

**Full Speech of Mr. Yves Nicolet, The Consul-
General of Switzerland Consulate, Lagos, on
occasion the commemoration of Swiss National
Day, Sunday 1st August 2017**

Dear colleagues, Dear compatriots, Dear friends, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you heard our national anthem was sung in our three official languages, German, French and Italian. But for everyone to understand, I will continue my speech in English, even though this language is not a national language in our country. Indeed, as you all know, Switzerland is located in the middle of Europe and is surrounded by the French, Italian and German cultures. This had an impact on the composition of Switzerland which has several communities with different languages: French, German, Italian and Romansch.

First of all, I thank my wife, my children and Joseph for the marvelous interpretation of both anthems. I would also like to warmly thank the staff of the Consulate General who worked hard to organize this event. Many thanks are going to the Orfay Event, for the logistics and Chocolat Royal for the buffet. I will not forget the Swiss Club of Nigeria, which is a very old organization, still alive, despite the decrease in number of the Swiss community in this country, which offers us tonight one of the most popular Swiss culinary specialties: “La Raclette” that you will have the pleasure to taste immediately after my speech.

Today, we are celebrating the 726th anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation. In fact, we officially commemorate the Swiss National Day on the 1st of August and you might think that we are three days in advance. But the pact signed by the three leaders of the first three cantons – the act establishing the Swiss Confederation – states that it was signed “at the beginning of the month of August 1291”. We are not making a blunder if we are not celebrating the Swiss National Day on the 1st of August.

Since 1291, our country has certainly changed. It no longer comprises 3 cantons but 26. Its territory expanded, until it reached its final size in 1815. Despite the political stability in our country, things are always changing but fortunately in the respect of the democracy, of the minorities and without fights. A very recent event, which had a very big echo in my country, was the popular decision of the population of a small town of 7600 inhabitants called Moutier, to change cantons from Berne to Jura in the last month of June. I believe that the way this election was conducted can be emulated by a lot of countries, regions or provinces worldwide. Particularly at a time of resurgence of nationalism, separatism, differences, etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests,

The engagement of Switzerland in Nigeria is guided by the vision that this country will be an example of a peaceful multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious society in the same model that we have the privilege to know in Switzerland for centuries. Mixedness, mixture of races, beliefs and traditions are the wealth of a society. This is all the more true at a time when the obscurantism of every edge re-emerges. Nigeria, because of its primordial importance in Africa, must serve as a leader in this field and I am pleased to note that in this country, even if it is not without difficulties and problems, tolerance towards others is exemplary.

I have been here for almost two years now and during this period we have been trying to strengthen our bilateral relations especially in the economy and culture. In the last two years, I was very proud to see five new companies that took the decision to open a branch office here in Lagos, despite the difficult economic period for Nigeria. This is a very positive sign and let's hope that as soon as the recession ends in this country we will have a lot of companies that will show a big interest for the Nigerian market. And as we all are convinced, this improvement in the economy is for very soon. I am sure that before I leave Lagos in 2020 I will have the great satisfaction to see a lot of new Swiss companies here. But I am still convinced that this is the right moment to come to Nigeria. The first to come will be the first to be served. The competition is actually not yet too hard. That is the reason why I have the objective to convince our companies to invest in Nigeria now. In this perspective, we will organize in October,

Nigerian days in Switzerland (in the three linguistic regions of Switzerland) inviting Swiss companies that could be interested in investing in Nigeria.

It is also very clear that the volume of our bilateral trade must increase and I am here with the goal to reaching this objective.

The bilateral trade between our two countries exists but is still quite weak. I am convinced that we can increase our commercial relationship and bring more Swiss products to Nigeria as well as more Nigerian goods to Switzerland. Actually, 95 percent of the importation from Nigeria to Switzerland consists of crude oil. Even if our import of crude oil from Nigeria increased substantially in 2017 (from 33 percent in 2016 to 45 percent in 2017 of the whole import of crude oil to Switzerland), I really hope to diversify the bilateral exchanges between our two countries and in both directions.

In conclusion, I also want to just mention the fact that in 2016, we were able to be found a Swiss Nigerian Business Council. Our membership base ranges from the small and medium enterprises to large scale multinational corporations and government agencies. We have the ambition to organize workshops, business luncheons, seminars, trade missions, members' evening and other such activities that aid trade and investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished guests,

As it is the tradition in my country, before opening the buffet, we will now hear the speech of the **President of the Swiss Confederation Mrs. Doris Leuthard** on the occasion of the commemoration of the foundation of our nation.

I wish you, a happy National Day in our four national languages.

Ich wünsche'n Ihne a guetn 1. August.

Je vous souhaite un excellent premier août.

Auguro a tutti un piacevole primo d'agosto.

Eu as giavüsch ün excellent prüm auost.