

MEDIA RELEASE

Sino-Swiss Economic Forum turns the spotlight on sustainability

November 20, Beijing – Swiss and Chinese business leaders and political heavyweights brought sustainability into the spotlight at the grand finale of the sixth Sino-Swiss Economic Forum on Friday in Beijing’s Four Seasons Hotel.

Executives from Swiss multinational giants including Nestlé, ABB, Swiss Re, SGS as well as Chinese business leaders like tech giant Alibaba and Greatview Packaging discussed innovative initiatives for sustainable development during the evening’s event.



HE Bernardino Regazzoni, Swiss Ambassador to China

In a keynote speech, Swiss Ambassador to China Bernardino Regazzoni emphasized Swiss enterprises’ commitment to sustainable development in China: “They are even generating synergies among themselves here in China to bring out sustainable, innovative and creative solutions to global concerns.”

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SINO SWISS ECONOMIC FORUM 2020



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The Sino-Swiss Economic Forum (SSEF), started in 2010, is a biennial event and the biggest economic forum between Switzerland and China. To mark the 70th anniversary of Sino-Swiss Relations, this year's forum, organized by the Embassy of Switzerland and Swiss Chamber of Commerce in China, centered on sustainability and the role of technology in achieving sustainable goals. Friday's event is the closing ceremony for this year's SSEF, which has seen a series of seminars in October.



(From left to right) Tian Wei, Moderator; HE Bernardino Regazzoni, Swiss Ambassador to China; Rashid Qureshi, Chairman and CEO of Nestlé GCR; Leon Xie, General Manager of Olympic Business Group Marketing, Alibaba; John Chen, President of Swiss Re China; Henry Huiyao Wang, Founder & President of Center for China & Globalization (CCG); Tracy Li, Deputy Director, Risk Management & Supply Chain Solutions Certification & Business Enhancement, SGS China

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(From left to right) Tian Wei, Moderator; Jeff Bi, CEO and Executive Director, Greatview Aseptic Packaging; Rong Wang, Vice General Manager, UNICEPTA Information Consulting (China) Ltd.; Samantha Chalmers, Client Manager – Shanghai, 5 Star Plus Retail Design; Daniel Heusser, President and Chief Architect, Virtuarch Architecture Design Consulting (Shanghai) Co., Ltd.; David Wang, CEO China, KingNature

In two panel discussions of the night, business managers from global giants and small and medium sized enterprises exchanged views with researchers on circular business models, green initiatives and the opportunities technology advancement brings in meeting sustainable development goals.

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Rashid Qureshi – Nestlé

“The pandemic showed an important change in consumer behaviors. They are now looking for more healthy and natural organic products. Customers are increasingly more aware of the necessity to protect the environment. Nestlé is embracing now circular business models, not later. For instance, Nestlé is today committed to shift to 100% sustainable reusable packaging by 2025 and CO2 neutral 2050.”

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John Chen – Swiss Re

“Companies need concrete goals to tackle sustainability issues. Swiss Re sets clear target such as we did in 2017 when we shifted to 100% ESG compliant investments. Covid-19 is a very powerful reminder that we have to commit to ambitious goals. Moreover, it will be through the creation of a joint movement with international partners that companies and society will reach those goals”.

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Henry Huiyao Wang - Center for China & Globalization (CCG)

“Covid-19 is a severe wake-up call for mankind. We realized that it is so important to respect the nature. Globalization will take a new turn now. It is time to turn to sustainable concrete practices if we want to reach target such as the 2060 Chinese CO2 neutrality goal. In China, it will be important to continue encouraging trend such as green energy development. However, we have to remember that 1.4 billion people, getting used to fast deliveries, are producing a lot of garbage. Education will be key to shape green behaviors.”

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Jeff Bi - Greatview Aseptic Packaging

“How to make consumers willing to pay for greener, certified and hence more costly products (up to +15%) in a society where people want fast and cheap products? We need to foster consumers’ awareness with transparent standards to empower them and allow them to reward best practices. This will force companies to embrace green practices”.

More than 300 distinguished guests attended the evening’s event. In her welcome speech, Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch stressed the strong bilateral economic relations despite the pandemic: “we continue to implement our bilateral Free Trade Agreement, and each year brings additional tariff reductions for imports into China. At the same time, discussions toward enhancing the FTA including in the area of tariffs are ongoing.”

Switzerland and China signed a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement in 2013, the first FTA China had with a continental European country.

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About Us

Founded in 1996, the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in China (SwissCham China) is the only Swiss non-profit and non-governmental business & trade association officially registered in Mainland China. Our main goal is to gather all actors of the Sino-Swiss business community on a common platform to strengthen the political and economic bonds between the two countries to stimulate interaction and develop business opportunities. Our close relations with Swiss and Chinese official institutions allow us to have the ability to make your voice heard in regard to your experience in doing business in China. Our five offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing and Shenzhen gather in total more than 600 members and among them 170 are in Beijing.

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Welcome Address by the Director of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, State Secretary Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch¹

Mister Ambassador

Mister President of the Chamber

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening

I am pleased to welcome you all to the 10th Swiss-Sino Economic Forum of the Swiss Chinese Chamber of Commerce. I thank the Chamber for the opportunity to address a few words to you all albeit remotely.

Originally, this Forum was scheduled in July for the visit of the Head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin. As with so many plans this year, this one was derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We do not know, when travelling will be possible again, but we know that China will be high on the list of possible destinations.

Despite the many difficulties this year, I can assure you that bilateral economic relations between China and Switzerland remain good. In the first three quarters, bilateral trade contracted by only 10 per cent, and

¹ Drafted by SECO/BWAO Samira Hüsler and Felix Rosenberger.

the lack of direct flights plays an important role. Having you here at this Forum tonight, I think, is the best indicator for the potential that still lies in commerce between Switzerland and China.

For our part, we continue to implement our bilateral Free Trade Agreement, and each year brings additional tariff reductions for imports into China. At the same time, discussions toward enhancing the FTA including in the area of tariffs are ongoing.

As you probably know, last year I could co-sign a Memorandum of Understanding on third market cooperation along the Belt and Road Initiative. Together with encouraging Swiss and Chinese companies to cooperate in BRI project, the MoU also lays down a catalogue of basic principles such as transparency, international standards and sustainability. These principles are not only in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but also lead me to one of the key points of today's event. To achieve the SDGs for the benefit of all, we do not only depend on more sustainable technologies, but also on a broader research and innovation landscape. I am glad that the Chamber will discuss this in depth this evening.

Like China, Switzerland also promotes innovation towards a more sustainable lifestyle, for example with regard to our daily food. Since a vegetal nutrition has a better environmental balance than a traditional one, changing dietary habits towards more sustainable sources of protein will have a positive impact. We all know that Chinese and neighbouring cuisines already include plant-based and protein-rich staple foods as tofu made from soybeans. In order to promote plant-

based proteins on the market, Switzerland supports different projects and the innovative landscape of Switzerland is very large in this respect.

Ladies and gentlemen

I am convinced that today's exchanges will be informative to you, not only in terms of nutrition, but more generally in working towards a more sustainable future as well. An event like the one today offers above all an excellent platform to exchange information. I hope you will make best use of it.

I wish you all an exciting event with enriching presentations and a delicious meal afterwards – both for herbivores and others.

Thank you for your attention!



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Sino-Swiss Economic Forum 2020

Together for a better future - smart & sustainable

Speech by Ambassador Bernardino Regazzoni

20 November 2020, Beijing

***** Speech starts on next page *****

Dear Mr. Martin Mueller, President of Swisscham,
Distinguished representatives of the business community,
Dear compatriots, colleagues, friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here today with you. First of all, I would like to congratulate **SwissCham** for co-organizing this event and make the Forum happen in 2020.

This year forced us to be **innovative and agile** to keep our economies interconnected and to keep exchanging with each other. As many are blocked by **travel restrictions**, companies in Switzerland adapted to the online opportunities. The Forum itself articulated through **four successive seminars** online, between April and October. Discussions took place with Chinese stakeholders. And here we go, we come tonight to the grand finale or to the happy end of this process.

For its 10th anniversary, the Sino-Swiss Economic Forum is focusing on **Sustainability**. I am glad to see that **both the public and private sectors in Switzerland and China** voice their ambition to align with the **Paris Agreement** and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals** by setting policy frameworks as well as industrial sector roadmaps.

We have learnt this year that **global problems require global solutions**. To tackle climate change, the objectives our countries adopted through the Paris Agreement in 2015 have become all the more important.

As we heard this afternoon, **Swiss companies are committed to these objectives**. They are even in some cases building synergies among them here in China to bring about sustainable solutions to global concerns.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Commitment defines well Swiss companies in China. When they settle in China, when they invest in China, when they do Research and Development in China, they aim for the long term. They engage with **local actors**, with **consumers**, with **partners** and with **suppliers** to develop shared solutions.

Doing business in China is a great opportunity; that's why you are all here; and I am impressed by your many successes. But doing business in China may also be **challenging**.

I spent much time this year visiting Swiss companies in China - especially SMEs. I wanted to know how they are coping in these uncertain times and have a clear understanding of how we can help them to stay in China.

Market access, a rapidly changing regulatory environment, enforcement of regulations and intellectual property rights are often expressed concerns.

COVID-19 has exacerbated some problems for Swiss firms. Most obviously, travel restrictions result in a number of consequences. **Audits and approval procedures** for certain licenses are **delayed**. Important meetings, canceled. **Recruitment** and retention of **talent** are compromised.

I am humbled by the **resilience and pragmatism** of the Swiss Business community in China. And I am here to support you.

Over the past months, we have been **engaging with relevant authorities to tackle those issues**. The MofCom, State Administration for Market Regulation as well as other relevant authorities have proven to be **receptive to our concerns**. While we are still in a challenging situation, we see that companies can operate in China more or less normally. I look forward for the further opening of the Chinese markets, as it has been announced. But I remain with my concern for the consequences of travel restrictions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through these uncertain times, Switzerland will continue to be **stable and predictable**. And we will continue to **stand by our values** and to promote cooperation and engagement.

This Forum is the perfect example of our thriving economic ties, especially in the time of **the 70th anniversary** of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and China.

Looking ahead, I expect to further strengthen Sino-Swiss bilateral relations. This also means continuing to support the private sector. Using our **strategic innovative partnership, enhancing our FTA, carrying on our bilateral dialogues**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have common challenges ahead. We need to be **'smart and sustainable'** to tackle them.

I am convinced that the numerous exchanges of ideas and wisdom between Swiss and Chinese stakeholders through this Forum will inspire all participants, from company representatives to higher political decision-makers.

I wish you will enjoy the beautiful evening. I wish you success. I wish us all a sustainable future!

Thank you.