

Muy buenas noches, estimados compatriotas y amigos de México. Me da mucho gusto saludarlos en esta ocasión tan especial, al tener el placer de inaugurar la exposición fotográfica "Mi Veracruz" de Ana Domínguez Lombard.

Grüezi miteinander. Guten Abend meine sehr geehrten Damen und Herren. Als Mexikanischer Botschafter in der Schweiz ist es mir eine Ehre, Sie bei der Eröffnung der Ausstellung „Mi Veracruz“ von der hervorragenden mexikanischen Fotografin Ana Domínguez Lombard begrüßen zu können und danke Ihnen, dass Sie uns bei dieser Gelegenheit begleiten.

And now, if I may, I will continue in English for those among you who do not understand either Spanish or German.

I am honored to have been invited to say a few words of welcome at the opening of this exhibition and would like to start by thanking Ana Domínguez Lombard for her commendable personal initiative to dedicate this show to her home-town, the historic port of Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico.

Veracruz is a truly historic place. It was there that Hernán Cortés and his troops first disembarked in 1519 for the conquest of the Aztec Empire of ancient Mexico. During the three centuries of Spanish colonial domination, Veracruz became the gateway to Europe exporting across the Atlantic precious gold and silver, exotic spices, as well as products that until then were unknown on this continent, such as potato, tomato, chocolate and avocado, to name but a few.

Nowadays, the port of Veracruz has significant importance in Mexico as an economic and cultural center. It is famous for the beauty of its colonial buildings, its popular sea-walk (or malecón), its colourful Carnival, its vibrant folklore, music and dances and its splendid cuisine but, most importantly, for the hospitality and *joie de vivre* of its people, affectionately called "jarochos".

As Ana Domínguez states in the invitation to this exhibition, it is precisely this atmosphere that she tried to capture through the lenses of her camera. The ancient roots of Veracruz, its Spanish colonial heritage, the stories of its people, places and customs are brought to life before our eyes. With a scent of nostalgia and a mix of concern and also of hope for her beloved Veracruz.

Mexico is undergoing profound transformations. Our nation has had its share of challenges which we Mexicans are facing head-on with our minds set on turning them into opportunities for a brighter future.

Regardless of where we live, each and every Mexican can contribute to the consolidation of Mexico as a peaceful and safe country, an inclusive and prosperous nation, with quality education for its new generations, as well as a responsible and committed member of our global community of nations. In this regard, we value the cooperation with like-minded partners such as Switzerland.

In closing, I would like to stress the importance of cultural promotion in the work of the Mexican Embassy in Bern. Promoting Mexico's "soft power", its rich and diverse culture of which we are extremely proud, is one of the main priorities of our diplomatic activities in this beautiful country. Providing our Swiss and international friends with a more positive and objective perspective of what Mexico is all about: a nation of friendly hard-working people, proud of its ancient roots and cultural heritage, a modern nation which looks confidently towards the future.

It is precisely this sense of Mexico that Ana Domínguez wishes to transmit to all of us through her wonderful pictures. For this commendable effort and for her valuable contribution to the promotion of the image of the country we aspire to achieve, I would like to express to her my deepest appreciation.

Ihnen allen, liebe Gäste und Freunde, wünsche ich gute Unterhaltung heute Abend und für Ihr Interesse nochmals ein sehr herzliches MUCHAS GRACIAS.