

## **Panorama - Interview mit Romy Hawatt**

*Auf dem Global Citizen Forum 2017 in Montenegro sprach Panorama mit dem Unternehmer Romy Hawatt, der in Australien geboren wurde, sich heute aber als Global Citizen mit einer besonderen Verbindung zu Montenegro versteht.*

### **Could you explain what the concept of global citizenship is about?**

**Hawatt:** Well, goods and services move freely around the world, or largely freely around the world in 2017, and so why shouldn't people? I don't think people should be bound by the shackles of the place that they are born in. Many people, most people, in fact all people are immigrants. We all started in Africa and at some point in our histories we migrated. So what is wrong with the concept of migration? What is wrong with the concept of people having multiple nationalities living in multiple places?

### **Where do you personally live?**

**Hawatt:** I was born in Australia, but I have lived in many different parts around the world. I have lived in Japan, I have lived in the United States, I've lived in Europe, in Germany in fact, in Munich for four years. I currently live in Dubai, or mainly in Dubai, and travel between Dubai, Montenegro and London.

### **And which citizenships do you hold?**

**Hawatt:** I hold an Australian citizenship from birth, I hold a Lebanese citizenship from heritage and I hold a Montenegrin citizenship from investment.

### **Ok, so the Montenegro program is already working?**

**Hawatt:** It is not fully working, not officially working, in the sense that it's not available to all people. There are special circumstances where they will provide citizenship, nationality and I guess I qualified for that given the level of investment that I made in this country.

### **What did you invest into?**

**Hawatt:** In aviation: helicopter scenic and charter, and also airplane scenic and charter. But we also have pilot-training facilities where we train pilots to learn to fly, from start all the way to air transport pilot licenses. And we also have a destination management company that we operate from here, Discover Montenegro.

### **How did you pick Montenegro? Did you consider different places?**

**Hawatt:** Well, as a citizen of the world I have travelled to and lived in many places, in fact I stopped counting at about 20 million air miles about five years ago ... once you reach this kind of number it becomes ridiculous. I have had exposure to many different countries, many different locations and here in Montenegro it is kind of the next new thing: You are right in the center of Europe.

Within a thousand-mile radius, you have the world's most affluent people. You sit in the center of Europe. If you look at a map, geographically it is much more attractive than the north, weather-wise for example. You have Italy just across the water, surrounded by Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia...

**...and as you have personal aviation it is not that far...**

The distance in miles is not that far but the territory is quite mountainous, so a helicopter is really a good way to go.

**Do you fly all the time by yourself?**

**Hawatt:** Sure, I use it, I have many aircraft, I have about 50 aircraft in the fleet, so many helicopters, I think 14 helicopters stationed in Australia mainly but also this one here which you see behind us, but also fixed-wing aircraft for training and scenic and charter.

**And is aviation also your original affiliation or how did you make your money?**

**Hawatt:** (laughs) Through a lot of hard work and many years of blood and sweat and tears. Getting knocked down and getting up again...

**...as an entrepreneur...**

**Hawatt:** ...yes, I'm an entrepreneur and I've invested heavily in real estate over the years, so I have a quite diverse portfolio in real estate. All kinds of international trade, import-export over the years, I was involved with a very large digital media education business which has many branches in Germany, a group called SAE Institute which I was able to join some years ago and help build up unto a point where we sold it about five, six years ago.

And I had a passion for flying. I have flown gliders since I was in my teens, I have always wanted to fly helicopters and when I could afford it and had the time I took it up and I use it as a mode of transport.

**And the yacht here...**

**Hawatt:** ... yeah, that's Rihanna...

**...and that's yours?**

**Hawatt:** Yeah, that's mine.

**And you provided it as a favor [to the event organizers]?**

**Hawatt:** Yes, supporting Armand Arton. I believe in what they are doing, you know it's a shrinking world in many ways. Global citizenship in terms of investing in second citizenship is part of an overall strategy. It's not just buying a passport, it is investing in a country, setting up a home, setting up business, setting up investments in that country and making it literally a place that you do call home, not just a place that you take a citizenship and don't visit.

**As you mentioned the term "buying a passport," there are critics who say this is only for wealthy people and if you promote freedom of movement here at the Global Citizen Forum, how does that fit the picture if you see that poor people cannot afford this?**

**Hawatt:** I do see the point but in this world there are always greater and lesser situations than the one that you are in. Wealthy people do have a fast entry to a lot of these things but if you look at the statistics, one percent wealthy people contributing into a global citizenship program can provide the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of other people coming to that market. So kind of one pays for the other. I think it is about keeping an open mind and understanding that we live in an increasingly globalized world and that we need to support both ends of the spectrum. And it may not be immediately apparent, but you can actually see, if you look close enough, if you feel with your heart and with some empathy, you will

see that wealthy migration can support things like refugees and the like. And on balance all of these things are contributors and I think positive contributors to society.

**So it is kind of a trickle-down effect you are describing...**

**Hawatt:** It is a trickle-down effect. You may not see the immediate effects, but they do exist. You know, I'm sort of a migrant, my parents were Lebanese, I was born in Australia into very poor circumstances. They left after WWII looking for better opportunity for their family, for their children and I'm an example for – hopefully – getting it right, being able to springboard off the foundation they provided into a better world, into a better life, not only for the rest of my siblings but also for my children and future generations.

**So what is your assessment of your two days here?**

**Hawatt:** Well you have a lot of interesting, talented and influential people in this forum. It was very interesting to meet and speak to a lot of different people and exchange ideas and views on how each one saw this whole global citizenship program. I think on balance it has been a very positive outcome, people will go away with a very positive understanding and feeling for the place. The importance is, most of these people are coming to Montenegro for the first time and I think they all will go away with a very positive impression: It's a very open government, they are very progressive, the prime minister is doing an excellent job, he has a young, dynamic cabinet. You know, they see, their future is with Europe, they are on their pathway, they implement all the processes to be part of that bigger family called Europe. And I see that the future is very bright, very, very bright indeed for this country.

**And tonight there will be some celebration?**

**Hawatt:** Yes, the closing party. (laughs) It's gonna be good. And after perhaps another party on the yacht, depending on when this one finishes...

**One last question maybe: What are the personal benefits of having the Montenegrin passport?**

**Hawatt:** First, when you look at the investment climate, the investment regime, it is a very attractive investment regime. In fact, the taxes here are kind of lower than in Singapore and Hong Kong and here you are in the middle of Europe. You can invest as much as you want, and you can repatriate as much as you want. The cost base, the cost of living, is extremely low here. And there is a lot of talent, a lot of educated people, so there is a big pool of resource you can tap into quite cost-effectively while you build your position. So here you are, in a country with a small, educated population and a reasonable cost base right in the center of Europe, there's got to be something in there. Apart from the fact that it is stunningly beautiful. I mean look around you, you have the second largest canyon in the world, the largest lake in Europe, you have got the second largest virgin forest in Europe. It is kind of the way the world used to be: It's organic, it's fresh, it's clean, very untouched in many ways and that is kind of the benefit of having a small country with a small population.

*Das Interview führten Johannes Edelhoff & Christian Salewski*