



Media release

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Assistant State Secretary of Switzerland, Heinrich Schellenberg, pays official visit to China

Assistant State Secretary of Switzerland for Asia and Pacific, Ambassador Heinrich Schellenberg, is visiting China from 7 to 15 March, the first official visit from Switzerland to China in over three years. The programme includes stops in Hong Kong Shanghai and Beijing, meetings with business, culture, academia and government counterparts.

On March 13, Ambassador Schellenberg had talks with Ambassador Wang Lutong, Director General of European Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, on the resumption of in-person strategic dialogues between the two countries, and to prepare future ministerial visits.

In Beijing, Ambassador Schellenberg will give a lecture at Tsinghua University on Tuesday, on Swiss foreign policy in Asia with China in the spotlight after having a courtesy meeting with Professor Wang Hongwei, Vice President of Tsinghua University. Close to 100 students are expected to attend the lecture, where Switzerland's role as a neutral state and non-permanent member of the UN Security Council will be discussed as well. He will additionally visit the Switzerland-based World Economic Forum, and meet with members of the Swiss community in Beijing.

Ambassador Schellenberg started his visit in Hong Kong, where he met with prominent representatives from academia, business and civil society and had a meeting with Mrs. Regina Ip, Convenor of the Non-Official Members of the Executive Council. In addition, he visited the M+ museum, which permanently houses the prolific contemporary art collection of Swiss businessman and diplomat, Uli Sigg. In Shanghai, where Assistant State Secretary Schellenberg served as Consul General in 2010 to 2014, he reconnected with the Swiss business community.

Switzerland and China's bilateral relationship is founded on regular dialogues on a broad range of topics including environment, development cooperation, human rights, immigration, education, science and finance.

There are 700 subsidiaries of Swiss companies in mainland China (plus another 233 subsidiaries in Hong Kong) which employ 230'000 people in mainland China (plus 25'000 in Hong Kong) and posted a turnover of more than CHF 52 billion in 2021 (plus 9.4 billion in HK).

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2023 will mark the 10th anniversary of the signing of a bilateral free trade agreement between the two countries.

Ambassador Schellenberg has served Switzerland as a diplomat since 1991, with postings in Bangkok, Stockholm, Mexico City and Shanghai, where he was Consul General from 2010 to 2014. He has since served as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and the Argentine Republic and was appointed, in 2022, as Head of the Asia and Pacific Division and Assistant State Secretary for Asia and Pacific at the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern.

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