



## Local Newsletter of the Embassy of Belgium in Islamabad Issue 6 – March 2015

### A message from the Ambassador

Dear friends,

I have the pleasure to present you the sixth issue of our newsletter, the first one of this year.

As usual, the past three months have been quite busy at the Embassy with visits to Karachi and Gujranwala, my return to Brussels to take part in the diplomatic days, the Embassy's support to the partaking of the University of Hasselt in the Dawn Education Expo and, most recently, the organization of the week of the *Francophonie* in Islamabad.

On top of that, with the official closure of the Embassy of Belgium in Kabul on 23 January, Afghanistan has been added to the jurisdiction of this Embassy. This means that we are now the diplomatic representation of Belgium that is responsible for both Pakistan and Afghanistan. I take this opportunity to warmly welcome the readers of this newsletter who are based in Afghanistan and assure them of the good services of this Embassy.

With best regards,

Peter Claes  
Ambassador of Belgium

### The Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan visits Belgium

During an official visit to Belgium, His Excellency Syed Nayyar Hussain Bokhari, Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan, met with his Belgian counterpart, Ms. Christine Defraigne. On January 29<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Bokhari was officially received in the Senate and had a fruitful discussion with Ms. Defraigne and a number of other Senators on issues such as enhancing bilateral relations and strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation.





### Belgium participates in the Week of the Francophonie

From 13 to 20 March, the Belgian Embassy participated in the Francophonie Festival in Islamabad, an annual event that is co-organised by the member, observer and associate countries of the *International Organisation of the Francophonie*. The so-called “Semaine de la Francophonie” celebrates the great cultural diversity of these countries, bound by a common heritage based on the French language, and offers the public glimpses of different kinds of history, artistic creativity, cultural heritage and traditions. More than twenty countries contributed to a series of events, from a film festival and food stalls to a common exhibition. Both Radio City FM and PTV World covered the festival, together with the written press.



Ambassador Claes had the honour of delivering the welcome speech at the opening reception of the week, which was held on 16 March in the *Pakistan National Council of the Arts* (PNCA). He emphasised the importance of cultural diversity and respect and also thanked the Government of Pakistan and the PNCA in particular, for their valuable support to make the festival possible.



At the film festival in the same PNCA, the Embassy showed the acclaimed Belgian film ‘Tango Libre’, a 2012 black comedy film which received a record number of ten nominations at the Magritte Awards, one of the most important prizes of Belgium’s film industry. Some 50 people came to the screening on Thursday 19 March.

At PNCA, there was also an eclectic series of exhibitions provided by some of the participating countries. In the case of Belgium, it was a fine arts exhibition (dubbed

“Conversation”) that was prepared over the last year, featuring on the one hand 19 reproductions of some of the most valuable miniature manuscripts safeguarded in the Royal Library in Brussels and 23 authentic works of art prepared by students and miniaturists of the *Pakistan National College of Arts* in Lahore, thereby re-interpreting the original 14th-15th century Belgian masterpieces. The result of this cross-border cooperation was both beautiful and surprising.

Finally the Embassy encouraged local schools in Islamabad to develop educational activities around aspects of the French language culture and contributed with a number of attractive prizes for the laureates of various competitions.

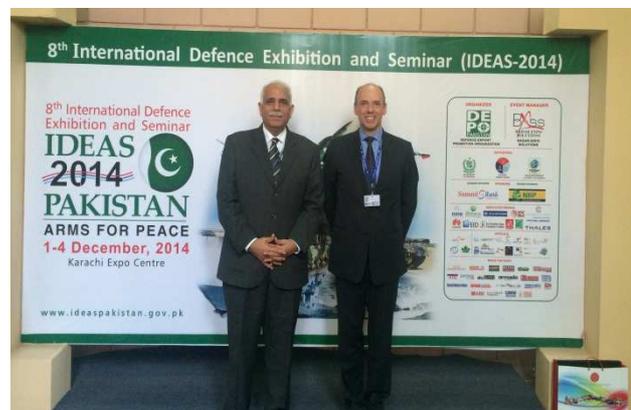


### **King’s Day reception in Karachi**

On December 4<sup>th</sup> the Honorary Consul of Belgium in Karachi, Mr. Sadruddin Hashwani, organised a reception in the Marriott Hotel in Karachi at the occasion of King’s Day. The well-attended reception was the Karachi counterpart of the reception in Islamabad, held in November last year, and showed the importance that Belgium attaches to Karachi and the great esteem Karachites hold for Belgium. Besides the Belgian community, the elite of Karachi and the Consular corps, Belgian business people visiting Karachi participated in the reception; they included EXMAR which will be responsible for the reception and gasification of the LNG Pakistan will import from Qatar.

### **Belgium participates in the International Defense Exhibition IDEAS 2014**

Ambassador Claes and Trade Commissioner Husain welcomed the Belgian participants in the 8<sup>th</sup> International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) which took place from 1 to 4 December in Karachi. The Ambassador visited the exhibition and interacted with longstanding and future partners in Pakistan of Belgium’s defence industry. The Ambassador also met with the Secretary Defence Production at the Exhibition to discuss bilateral cooperation between both countries.



## Belgium at the Dawn Education Expo in Islamabad and Lahore

Just as last year, the University of Hasselt participated in the *Dawn Education Expo*, Pakistan's largest and most renowned education fair. The University had a stand at the events in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi where two representatives promoted the Master Programme in Transportation Sciences, one of the three Masters that are taught in English. The stand was a huge success with hundreds of curious students asking questions about the content of the programme, the admission procedure and the job prospects.



This year too, the Embassy fully supported the participation of Hasselt. Consul and deputy head of mission Johan Casaer and diplomatic collaborator Karel Van Hecke helped to man the stand of the university in Islamabad and Lahore and gave the interested students more information about the opportunities and practicalities of studying and living in Belgium.

The Embassy strongly believes in so-called academic diplomacy: the idea that the institutionalised cooperation between Belgian and Pakistani universities improves the mutual understanding between the countries and contributes to a higher level of education. Based on an agreement between Hasselt University and the Higher Education Council of Pakistan, 27 Pakistani students are currently studying in Hasselt.



## “Diplomatic days” in Brussels

All Belgian ambassadors, consuls-general and permanent representatives to international organizations met in Brussels to discuss Belgian diplomacy. This took place during the annual “**Diplomatic Days**” which were held from 2 to 6 February 2015. The heads of diplomatic missions developed their contacts with political, business and academic circles as well as with civil society in Belgium.



The opening session of the Diplomatic Days 2015 focused on the multiplication of crises and challenges in the European neighborhood. The European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerckhove, was the guest of honor.

More than 200 appointments were made between businessmen and diplomats for the "Meet the Ambassador" event. Ambassador Claes met with 8 company delegations interested to invest in Pakistan and informed them about specific possibilities and assured them of the active support of the Embassy in their endeavours.



One entire day was dedicated to economic diplomacy, from a Belgian point of view with a presentation by the Degroof bank and the Bruegel think tank, as well as from a European point of view with a speech by the Director General Trade of the European Commission. The Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (FEB), the Walloon union of enterprises (UWE), the Brussels chamber of commerce (BECI), the Flemish network of enterprises (VOKA) and the Belgian food industry association (Fevia) created a networking platform for ambassadors. The day before, Brussels Airlines organized a session 'Ebola is not Africa', on positive changes in Africa. The week ended with the traditional photo of the Ambassadors during the reception at the Royal Palace with Their Majesties King Philippe and Queen Mathilde.

Around the world and on every continent, Belgium has 86 ambassadors, 21 consuls general and 8 permanent representatives to international organizations. Every day they promote the values and interests of Belgium, and they serve the 500,000 Belgians established abroad, as well as numerous compatriots travelling internationally.



With a network of over 100 career posts around the world and on every continent, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promotes the interests and values of Belgium among its partners and in international organizations.

### **Afghanistan added to the jurisdiction of the Embassy**

The Embassy of Belgium in Kabul has been officially closed on 23 January. Since that day Afghanistan is part of the jurisdiction of this Embassy. This means that we are now the diplomatic representation of Belgium responsible for both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The closure is part of a larger reorganization of the Belgian diplomatic network. Indeed, following a decision of the Government, a total of eighteen Belgian diplomatic and consular

missions abroad have been closed over the past weeks. This decision was taken in the context of a broader effort of rationalization of the diplomatic network, based on objective studies, in order to enable the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue carrying out its tasks in a context of budgetary restraint. However, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Reynders stresses the importance of maintaining regular contacts in the concerned countries. Belgians will continue to receive services at the best possible level. This rationalization is carried out with the intention of preserving the effectiveness of the network of the Belgian diplomatic missions. This network is a strong asset in defending the economic, political and consular interests of our country, one of the most globalized in the world.

### **Visit to the Chamber of Commerce of Gujranwala**

Together with Trade Commissioner Abid Hussain, the Ambassador traveled to Gujranwala on 2 March to meet with the local chamber of commerce and open a catalogue exhibition destined to familiarize the business community of this thriving economic center of the Punjab with Belgian specialized products and forge useful business contacts.



### **Ambassador's speech at the English-Speaking Union in Karachi**

During a visit to Karachi in December last year, the Ambassador gave a speech to the English-speaking Union of Karachi on the role of Belgium at the start of the First World War. His speech was meant to mark the centenary of the start of this devastating war. The Ambassador explained to the audience how Belgium tried to maintain its neutrality in the first days of the war but was compelled to defend its territory when Germany brutally invaded the country without warning and, despite being a major battlefield of the war with hundreds of thousands of casualties, still refused to join an alliance. This explains to a large part, said the Ambassador, why Belgium fully invested in multilateralism after the Second World War when it suffered the same fate, and became a founding member of the UN, NATO and the EU.



## **Meeting with the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations**

On December 4<sup>th</sup>, the Ambassador was invited by the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations for an interactive session on “Pakistan – Belgium Relations”. The Ambassador delivered a key-note speech about Belgian foreign policy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, embedded in both the multilateral frameworks of United Nations, European Union and NATO, but supported by an extensive bilateral network. He explained how this framework is translated in Belgium’s relations with, and its Embassy’s work in Pakistan and elaborated the various areas of activity of the Embassy to substantially promote bilateral relations.

## **Belgian catalogues exhibition at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

While in Karachi, the Ambassador also attended the inauguration ceremony of the Belgian Catalogues exhibition at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) on 3 March. The exhibition was organized by the Embassy’s Trade Commissioner, Mr. Abid Husain and his staff and was very well received and attended. In his speech to the members of the chamber, the Ambassador discussed the future course of Pakistan’s economy and the potential for further cooperation between Pakistan and Belgium.



## **Belgium ranks fourth in the Innovation Index 2014**

For the third year in a row, Belgium takes up the fourth place in the Innovation Index. With this fourth place, Belgium outclasses the Netherlands (8th), France (17th) and Germany (6th).

The Innovation Index is a study executed by a consortium of three research institutes: the *Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research*, the *Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW)* and the *Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (MERIT)*. This consortium analyses 35 countries on the following domains: economy, science, education, government and society. The Innovation Index is composed out of 38 individual indicators to conclude on the capacity for innovation of a nation.

According to the study, Belgium takes up the 4th place in the ranking thanks to its large number of hidden champions in the small industrial subcontracting markets and thanks to the fact that the Belgian innovation system is very balanced.

## **Brussels figures in the top 15 cities most appreciated**

According to the Reputation Institute, global leader in consulting, Brussels has a better reputation than Paris or Rome. In one year, the capital of Europe has moved from 28th to 13th place.

Conducted for four years, over a hundred cities in the world whole, the study is based on interviews with 19,000 citizens from the G8 countries.

Among the highlights of Brussels figures its attractiveness to the business world, thanks to the presence of European institutions.

## **More than 10.000 likes for our Facebook page**

Only a few months after the Embassy entered the realm of social media, its page on Facebook already managed to receive more than 10.000 likes, the large majority of them coming from Pakistani people. On this page you will find more information about the activities of the Embassy as well as of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels.