



## Friends of Belgium - Newsletter

News from the Embassy of Belgium in Nairobi on Belgian relations with Kenya, Somalia, Madagascar, the Seychelles, the Comoros, Eritrea and UN institutions in Kenya.

### A word from your Ambassador

Dear friends of Kenya,

Last August, we celebrated our two years in Kenya and I struggle to believe that so much time has passed already! I can tell you that my family and I are very happy to be in this country and I hope that it is the same for all of you. Another few months have gone by since our last newsletter: for some of us it was a period of travels or holidays, for others maybe a move to another place, a new school, a new country... I would like to wish all the new Belgians in Kenya a heartfelt welcome. I hope that we will have the occasion to meet soon, at one of our activities.

Speaking of activities, as you will read in this newsletter, we have had quite a few successful and pleasant moments: petanque for the national day, a very warm Drink of the Belgians at Erik and Nyambura's house, a day in Kiambere with Better Globe Forestry... and there are many more to come. Do not hesitate to join those informal Belgian Club activities, it is always nice to meet new people and interact. We will have the visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Didier

Reynders in November and will take advantage of his presence to celebrate King's Day with him on 21<sup>st</sup> November. Please mark the date in your agendas! Both Minister Reynders and Prime Minister Charles Michel will attend the meetings of the Francophonie in Madagascar just after that. December will of course be the month of Saint Nicolas... If you have any suggestion of activities or wish to organize something, please contact the club.

As you will have noticed with the sending of this newsletter, Koen De

Smedt left the Embassy last August. He went back to Vienna with his family. We wish them all the best! Koen has been replaced by Ineke Rentmeesters, whom some of you know already from the Belgian Club. We wish Ineke a warm welcome to the Embassy team and look forward to a great year of activities, and communications.

Warm regards,  
Roxane de Bilderling  
Ambassador



*Ambassador Roxande de Bilderling and Richard Leakey during a Breakfast meeting at the Kifaru Residence*



## In pictures



*Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling received journalist Annemie Struyf with visitors from Davidsfonds, together with Chelenge van Rampelberg, Gina Din, Alix d'Ansembourg, and Wycliffe Muga for an interesting lunch at the residence.*



*Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling at the inauguration of the new Kenya Media Council Board*



*Ambassador Roxane de Bilderling, planting a tree at Better Globe Forestry plantation*

## Consular news

### Visa application process

– Please be informed that the application process for Schengen visa to Belgium takes at least 15 days. In addition, you should book your appointment to apply for a visa online and timely in order to ensure enough time for the visa application process. More information can be found [here](#).

### Visa section

- In case of any visa enquiries, you can now contact [nairobi.visa@diplobel.fed.be](mailto:nairobi.visa@diplobel.fed.be).

### Outsourcing visa section Nairobi

– By the end of the year the services to the public of the visa section will be outsourced. All visa applications will be received by TLS Contact Nairobi; the firm will also handle all communication concerning visa. The exact date of the launch of this new project will be announced later.

### Consular missions

– Consul Hilde Van Inthoudt will travel to Mombasa on November 3 with her European colleagues where she will provide consular services to Belgians.

A consular mission to Madagascar is scheduled in October. The Belgians registered in the Embassy will be informed of the exact dates and place of meeting by e-mail.

### Embassy closed

- The Embassy will remain closed:

- on October 20 : Mas-hujaa Day,
- On December 12 : Jamhuri Day,
- during the Christmas holidays from Monday December 26 till Tuesday January 2. On Wednesday January 3 all services will be open again.

## Diplomatic news

### Richard Leakey (KWS)

- On September 9, the Ambassador of Belgium organised an interesting breakfast meeting with Richard Leakey: conservationist, palaeontologist and chairman of Kenya Wildlife Services. In the company of other Ambassadors they exchanged thoughts on wildlife conservation, governance and the Kenyan environment.

**Belgium and UN environment: partners in Sustainable Development** - The Belgian Minister for Development

Cooperation Alexander De Croo and Un Environment Chief Erik Solheim signed a new deal to work together on implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

They also discussed Belgium's foreign environmental priorities, including the impact of conflicts on the environment in the African Great Lakes Region, the role of the private sector, digital innovation and the progress of international cooperation in more fragile countries – a topic of great interest for



Belgium. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an essential partner in Belgium's multilateral cooperation. Over the period 2013-2016, our country contributed more than €16 million to the organisation, of which more than €4 million was given in 2016 alone. Belgium was the 8th biggest donor to the Environment Fund in 2015.

**Inauguration of the new Kenya Media Council Board**– The new board members, appointed by the Cabinet Secretary Information Communications and Technology (ICT) Mr. Joe Mucheru as per the

provision of the Media Council Act 2013, will serve for three years. The function was hosted by Media Council with support from the delegation of the European Union to Kenya.

**Belgium contributes to the UN Peace building Fund**- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders announced in New York (USA) a contribution of Belgium amounting 500.000 Euros to the United Nations Peace Building Fund. Belgium thus confirms its commitment towards conflict prevention and durable peace in fragile countries

**International Peace Day** - September 21 was not only the International Peace Day, but also the Anniversary of the Westgate attack . A time to remember and to unite for peace and against hate and extremism

**Did you know...**

**That you can still vote for your favorite picture of Belgium?**

You can vote from the preselection of twenty photos of the Photo contest #Focus on Belgium. Voting is done by giving a simple 'like' to the picture. Other reaction buttons will not be included in the results. Voting runs until the 30th of September at 17h.

Find the FB link [here](#)



**Belgian corner**

**Belgian Night** - After the 'summer break', Erik Geenen kicked off the first Belgian Night at a Kenyan style culinary evening in his garden in Loresho! The next Belgian Night will be hosted by our Consul Hilde on September 30. Check your Belgian Club calendar mail for RSVP details!

**Visit Better Globe Forestry plantation in Kiambere** - On September 18, a convoy of 7 cars filled with adventurous Belgians who woke up really early, travelled to Kiambere to visit the plantation of Better Globe Forestry, a project eradicating poverty and improving the environment. After a small walk and interesting explanations, all participants had fun planting some trees, followed by a delicious BBQ! Tired but inspired by this unique experience, the convoy returned to Nairobi. This event was organised by the Belgian Club. Check out the pictures on our FB

pages: Belgians in Kenya.

**National Day July 21** - The Embassy of Belgium invited all Belgians to celebrate the National Day at the Windsor Hotel for a small petanque tournament, and tasty Belgian dishes!

**Save the date for:**

- Kingsday on Nov 21!
- Saint Nicolas/Sinterklaas on Dec 4

**Trophées des Belges du bout du monde** - The RTBF is looking for Belgians abroad who established original and positive projects. There are 5 different categories: culture, art of living, solidarity, economy, and new technologies. Deadline to subscribe is September 30!

More info: [www.rtbf.be/tropheesdesbelges](http://www.rtbf.be/tropheesdesbelges)

**October 7: Screening of 'The Invisible City** - All Belgians are invited at the Lord Erroll in Runda starting 7pm. More info on our FB pages!.



The yearly petanque tradition during the Belgian National Day at Windsor Hotel



The Belgian Club listening attentively to forest expert Jan at the Better Globe Forestry plantation in Kiambere



**What brought you to Kenya ?**

As a medicine student, I was always passionate about working abroad in development countries. This passion brought me as an intern student in many places around the world. In 1985, being a young graduated gynecologist, I came to Kenya for the first time, to join Peter Piot's research team at the University of Nairobi. As a researcher I got the opportunity to work in Pumwani Maternity Hospital, the largest maternity in the world, here in the suburbs of Nairobi, where every day 80 to 100 women are giving birth. My research project on HIV and women has opened my eyes to other important health topics such as maternal mortality, stillbirth, gender inequality, violence against women, and to fight for better health and rights for women and children. Instead of 1 year, I stayed 5 years, but when I returned to Belgium, I realized I had fallen in love with Kenya and wanted to continue our collaboration. I established the **International Centre for Reproductive Health** (ICRH) in 1994 an organization that aims to improve women's health and rights in the widest sense; not only in Africa, but also in Latin-America, Asia and Europe. I became Professor OB/GYN in Ghent, was elected as Senator in the Belgian Parliament in 2007, and joined WHO in 2012 as Director Reproductive Health and Research. After retiring from WHO, early 2016, I got the opportunity to return to my 'old love': doing research and teaching in Kenya, at the Aga Khan University in



Nairobi.

**What does your work at Aga Khan Development Network entail?**

I'm Chair of the Gynaecology department at the Aga Khan University Hospital, and Director of the Centre of Excellence for Women, Children, Adolescents, Aga Khan University East-Africa where I do lead research and capacity strengthening in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

**You refer to Kenya as your second home country; what do you like so much about Kenya?**

My heart is in Kenya, ever since I arrived here for the first time thirty years ago. Kenyans are people who embrace life. I admire the strong African women in particular whose personal, social and economic situation is far more difficult than ours in the West, but who, despite all that, enjoy the small things in life. Their stories of warmth, solidarity and friendship make me sometimes feel

ashamed on us spoiled whining. In addition, Kenya is progressing rapidly, has a new progressive Constitution with respect for human rights and the potential to become a shining jewel on the African Crown .

**Do you have any advice for countrymen moving to Kenya?**

Don't judge too quickly! Try to understand Kenya first before making critical judgments about Kenyan habits, culture, politics or way of life, based on our western point of view. Belgians who move to Kenya are here by their own choice, so use this freedom to look at Kenya with a broad view and to enjoy Kenyan friendship, lifestyle, food and the beautiful landscapes!

If you are interested in Marleen's experiences in Kenya, read her latest book: 'mama Daktari'

If you want to learn more about ICRH: <http://icrh.org/>

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