# Minutes of the General Assembly

**Zürich, 12th March 2016 at ETH Zürich, Sonneggstrasse 5, Zürich**

## Participants

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## Excused

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**Special Guests**

**Embassy of Bhutan**  
H.E. Ambassador Kinga Singye  
Mr. Tandin Dorji (Second Secretary)

**Bhutanese Guests**  
Bhim Maya Tamang  
Dungay Tshering  
Jigme Loday  
Kunzang Wangmo  
Phuntsho Wangchuk  
Richa Gurung  
Sangay Tenzin

**Speakers**  
H.E. Ambassador Kinga Singye  
Prof. Dr. György Hetényi  
Prof. Dr. Simon Lüw

**Swiss Guests**  
Dösseger Alain  
Haller Christoph  
Mattli Georg  
Mühlemann, Barbara  
Pletscher, Marianne

**Agenda:**

1) Opening  
2) Nomination of Vote Counters and Minutes Taker  
3) Minutes of General Assembly 2015  
4) Annual Report by the President (verbal/approval)  
5) Presentation of Accounts 2015 / Audit Report  
6) Elections  
   a. Re-election of Board members  
   b. Election of new Board members  
   c. Re-election of the President  
   d. Re-election of Auditors  
7) Programme and Activities 2016  
8) Budget 2016, confirmation of Membership Fees  
9) Additional motions by members  
10) Date and Place of next General Assembly 2017  
11) Miscellaneous

**Decision 1:**  
*The agenda is approved. No additional motions were submitted to the Board, point 9 of the agenda can be skipped.*
1. **Opening**

Marianne Frei, President of SSB, welcomes the members and guests of the Society Switzerland Bhutan. She especially welcomes the Bhutanese guests. She thanks Prof. Dr. Simon Löw for the unique possibility of conducting our annual meeting at the world-famous ETH Zürich. Since a very long time there is a strong relationship between ETH Zürich and Bhutan. Marianne Frei shows the list with the Bhutanese ETH graduates: 7 PhD, 1 Master’s Degree and 1 MAS. She also mentions their actual professional work and engagement in Bhutan or for International Organisations abroad.

Prof. Dr. Simon Löw from ETH Zürich welcomes as the host all the guests. He refers to the research of Prof. Dr. Alberto Gansser and also informs about his actual work in geological survey and possible long-term projects in Bhutan.

SSB has a total of 249 members and attending today are 40.

2. **Nomination of the Vote Counter and Minutes Taker**

- Proposed vote counters Reto Strässle and Roland Stähli, accepted
- Proposed minutes taker: Ruth Schwitter-Allenspach, accepted

**Decision 2:**

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

3. **The Minutes of the General Assembly 2015:**

See also http://www.bhutan-switzerland.org/pages/meetings.htm

**Decision 3:**

*The minutes of the General Assembly 2015 are approved unanimously. Marianne Frei thanks Ruth Schwitter-Allenspach for her excellent work.*

4. **Annual Report by the President**

**Activities 2015 in Bhutan:**

*School Programme*

SSB gave financial support to five primary schools in remote areas in Zhemgang and Mongar.

*School Exchange Programme*

The Swiss teachers Barbara Mühlemann and Christoph Schwitter initiated the school exchange programme, while they were teaching at Early Learning Centre in Thimphu. SSB found a school and a teacher in Amriswil/Switzerland. Students from Amriswil and Thimphu got in touch with each other, letters and short films were exchanged between the two groups. Similarities as well as differences in their lives could be shared. Letters and films from the two classes were displayed at the Assembly.
General Meeting of BSS
The 6th general meeting of BSS took place on 1th of August in Thimphu. The BSS board, members of the supporting group, BSS members and several Swiss guests were enjoying the very nice event at SDC premises Thimphu. RR Mario Fehr and Werner Külling addressed the assembly.

In Memoriam Karma Tobden
Swiss friends of late Karma Tobden and SSB donated money for a Buddhist statue in memory of Karma Tobden. The statue of wisdom and knowledge was installed in September 2016 in Tang Central School.

“People to People Partnership”
The Documentary “People to People Partnership” which was produced by our sister organization BBS is now on You Tube.

Events and Activities 2015 in Switzerland:

SSB Events
• General Assembly at Federal Administrative Court St. Gallen in March
• Presentation and Discussion by Dr. Saamdu Chetri: “Gross National Happiness” at Songtsen House in Zürich
• Lecture by Dr. Hans van Noord: “Melting Ice and Flash Floods. A real threat for Bhutan” in Alpines Museum of Switzerland in Berne
• One of the highlights was the visit of Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji, president BSS. A main aim of the visit was to plan the future cooperation between SSB and BSS and also to nurse the personal contact between the president of BSS and Swiss members of the society. Another aim was to give impressions and information about the various associations in Switzerland, which are a solid ground of our democracy. For Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang it was important to discuss different planned projects. He mentioned that it was also a very interesting experience for him to learn about our manifold and effective associations.

SSB Activities
• SSB Website: Relaunch February 2016: Marianne Frei thanks Hanspeter Bürgi and Peter Moser for their good work.
• SSB Facebook Site: 350 members
• SSB Members by March 1, 2016: 249 members
• 2 Newsletters in June and December, editor is Dr. Otto Stern
• 6 Board Meetings (2 meetings in presence of Lyonpo Dr. Kinzang Dorji, 1 meeting in presence of OL Dr. Pema Gyamtsho)

Various information:
• Several Bhutanese are currently studying in Switzerland.
• Many guests from Bhutan visited Switzerland in 2015.
• Meeting of H.E. Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay with representatives of the European Friendship Associations and Honorary Consuls of Bhutan in Brussels on June, 2. Lyonchhen mentioned: “Friendship can not be taken for granted but has to be nurtured and celebrated”.

Decision 4:
The General Assembly unanimously approves the President’s annual report by voting and acclamation.

5. Presentation of Accounts 2015/ Audit Report

The Treasurer, Rosmarie Frey, presents the Annual Accounts for 2015.

Balance

Income

• Accumulated profit of CHF 1’850.30 as compared to a budgeted loss of CHF 9700.
• The board in accordance with the auditors has decided to exclude the account of Bank of Bhutan from the balance. This bank-account is fully managed by BSS and contains the money-transfers from SSB to BSS. From now on, the account of Bank of Bhutan will be mentioned only pro memoria. By end of December 2015 Nu 152,584.30 were left, but some promised items for the schools will be paid and delivered only this year.
• Thanks to an increase in members (249) the total amount of member fees reached CHF 20’800. - Rosmarie Frey takes the opportunity to thank all the present members for being very reliable with paying the membership fees in time. She thanks also for the again substantial donation for Tashibi Primary School and for several additional donations.

Costs

• On the other hand SSB had fewer expenses in most of the cost-accounts.
• The website is now relaunched and nearly perfect - and it cost much less than estimated. The costs for events were rather high this year because of the visit of Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji, president of BSS, but on the other hand there were fewer expenses in representation.
• There were no expenses for Public relations this year, there might be next year.
• SSB did not support any other projects besides the schools, as there were no requests.

Audit

• Christian Rohrbach informs the Assembly that - as usual - the accounts were perfectly in order. The Auditors have checked and verified the accounts of 2015 and can state that all transactions and bookings have been done in a correct way. The Auditors would like to thank Rosmarie Frey for this perfect job.
• For details refer to the report by Christian Rohrbach and Christoph Ditzler on the website.
**Decision 5:**
The General Assembly unanimously approves the annual accounts and financial statements for the year 2015. The Executive Board is fully discharged.

**6. Elections**

**Board 2016-2018**

Resigning Board members:
Marianne Frei thanks Julia Menk for her good work on the SSB Board during the past years and for contributing so many new ideas. Also she thanks Patrick Vogel – who couldn’t attend the assembly – for his engagement on the board.

a. Re-election as Board members
   - Hanspeter Bürgi
   - Marianne Frei
   - Rosmarie Frey
   - Werner Külling
   - Ruth Schwitter

**Decision 6:**
The General Assembly re-elects unanimously the nominated members of the Board for another two years.

b. Election of new Board members
   - Regula Hanimann (Horgen), Senior HR Partner at Swiss Reinsurance Company, has a strong bond to Bhutan through travelling to the country and through supporting projects.
   - Lukas Rast (Zürich), Assistant to the President at the Federal Administrative Court (FAC) in St. Gallen, responsible for the Legal Sector Project, involved with the Bhutanese MIL students at FAC.
   - Dieter Zürcher (Uster), Partner of KEK-CDC Consultants, 1999 – 2002 as Resident Coordinator of HELVETAS in Bhutan.

**Decision 7:**
The General Assembly elects the new members of the Board unanimously.

c) Re-election of the President
Hanspeter Bürgi thanks Marianne Frei for her excellent work as the president of our board of the SSB. He appreciates her as highly dedicated and creative personality, which is invaluable for our society and the friendship between Switzerland and Bhutan. In the name of the board he recommends very much to the Assembly to re-elect Marianne Frei as the president of SSB. *Big acclamation by the Assembly.*
Decision 8:
The General Assembly re-elects Marianne Frei as President for the years 2016 to 2018.

c) Re-election of Auditors
   - Christoph Ditzler
   - Christian Rohrbach

Decision 9:
The General Assembly re-elects Christoph Ditzler and Christian Rohrbach as Auditors for the financial years 2016 to 2018.

7. Programme and activities 2016

In Bhutan
- Yangbari Primary School, Zhemgang: 1st Request
- Evaluation School Children’s Programme by BSS, MoE and DEO
- Project Evaluation “Pilot Bakery Project Bjoka PS”
- School Exchange Programme (continuation): planned
- Hiking Trail Project: planned
- Electric Fencing Programme EFP: planned
  A documentary by the National Plant Protection Centre (Bhutanese Forestry Department) is shown at the assembly to illustrate the human wildlife conflict. The request was submitted by our sister society BSS.
- Farmers Exchange Programme “on hold”:
  It is almost impossible to get permissions for persons from non-EU countries for short-term trainings in Switzerland. Quotas for trainings in 2016 are already exhausted.

Events 2016 in Switzerland
- Annual SSB Excursion on Saturday, May 28, 2016, 10.00 – ca. 16.00: Presentation by Carlo and Andreas Galmarini “Building with wood: traditional structures in Bhutan and a modern structure for a Bhutanese resident in the Zürich Zoo”. Visit of the elephant-house and Himalaya-garden in the Zürich Zoo
- Bhutanese Film Days are planned in Zurich in January/February 2017 on 2-3 afternoons and evenings.
- A presentation by Dr. Tho Ha Vinh, Programme Director GNH Center is planned in Berne in August 2016.

No further suggestions from the assembly.

Decision 10:
The General Assembly approves the program and activities for the year 2016.
8. **Budget**

Rosmarie Frey presents the budget 2016 and explains some key figures:

**Costs**
- Expenses 2016: SFR 24’200.-
- The maintenance and regular update of the website is estimated on SFR 1’500.-.
- For the planned events were initially budgeted SFR 7000.- But now, as the "Bhutanese Film-Days" take form, a "Reserve", like a "deficit-guarantee" is proposed for these Film-Days of SFR 5’000.-.
- With a promised private donation the Yangbari School can be supported 2016 again.
- It is planned to start new projects this year. Therefore FR 10'000.- are in the budget for projects

**Income**
- Earnings 2016: SFR 23’500.-
- For the member fees most probably one can expect the amount of SFR 20’000.-.
- Rosmarie Frey informs also that at the end we anticipate a loss of either SFR 700.- without the "reserve" of SFR 5000.- ’for the Bhutanese Film Day or of SFR 5’700.- with the reserve.
- She mentions that this loss can be covered with the asset which reaches this year SFR 46’353.-.
- The Board is convinced to generate enough additional income (donations, sponsorships, contributions) throughout the year to cover the expenses when actual projects will be carried out

**Decision 11:**
*The General Assembly approves the proposed budget for 2016 including the reserve of SFR 5000.- and confirms the Membership Fees by vote.*

9. **Additional motions by members**

There are no additional motions by the members.

10. **General Assembly 2017**

The Board suggests conducting the next assembly on Saturday, March 18 or 25, 2017. The venue is not yet decided.

11. **Miscellaneous**

Ernst Reinhardt is concerned about the future Swiss involvement in Bhutan. He points out the resources and knowledge in Bhutan and Switzerland should be used for the further development. He suggests a discussion and exchange for a future strategy including SSB.
Franz Gähwiler from HELVETAS mentions that in 2016 SDC will close all the programs. He informs that there will be a HELVETAS programme review in Bhutan in May 2016 by Rudolf Dannecker. Afterwards the Board of Helvetas takes decisions based on the results of the evaluation. Franz Gähwiler mentions that some SSB members will be contacted by the team leader. Marianne Frei mentions that SSB/BSS has been contacted by SDC/EDA to be involved in yearly networking meetings Bhutan – Switzerland (one year in Bhutan and one year in Switzerland).

Marianne Frei thanks for the comments and recommendations of Ernst Reinhardt and Franz Gähwiler.

The President closes the assembly around 12.00 and invites all members and guests to an aperitif followed by a lunch.

Afternoon Program

- Address by the Chief Guest H.E. Ambassador Kinga Singye, Embassy of Bhutan in Geneva
- Presentations by Prof. Dr. György Hetényi: “Mountains and Earthquakes – fieldwork and results of two geophysics projects in Bhutan”
- Presentation by Prof. Dr. Simon Löw: “Landscape Evolution and Landslide Hazards in the High Himalaya of Bhutan: A new ETH research project”

Keeper of the minutes: Schwitter-Allenspach Ruth

March 16, 2016