation for 3 years)
• new: Request of Yaragla Community Primary School (Jurmey Gewog, Mongar): CHF 6871
• new: Request of Jurmey Primary School (Jurmey Gewog, Mongar): CHF 6989
Requests came through LCD Project HELVETAS Bhutan to our sister organisation BSS. The two schools are located in one of the remotest parts of Mongar still not connected with the road.

Fundraising is foreseen in 2013 to be able to extend the school programme to the schools proposed above.

Further activities of SSB for Bhutan:
• Documentary Film about School Programme (10 – 15 min, in English); Producer / Director: Kinley Penjor
• Pilot Project “Hiking Trails in Bumthang” (Request from BSS Bumthang 2012)
• Promote greater participation by women in politics in Bhutan (Request from BSS 2011) in co-operation with BNEW and SDC
Future plans:
• Link Bhutanese schools to Swiss schools
• Extend school programme to Samtse in 2014

Programme 2013 in Switzerland:
• Annual SSB Excursion on August 31, 2013 to Tibet-Institut in Rikon
• 1 - 2 lectures / presentations, e.g.
  – “Archäologie für Bhutan / The Bhutan-Swiss Archaeology Project” (Dr. Eberhard Fischer)
  – ”Bhutan: Transition and Possibilities” (Mr. Dorji Wangchuk, London)
• Initiative “Young SSB members”

SSB supports:
Co-operation between the valley of Bumthang and the city of Zurich in the fields of zonal planning, town planning, archeology and museum conception (Decision of City Council of Zurich, February 8th 2012)

Decision 7:
After some discussion among the members the General Assembly approves the projects 2013-2015 (incl. the extension of the school programmes to 2 remote schools in Mongar).

8. Budget
With the decision to support more remote schools in Mongar with a fundraising campaign amongst the members and through contacting other sources (which is hoped to generate as much as CHF 18’000), Rosemarie Frey presents the budget and explains some key figures:
Earnings 2013: CHF 49’945
Expenses 2013: CHF 55’600

The higher amount of expenses as compared to the earnings leads to a budget deficit of CHF 9’655. This loss - and even more if necessary, can be covered with the assets, which reach this year CHF 39’000.

CHF 1’000 for initiative fund to be used on proposal of our sister organisation in Bhutan
CHF 3’500 for events
CHF 5’000 reserve for disaster relief
CHF 5’000 for small projects
CHF 25’000 for school programmes

Decision 8:
The General Assembly approves the proposed budget for 2013 and confirms the membership fees as well as the fundraising target.

Decision 9:
The General Assembly approves the proposal of the Board, if the fundraising target of CHF 18’000 in 2013 is not reached, to support the 2 schools in Mongar by closing the gap by further reducing the Society’s assets.

Decision 10:
The General Assembly approves the proposal of the Board to support the 2 schools in Mongar by transferring the required funds of CHF 14’000 by the end of March 2013 before the start of the fundraising campaign.
9. Additional motions by members

This point can be skipped, see decision 1.

10. Annual Meeting 2014

Saturday 15th March 2014, in Zurich

11. Miscellaneous

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Presentation by Mr. Pradeep Itty, Head East Asia Division, on Switzerland’s Programme with Bhutan 2013-1016 (Rounding off development cooperation)

There are three key development challenges in Bhutan:
- Consolidating the young democracy introduced in 2008 top down by HM the King, the citizens still remain to be fully convinced of this change
- Civil society and participation
- Gender and ethnic equality

Swiss cooperation with Bhutan works towards achieving three main outcomes:
- Strengthening the core institutions of democracy at central and local levels
- Fostering civil society and civic participation
- Community forest management groups practice inclusive decision-making

Bhutan is not a SDC priority country but Switzerland will continue the excellent and longstanding relations and friendship with Bhutan beyond development cooperation.

Afternoon Programme

- Address by Mr. Rinchen Kuentsyl, Counsellor, Bhutan Embassy Geneva
- Panel Discussion “Young Bhutanese living and studying in Switzerland” moderated by Dr. Hugo Bigi
  - Mr. Draygel T. Dorjee (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts)
  - Mr. Gyamtsho Tshering (HWZ Zurich)
  - Ms. Thinley Lhamo (EPFL Lausanne)
  - Mr. Tshering Dhendup (University for Bodenkultur Boku, Vienna)

Keeper of the minutes: Fabienne Grossenbacher
April 7th 2013

Annexes:
- Accounts 2012
- Budget 2013
- SDC Document
- Statement by Mr. Rinchen Kuentesyl