

## An exceptional event in Castle de Wittenburg

**I**t was a tropical evening as Mayor Frank Koen of Wassenaar, a large number of Ambassadors, accompanied by their spouses, and other distinguished guests gathered in the Castle de Wittenburg to, not only, attend the official welcome ceremony of five newly arrived Ambassadors, but also to celebrate the five-year anniversary of Diplomat Club Wassenaar.



*By Bonnie Klap*

Diplomat Club Wassenaar was founded five years ago by Mrs. Shida Blik and, due to her relentless focus and passion, has evolved into the successful and well-known entity it is today. In his speech Mayor Frank praised Shida Blik for regularly organizing welcome ceremonies for newly accredited Ambassadors and presented her with a bouquet of flowers as a token of his appreciation.

The five newly arrived Ambassadors were Ambassador Xu Hong from China, who, incidentally had to excuse himself early, as he was to travel to China the next morning with Prime-Minister Mark Rutte and a delegation, Ambassador George Shavashidze from Georgia, Ambassador Alireza Ka-

zemi Abadi from Iran, Ambassador Abdul-Rahman Al-Otaibi from Kuwait, Ambassador Dr. Hissa Abdulla Ahmed Alotaiba from UAE and Ambassador Mrs. Laura Dupuy Lasserre from Uruguay. Mayor Koen extended a special welcome to the new Ambassadors and their spouses. "You all represent beautiful countries with an interesting history. As a diplomat and highest ranking representative of your country in The Netherlands you have an important job. I hope you will succeed in your mission and learn a lot from the Dutch during your stay and the many receptions you visit," according to the Mayor. Mayor Koen further elaborated on the appeal of living in Wassenaar, mentioning it ranks number 6 in the Top-10 best places to live in The Netherlands, with its luscious green surroundings, vicinity to the

beach and dunes and boasting a number of good restaurants. Moreover he noted the excellent education opportunities available in Wassenaar, such as the American School, the Indonesian School and the British School in nearby Voor-schoten. Briefly touching on cultural activities in Wassenaar, such as the local cinema, library and the Modern Art Museum Voor-linden, he concluded his remarks by wishing the Ambassadors and their families an enjoyable stay in The Netherlands and advised them to learn to ride the bicycle in order to avoid parking problems.

The new Ambassadors were all presented with a small gift from the municipality of Wassenaar: Dutch cheese. After the official ceremony and a concert, a lavish buffet could be enjoyed in the garden of the magnificent 18th-century Castle de Wittenburg.

Photo: First row from left to right: Ambassador Alireza Kazemi Abadi of Iran, His Excellency Mr. Fernando Arias (Director-General OPCW), Ambassador Xu Hong of China, Ambassador Abdul-Rahman Al-Otaibi of Kuwait. Second row from left to right: Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre of Uruguay, Mayor Frank Koen of Wassenaar, Mrs. Shida Blik (Founder DCW), Mr. Peter Blik (President TenRande Foundation), Dr. Hissa Abdulla Ahmed Alotaiba (Ambassador of UAE). Third row: Mr. Henk van der Meulen (Director of the Royal Conser-vatoire The Hague), Mrs. Ketevan Ratiani (spouse Amb.of Georgia), Ambassador George Sharvashidze of Georgia, Mrs. Patricia van Oordt de Arias (spouse Director-General OPCW). (Photo: By Anton van der Riet.)