



„WILLKOMMEN IN BERLIN“ Clubjahr 2024/2025



Opening of the new WIB Club Year

On 10 October 2020, the official start of the new club year of *Willkommen in Berlin*, WIB (*Welcome to Berlin*) took place at the Federal Foreign Office. Numerous members and new interested parties came to the Federal Foreign Office. In her capacity as patron, Daniela Schlegel, Personnel Officer, spoke on behalf of the State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Office. She paid tribute to the voluntary work of the board and active members over the past 25 years and emphasised the commitment to friendship, tolerance and international understanding. WIB embraces diversity and facilitates the arrival of foreign diplomats in Berlin. „WIB is our hub, our home, our harbour. Here we feel safe, wanted and welcome. We are everything to each other“, said one diplomatic member, expressing her enthusiasm for *Willkommen in Berlin*.

▲ The Committee
From left: Monika Sachs-Wilde, Kazuko Gehrig, Bernadette Ruff, Katja Heusel, Karla Steinert-Thys, Katharina von Aretin, Gülrü Özcelik-Schindler, Ursula Braumann

The opening was accompanied by an interesting musical programme: Svetlana Lundgren (piano) and Oliver Gascogne (cello) played works by Felix Mendelssohn and Arnold Schönberg, among others. The focus of the opening was the presentation of the groups and their programmes by group coordinator Kazuko Gehrig. Visitors were able to get an overview of the Club's activities for the coming year while enjoying the beautifully decorated tables. The small reception that followed was an opportunity for old and new members to meet and mingle.

Guest of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka

The Ambassador of the Republic of Sri Lanka, H.E. Varuni Muthukumarana, invited the members of *Willkommen in Berlin* to a presentation of her home country at the Embassy on 16 October 2020. Sri Lanka, a fertile island in the Indian Ocean, is home to miles of beaches, mountains, well-managed hotels that are increasingly setting high sustainability standards, the richest biodiversity in Asia, fascinating wildlife such as the blue whale and elephants, and a highly regarded cuisine that uses local products such as tea, coconut, cinnamon and many other spices. A country that offers festivals, music and interfaith cultural sites such as the 2,243-metre sacred mountain of Adam's Peak. And where women can travel safely on their own. Not to be forgotten: Ayurveda, the traditional holistic healing system. It can promote health on a physical, mental, emotional or spiritual level. German travellers are the fourth largest tourist group in Sri Lanka. The country, with a population of 21 million and a documented history of over 2,500 years, is multicultural and multi-religious, with almost all ethnic groups and religions represented. Sri Lanka's Foreign Service is 60 per cent female. 20 per cent of Sri Lankan mis-



▲ From left to right: Olivia Nickel, Embassy and Residence Group; H.E. Ambassador Varuni Muthukumarana; Katharina von Aretin, Embassy and Residence Group

sions abroad are headed by women, including the embassy in Berlin. The positive impressions were rounded off by a delicious buffet of typical Sri Lankan dishes – plenty of reasons to plan your next holiday to this paradisiacal island nation.