



## Media release

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# Swiss Federal Councillor, Defence Minister Guy Parmelin pays official visit to China

**Swiss Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), is paying an official work visit to China from 30 March to 3 April. He will be received by the Chinese Minister of Defence CHANG Wanquan in Beijing.**

This official visit by Defence Minister Guy Parmelin to his Chinese counterpart CHANG Wanquan is the first high-ranking meeting at ministerial level since the state visit of Chinese President XI Jinping to Switzerland in the middle of January. Federal Councillor Parmelin will also be received by the Vice President of China's Central Military Commission, General FAN Changlong, for a brief bilateral exchange.

Talks will focus on bilateral relations between Switzerland and China, the security situation in Asia and in Europe, cooperation on peace support within the context of the UN, and military bilateral contacts. The DDPS has been conducting a security policy dialogue with China for several years and cultivates cooperation on training through the exchange of officers in various courses, particularly with regard to the deployment of UN observers. The ministers of defence will also inform each other of their respective priorities in national security and defence policy.

In addition, a visit is planned to a helicopter brigade which is primarily involved in natural disaster relief and rescue operations on behalf of the civilian population. From 2005 to 2009, the Swiss Armed Forces Joint Staff and the Department for Humanitarian Aid of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation provided support in setting up the Chinese rescue team. In parallel, the DDPS conducted various training sessions and workshops in China on earthquake rescue operations.

Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin is traveling to China for the first time in an official capacity. He does so in response to an invitation from his Chinese counterpart issued shortly after he assumed office as head of the DDPS at the start of 2016. For more than ten years, the defence ministers of Switzerland and China have been meeting regularly. These meetings also serve to cultivate relations in general, which is particularly important in view of China's significance as an international player and permanent member of the UN Security Council.

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