



Message from the Ambassador

Christmas is more than just a festive season; it’s a time when the warmth of togetherness embraces us, bringing family, friends and communities closer. In a world so often marked by division, Christmas reminds us of the power of unity. In our fast-paced lives, this season encourages us to slow down, appreciate the moment, and cherish the company of our loved ones.

This aligns with Swedish fika’s ideas, so ingrained in Swedish culture that most companies add a contract clause stating that employees are entitled to fully paid “fika-breaks”. Sweden ranks as one of the most competitive countries in the world. We are rated highly for innovation, sustainability, equality, happiness, and well-being. The importance of a “fika-break” cannot be underestimated, as it is a pleasant moment for social interaction and creativity.

Welcome to a quick read during fika. Merry Christmas, and may 2024 be filled with joy and happiness.

Hakan Juhelt

FIKA DURING CHRISTMAS

EXCHANGE WITH CHRIS HANI HOSPITAL



Swedish medical doctors recently visited the Embassy for a debrief on their work at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. As the third biggest hospital in the world with the busiest trauma unit, Baragwanath has become vital to growing bilateral agreements between Swedish and South African medical staff.

The agreements aim to share medical knowledge, training and capacity building in Swedish and South African hospital, inspiring a new era of cross-cultural collaboration and innovation in healthcare.

WELCOME RECEPTION TO NEW COLLEAGUES



As September ushered in Spring in South Africa, we welcomed new team members to the Embassy. The Ambassador hosted a welcome reception for, Martin Jörnruud, Trade & Economic Affairs Officer, in the Political and Economic Section and Markus Larsson, Regional Adviser on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights in the Development Cooperation Section.



SWEDISH BUSINESSES LUNCH



The Swedish business community in South Africa is growing. Recently, we hosted one of our recurrent lunches for representatives of Swedish companies in the country, to discuss challenges and explore new horizons for growth and collaboration.

With 80 Swedish companies registered, we represent 400 renowned brands and with a trade value of USD 1.2 billion annually. The impact of Swedish investments is most keenly felt by the 12,000 South Africans employed by these companies. This growth is a testament to the thriving business relationship between Sweden and South Africa.

AMBASSADORS ANNUAL MEETING IN SWEDEN

The excitement was palpable as the Ambassador joined the 82 Swedish Ambassadors from around the globe for the Annual Ambassadors meeting held in Stockholm. The event started with an opening address by the HRH The Crown Princess Victoria.



To re-affirm Sweden's solidarity with the people of Ukraine and Belarus, the leader of the opposition, Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, delivered a speech to the ambassadors.



HERITAGE DAY



The Embassy staff celebrated Heritage Day on 21 September by paying tribute to South Africa's and Sweden's rich cultural heritage and customs. During September, South Africans will host various events to immerse themselves in discussions on the values and traditions that make up the rainbow nation.



19TH ANNUAL SOWETO PRIDE

Now in its 19th year, Soweto Pride was started by the Forum for the Empowerment of Women to create a safe and welcoming space for individuals of all genders and sexual orientations. Joining our colleagues from the European Union, we marched alongside the LGBTIQ+ community of Soweto to show support as they created visibility and amplified their voices and challenges. Soweto Pride has grown over the years, with not only members of the LGBTIQ+ community participating but also their families, friends, and allies taking part. Sweden champions human rights and is a proud ally to LGBTIQ+ people; we participate in Soweto and Cape Town Pride. Standing in allyship, we can ensure that human rights apply to everyone, everywhere.



RAISING AWARENESS OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Further affirming Sweden's support for the people of Ukraine, the Embassy hosted a two-day programme for Prof Oleksiy Haran, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy and Charlotta Rodhe, Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies. Prof Haran and Rodhe had the opportunity to engage with decision-makers, academics and students, and met with media outlets. On the first day, the Embassy hosted a lunch meeting with influential partners in the political sphere, Think tank representatives and academia to discuss the prospects of lasting peace in Ukraine and the role that South Africa can play. The first day ended with a panel discussion co-hosted with the The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) titled "Russia's war against Ukraine: Where do we stand? Does South Africa provide a pathway for peace?" Government representatives, CSOs members of the diplomatic corps, think tanks, and universities were in attendance. The second day was spent at University of Pretoria talking to students on the war from a right to development perspective.



INTER-FAITH TALKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

Sweden has identified the promotion of respect for and enjoyment of SRHR as fundamental to advancing human rights. Although this is a goal widely agreed upon, there is a need to respond to polarisation and pushback against human rights- especially when it threatens gender equality and the freedom of LGBTIQ+ persons to live without discrimination and violence. Working proactively, we organised an inter-faith lunch to speak with religious and secular leaders working to protect human rights and gender equality. Bringing this diverse group of leaders together for dialogue, exchanging ideas and honest reflections about challenges.



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DISCUSSIONS ON SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In September, the Embassy buzzed with energy as we brought together regional sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) partners for a two-day meeting. On the agenda was results-based management, partnerships and resistance against SRHR. The goal was to create a space for partners to connect, share lessons and spark synergies. SRHR has taken centre stage in Sweden's priorities as part of our commitment to gender equality and human rights. Following others, we have defined SRHR holistically, encompassing all aspects of sexuality and reproduction. This positive approach emphasises the role of pleasurable relationships, trust and communication in promoting overall well-being. Armed with this mandate, we are working with partners across the region to ensure that all individuals have a right to make decisions over their bodies and access services that support this right. In the coming years, we are optimistic that results obtained from our partnerships will further promote respect for bodily integrity, freedom from reproductive coercion and reduce maternal mortality whilst providing everyone with lifetime access to information and resources that will enable them to obtain sexual and reproductive care.



EMBASSY VISITING HOEDSPRUIT

In November, the Embassy travelled to the Southern African Wildlife, located in the Kruger National Park, to attend the closing ceremony of a training program where several Swedish entities, such as the Swedish Defense Academy, Police, Linköping University, and AI Sweden, were invited to participate. The program aims to enhance the capacity of rangers from Angola, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe to drive nature conservation. Beyond this laudable goal, the attendees focused on collaborating to prevent and prosecute poaching and cross-border wildlife trade. As criminal networks are becoming multi-faceted, involving wildlife crimes, human trafficking and weapon smuggling, such collaborations will prove to be vital for protecting nature and people.



NOBEL SYMPOSIUM



With a focus on chemistry and tuberculosis/antibiotic resistance, the Embassy, in partnership with the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS), held the Nobel in Africa. The first of its kind in Africa, the symposium brings together world-leading researchers, practitioners, and experts with knowledge of several Nobel Prize scientific disciplines.

Before the Ambassador opened the Swedish Institute's exhibition in memory of Alfred Nobel at the symposium, he spoke on how collaboration between research, business and government has contributed to Sweden becoming a leading country in innovation and technology. This kind of cooperation has become Sweden's foundation for solving tomorrow's challenges. Present at the symposium were Swedish universities that form part of the 40 academic institutions, collaborating with their South African counterparts through the South Africa- Sweden University Forum. The platform promotes bilateral cooperation in research and innovation between our countries.



LAWLEY STREET EXHIBIT

The Embassy of Sweden, for the second year, has an exhibit on the famous Lawley Street in Waterkloof, Pretoria. Bringing Sweden to Pretoria, our exhibition features a moose family in a pine forest. You can visit the exhibition and share in the festive cheer until 3 January 2023. The Embassy wishes to thank our sponsors for making this our Christmas exhibit possible! The exhibit was made possible with the generous support of Swedish companies Scania South Africa, Sandvik, Polarium, SPM Instrument, and Volvo Cars South Africa. Our moose family was created by talented South Africans residing in Pretoria. Make sure to snap a picture and tag us:

#SwedenLawley



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HEALTH MINISTERS SADC MEETING IN ANGOLA



The SRHR team participated in the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) health ministers' meeting in Luanda, Angola, on 25-30 November 2023. Through the regional United Nations-led program, 2gether 4 SRHR, Sweden has supported the development of the SADC scorecard. This innovative tool offers a quick overview of the status of sexual and reproductive health and rights in each member country. The scorecard is set to be a valuable resource, aiding the region in shaping policies and programs that can make a positive contribution to the provision of health services and contraceptives and combating gender-based violence.

The health ministers endorsed the scorecard for 2023 and renewed their commitment to achieving the highest possible health standards for all in the region. Elisabeth Hårleman, head of the SRHR team, shared Sweden's experience and emphasised how our approach to anchoring inclusive health services in human rights played a pivotal role in fostering development and economic growth.

LUCIA CELEBRATIONS



December marks the beginning of the festive season around the world. The Embassy celebrates this remarkable season with the annual Lucia celebrations on 13 December at the residence. The origins of the custom can be traced to the 4th century. According to Swedish folklore, the 13th was a long and dark night. St. Lucia appeared, lighting her way with a candlelit wreath on her head as she brought food. The procession is ushered in with a tune known to many Swedes, "Santa Lucia". It wouldn't be a Swedish celebration without food; therefore, our guests can expect to indulge in traditional Swedish Christmas food. We bring Lucia to South Africa to celebrate the spirit of this rainbow nation that has brought people together across religious, national, and political lines.



JOINT PLANNING WITH THE SWEDISH AMBASSADORS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In mid-November, the Embassy hosted seven Swedish Ambassadors to the SADC region. Over two days, the Ambassadors engaged with politicians, think tanks, the SADC secretariat, and academia on various issues, including trade, regional integration, security, and foreign policy.

The main focus was identifying how Embassies can work collaboratively across these issues. We were hosted by the Swedish-run "Innovation City" for talks and discussions.



During the Swedish Ambassador's visit, [International Media Support](#) and [Research ICT Africa](#) hosted a workshop on disinformation and African elections. 2024 will be a watershed moment for democracy in the region and worldwide as over forty countries will hold elections. AI-powered technologies are used to spread disinformation during elections, and partnerships are needed to steam the tide and defend democracy.



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NEWS FROM SWEDISH BUSINESSES IN SOUTH AFRICA

SWEDISH WORKPLACE PROGRAMME

13 September marked a significant milestone for the Swedish Workplace Programme (SWP), a private sector and trade union partnership that promotes decent work principles and practices and is funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. The programme's aims include capacitating companies and unions to foster active participation and workplace cooperation for a just and equitable transition based on transparency, accountability, and democratic governance.

Since 2020, SWP has partnered with the National Union of Metalworkers South Africa (NUMSA) in a capacity-building programme for 30 shop stewards, most recently from the engineering sector.

SWP is proud to announce that the partnership with NUMSA is developing into a train-the-trainer approach in 2024, with NUMSA education and regional officers becoming equipped to deliver modules that enhance the operations of the union, contribute towards constructive labour relations, and improve the partnership between unions and companies.



TETRAPAK

Tetra Pak® has partnered with Woodlands Dairy's FIRST CHOICE® brand, Gayatri Paper Mills, and PETCO, to raise awareness of the importance of recycling liquid board packaging (LBP) and collective responsibility amongst school children. The campaign aims to encourage learners to take on the responsibility of recycling through an educational competition called "Choose to Recycle". The competition ran across twenty-two schools in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, between July and November 2023. The aim is to develop a platform to support the entire value chain in driving effective sorting, collection, and recycling whilst raising awareness through educational activities. Schools have been provided with bins to place the used beverage packages collected from home. Contents of the bins will be collected weekly, and schools can track their progress via an App.



SWEDISH-ZAMBIAN MINING DELEGATION

In collaboration with the Embassy of Sweden in Lusaka and other Team Sweden members, Business Sweden in Southern Africa successfully organised a sustainability mining delegation in Zambia between 7-10 November 2023. The aim was to promote collaborations and partnerships between Sweden and Zambia. The delegation included dialogues from high-level private sector stakeholders involved in policy and governmental members, alongside mining, energy, and transport solutions experts.

Zambia has ambitious plans for the country's mining sector. The new government has pledged to help the industry increase its copper production from 760,000 tonnes in 2022 to 3 million by 2032. Investments in connected infrastructure, such as transport and energy, are needed to realise the ambitious plans. The mining sector will remain the dominant driver of Zambia's economy. Sweden's drive to achieve sustainability and expertise in mining will enable us to become a key partner for Zambia as it aims for a green transition.

The delegation was welcomed to the Swedish residence in Lusaka by Ambassador Johan Hallenborg. Amongst the cohort of Swedish companies in attendance were [Hitachi Energy](#), [ABB Kabeldon](#), [Siemens Energy](#), [SSAB](#), [Epiroc](#), [Scania South Africa](#), [Sodeico HR Solutions RDC](#), together with representatives from [International Council of Swedish Industry \(NIR\)](#), [Swedfund International](#) and [EKN Exportkreditnämnden](#). Delegates also had the honour of meeting with President [Hakainde Hichilema](#), Minister of Green Economy Mr Collins Nzovu and European Commissioner for Climate Action, Mr Wopke Hoekstra, to discuss economic growth and local value addition.



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