



Dr François Voeffray-Peyro

Ambassador of Switzerland to Sweden

Photo: François Voeffray-Peyro

Dr François Voeffray-Peyro is the Ambassador of Switzerland to the Kingdom of Sweden. He took up his duties on 2 November 2020.

This is your first posting in the Nordic region. What do you see as particularly interesting in this new role?

It is a privilege of a diplomat's job, and one of our main sources of satisfaction, to have the opportunity, every 3 or 4 years, to discover a new country and meet new people. I am very much looking forward to exploring Sweden and discovering its different facets.

Switzerland and Sweden have a lot in common, which goes far beyond the mere similarity of their names. My main ambition as Swiss Ambassador to Sweden is to help further strengthen the relations between our two countries in all areas, "tous azimuts", as we would say in French.

Firstly, I hope that our two countries, which are very liked-minded, will work more closely together within multilateral organisations to defend the values we share and hold dear. Secondly, I would like to contribute to the exchanges in the field of science and innovation, which are one of the main drivers of our economic prosperity. Another of my priorities is the fight against climate change and the other global environmental challenges. I have worked on sustainability issues in the past and would like to foster a closer cooperation and exchange of expertise between our two countries.

How do you see the economic situation and what are your ambitions in this area?

We all hope that this health crisis will end quickly and that the economy will rebound strongly next year. In Switzerland, as in Sweden, the export industry is an important sector of our economy and is suffering from the current recession.

It needs our support, and this is one of the important tasks of the Embassy. As I said, one of our priorities is also to support innovation and start-ups.

What is the state of relations between Switzerland and the EU?

Switzerland is located at the heart of Europe. Thanks to a dense network of bilateral agreements with the EU, Switzerland is highly integrated in the common market and participates in the various pillars of European integration. These agreements are the cement on which our relations with Sweden are based. I hope we will make new steps in the coming years to strengthen the Swiss-EU relations and look forward to following the Swedish Presidency of the EU Council in the first half of 2023.

You have taken office during the «second wave» of the pandemic in Sweden. How has the pandemic changed the role of the embassy and the way you work?

We have had to adjust our work organization to conform to the restrictions introduced both in Sweden and Switzerland and to ensure business continuity. That means partial home office, splitting the staff in two teams with alternating presence on the embassy premises, as well as a reduction in the face to face meetings that in normal times are of key importance for the diplomatic work. At the same time, we had to meet the increased demand on the embassy in terms of information and consular services.

Biography

Dr Voeffray-Peyro was born in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. He began his professional career as a lecturer in international law at the University of Geneva. He joined the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1996.

A career diplomat, he has served abroad at the Swiss Mission to the United Nations in New York (1999-2001) and at the Swiss Embassies in Spain (2006-2010) and in the United Kingdom (2016-2020).

At the Foreign Ministry in Berne, he served in the Directorate for Public International Law as Legal Counsel (1996-1998) and later as Ambassador-at-Large for International Humanitarian Law (2014-2016). He also served in the International Organizations Division (1998-1999, 2001-2006) and as Head of the division in charge of environment, energy, transportation and health (2010-2014). In this latter function he was a Sherpa in the UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability which made an important contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development 2012 (Rio+20).

Ambassador Voeffray Peyro holds a PhD in international law from the University of Geneva. He also has a degree in law from the same University and a Masters in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. He has been a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York and received the Guggenheim Award for his doctoral thesis.

Ambassador Voeffray Peyro speaks French, English, Spanish, German and a little Italian. He is married with four children aged between 21 and 16.