30-Year Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Bhutan and Switzerland

In the eve of 8 May 2015, Bhutan and Switzerland marked the anniversary of 30 years official bilateral relations in Thimphu at the Terma linca Resort & Spa. The Hon’ble Prime Minister Lyonchen Tshering Tobgay graced the diplomatic anniversary as the Guest of Honor. H.E. Johannes Matyassy, Assistant State Secretary of the Directorate of Political Affairs for Asia and Pacific led the Swiss delegation. One hundred guests representing the Royal Government of Bhutan, Constitutional bodies, the Parliament, the Embassy of Switzerland in Delhi, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, the diplomatic, international and local Swiss community, as well as local partner organizations of Swiss organizations were in attendance.

H.E. Johannes Matyassy underlined, among others, the importance of personal friendships and people-to-people contacts in the Swiss-Bhutanese relationship, starting with the exalted friendship of the late Third King of Bhutan and the entrepreneur Fritz von Schulthess. He also highlighted that the Swiss people were commemorating a host of historic anniversaries in 2015, which take a special place in the collective memory of Switzerland. These marked moments of Swiss military prowess – as well as weakness –, the paradigm of political neutrality and the foundation of Switzerland’s global humanitarian engagement.

The Chief Guest, Lyonchen Tshering Tobgay sincerely acknowledged, among others, the many achievements of Swiss-Bhutanese Cooperation, in particular of the Pro Bhutan Foundation, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Lyonchen also emphasized the evolution of the long-standing bilateral relations of Switzerland and Bhutan.

Mr. Hansruedi Pfeiffer, Country Director of Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, remarked on the occasion of Helvetas’ 40 years partnership with Bhutan the role of civil society and the concept subsidiarity as one leading principle in Swiss public affairs.

Cultural performances from both countries, including a joint musical production, enriched the evening. These were contributed by the Swiss Alpine Horn player, Mr. Thomas Rüst, the Ayang Music under its director and lead musician Mr. Jigme Drukpa and the Royal Academy of Performing Arts (RAPA).

The anniversary was organized and hosted by the Swiss Cooperation Programme Office of SDC in Thimphu.