

Switzerland highlights 'Swiss Quality' as Guest Country of Honour at Hainan Expo

Press Release

Haikou, 07 May 2021

This morning, the Ambassador of Switzerland to China, Mr. Bernardino Regazzoni, opened the Swiss National Pavilion at the inaugural China International Consumer Products Expo (Hainan Expo) alongside the Secretary-General and Vice Governor of Hainan Province, Mr. Ni Qiang, the Director General of the Department of European Affairs, Ministry of Commerce of China, Mr. Zhai Qian, and representatives of Swiss exhibitors. Switzerland, as exclusive Guest Country of Honour, will showcase its innovativeness, traditions and sustainability under the motto 'This is Swiss quality'.

Around 40 of Switzerland's most renowned companies in the luxury and consumer goods sector are participating in this Expo, with a total exhibition area of around 1,100 m². Switzerland's status as Guest Country of Honour offers unique visibility to its diverse consumer brands, and is testament to Switzerland's world-class reputation in the premium products sector.

On the night before, Ambassador Regazzoni welcomed a delegation of high-level Chinese Government representatives, including Mr. Hu Chunhua, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in an official tour to the Swiss National Pavilion. On the occasion of the Hainan Expo Opening Ceremony, the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Guy Parmelin sent a greeting message: 'The invitation to be the Guest Country of Honour at the Hainan Expo reflects the quality of the relations between Switzerland and China. Building on our foundation of trust, our relationship has strengthened through dialogue and cooperation in many fields.'

On behalf of the Swiss Confederation, the Swiss Business Hub, an integrated unit of the Embassy of Switzerland in China, in collaboration with Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE), has organized and is operating the Swiss National Pavilion at the Hainan Expo. Located in Hall 5 of the Hainan International Convention & Exhibition Centre in Haikou, the Swiss National Pavilion is 200m² large and exhibits some of the most prominent testimonials of Swiss innovation and lifestyle. The pavilion consists of an '**Animation Area**' and an '**Exhibitor Area**'.

The distinctive features in the '**Animation Area**' offer visitors the opportunity to interactively discover how Switzerland combines tradition and innovation. The space in a large, transparent 'Swiss Cross Cube' is designed for events and networking, where promotional videos of exhibiting companies will be shown on a large screen. A Sino-Swiss Matchmaking Session as well as various exhibitor events will also take place in this area.

The Swiss National Pavilion has **three main partners**: Swatch Group, Switzerland Tourism and Presence Switzerland. Through a digital platform created by Swatch, visitors will be able to personalize their own watch, selecting their favourite motifs from bespoke art pieces created by Swiss and Chinese artists. Switzerland Tourism has provided a series of picturesque visuals

of the Swiss Alps, giving visitors the impression that they are personally on site. Visitors can take a break from the busy expo by enjoying the Swiss alpine landscape, taking selfies with a life-size cow, and tasting a few Swiss delicacies.

26 Swiss companies are exhibiting in the ‘**Exhibitor Area**’ of the Swiss National Pavilion. They showcase Switzerland’s leading role in watchmaking, luxury goods, and premium consumer products. **11 sponsors** additionally support the Swiss National Pavilion. The majority of Swiss brands in the Expo have established a presence on Chinese e-commerce platforms so that visitors can directly buy their products online and enjoy some discounts. Some of the most popular Chinese live streamers will sell premium Swiss-made consumer goods such as Laurastar irons, Victorinox army knives and Läderach chocolates.

‘Switzerland is a key player in the international luxury industry and the birthplace of watchmaking. Thus, it is no surprise that Swiss companies seized the opportunity to participate in this Expo and that today, Swiss high-end brands play an important role in Hainan’s duty free retail landscape,’ Ambassador Regazzoni said at the Swiss Pavilion Opening Ceremony, ‘All of them epitomize the motto of the Swiss National Pavilion – This is Swiss Quality.’

Swiss luxury goods and premium consumer products sector set foot in Hainan

Switzerland’s track-record for offering high-quality products and services is an attractive asset for Hainan, as is evidenced by the many collaborations that have been concluded in recent months. On 25th September 2020, the Switzerland-based world-renowned luxury goods retailer **Kirchhofer** decided to set up its Chinese headquarter in the Hainan Free Trade Port, making it the first international luxury goods retailer to be headquartered there. On 29th September, Switzerland’s **Richemont**, the second-largest luxury goods company in the world, and Foudation de la Haute Horlogerie jointly hosted the ‘Watches & Wonders’ event in Sanya – an exhibition that showcases high-end timepieces; agreements have also been made with Hainan Province to cooperate in sharing Hainan Free Trade Port investment opportunities and participating the Hainan Expo. On 15th December, **École hôtelière de Lausanne** (EHL) signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Hainan Province. EHL will independently set up a campus in Sanya, making even more accessible its educational system and undergraduate programmes to Chinese students. In January 2021, the Swiss duty free giant **Dufry** officially signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Hainan Financial Holdings Co., Ltd. to develop duty free retail business in markets including Hainan. Furthermore, important Swiss high-end brands such as **Omega, Vacheron Constantin, Chopard, IWC or Jaeger-LeCoultre** have been launched in Haikou Riyue Square Duty Free Shop, Sanya International Duty Fee City and Haikou Meilan International Airport Duty Free Shop. On 6th April, 2021, the luxury watchmaker **Baume & Mercier** – a subsidiary of Richemont, entered into an agreement with Hainan Expo, making Baume & Mercier the Official Timekeeper of the Expo.

Close trade ties between Switzerland and China

Switzerland is an important economic and trade partner to China, and so is China to Switzerland. In the 71 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties between Switzerland and China, bilateral economic and trade relations reached many milestones. Switzerland was one of the first Western countries to establish diplomatic relations with China and work with China. In 2007, Switzerland was the first European country to recognise China as a full market economy. In 2013, the two countries signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) – the first between China and a continental European country, and the first with one of the 20 leading economies of the globe. The FTA officially came into force in 2014. In 2015, Switzerland became one of the first European founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. Practice

has proven that the Swiss and Chinese economies are complementary, and the FTA has tremendously simplified the import process. In 2017 alone, the FTA saved more than CHF 100 million (approximately RMB 730 million) for exporters from both countries. Currently, China is Switzerland's 3rd largest trading partner in the world (after Germany and the U.S.) and the biggest trading partner in Asia, while Switzerland is China's 10th largest supplier.

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