

# President Leuthard attending 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) summit in Beijing

**Bern, 15.05.2017 - The summit on the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) in Beijing concluded on Monday, 15 May. Around 28 heads of state and government took part with President Doris Leuthard representing Switzerland. The aim of the BRI or Silk Road summit was to strengthen trade links, particularly between Asia and Europe, and to discuss the interlinking of continents. Switzerland welcomes the initiative as it can help to strengthen prosperity along the various trade routes and enhance relations between continents, in particular by encouraging exchanges at a cultural level and in relation to tourism and research.**

For the initiative to succeed it is essential for internationally recognised norms and standards to be respected or harmonised where necessary, and for transparency in international financial transactions to be guaranteed and for the rule of law to be respected. That is the Swiss position expressed by President Leuthard in Beijing.

Prior to the summit President Leuthard held bilateral talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The two sides stressed that the Belt and Road Initiative had the potential to further deepen Sino-Swiss relations – in the spirit of the innovative strategic partnership agreed between the two countries in 2016. Ms Leuthard expressed the belief that Swiss businesses could make a strong contribution to the initiative and stressed that Switzerland was committed to high social and environmental standards under the BRI.

Discussions also covered financial matters, in particular the opening of the markets, as well as questions concerning energy, the development of transport infrastructure and digitalisation. The two presidents also expressed their wish to develop the free trade agreement between the two countries.

During the visit a number of agreements were signed between Switzerland and China and between Swiss and Chinese institutions, including a roadmap on cooperation in energy matters and an agreement institutionalising cooperation between the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE).

The Swiss delegation included Jörg Gasser, State Secretary for International Financial Matters at the Federal Department of Finance (FDF). On the fringes of the BRI summit President Leuthard held bilateral talks with heads of state and government of other guest countries. These included the Greek prime minister, Alexis Tsipras and the state counsellor and foreign minister of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi.

The president also attended a number of other events in Beijing highlighting exchanges between Switzerland and China in different branches of the economy and culture: the presentation of the Sino-Swiss Business Awards, an event to mark the 2017 Switzerland-China Year of Tourism at the Great Wall

and an event on fashion, creativity and innovation in both countries.

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### Address for enquiries

Dominique Bugnon, DETEC Press and Information Service  
+41 (0)79 367 08 43, dominique.bugnon@gs-uvek.admin.ch

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### Publisher

General Secretariat of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications; General Secretariat DETEC

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