

## Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

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### Media Release

## Aid for China following the earthquake in Sichuan province

15.05.2008

**Switzerland is deeply moved by the terrible earthquake which hit the Chinese province of Sichuan on Monday 12 May, in which according to provisional estimates at least 15 000 people have died, hundreds of thousands are missing, countless numbers are injured and serious damage to property has been caused. The Federal Council expresses the sympathy and the solidarity of the Swiss people to the Chinese government and people. As a first emergency measure, Switzerland will provide CHF 400 000 for needs on the ground. Other measures will be taken in response to developments and to requests by the People's Republic of China.**

In a letter to his Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao sent on 14 May, the President of the Confederation Pascal Couchepin promised that "Switzerland is ready to provide assistance to the People's Republic of China at very short notice."

From around midday on 12 May, the humanitarian aid crisis unit of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) within the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) was activated. It is in constant contact with the Chinese authorities, UN agencies and international organisations on the spot. An offer of aid has been addressed to China via the Swiss embassy in Beijing and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a list of the most urgent needs on Thursday 15 May.

Initially the Confederation will contribute CHF 400 000 from the budgets of the SDC and the Swiss Red Cross (SRC). This will be used essentially to buy tents, blankets, jerrycans and other first aid items.

In the long term, the SDC is already financing a training programme in China for 20 to 30 instructors on search and rescue methods during earthquakes. Up to now these instructors have helped to train 200 dog handlers and rescue workers who are members of the Chinese International Search and Rescue Team (CISAR). They are now working in and around the earthquake epicentre in Sichuan.

In the following phase, these instructors will train rescue teams (USAR Teams) in 18 Chinese provinces. For this purpose the Chinese Earthquake Administration, with the assistance of the SDC, has constructed a huge training centre in Beijing, equipped with all modern facilities for training teams. This centre is due to be opened on 26 May.

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