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EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND IN CHINA

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Media release

Schengen-Visa valid for Switzerland starting 12th December 2008 Facilitated access to Switzerland for Chinese travellers

Starting 12th December 2008, the Swiss-EU Schengen cooperation will be operational. This means that Switzerland will start issuing Schengen-Visa valid for a maximum stay of three months. These Swiss Schengen-visa will not only allow travel in Switzerland but also in the whole Schengen area. Conversely, Chinese passport holders with a valid Schengen visa issued by other Schengen-states will also be able to enter Switzerland without an additional Swiss visa. This is the result of the bilateral Schengen agreement signed in October 2004 between Switzerland and the European Union. This new development will facilitate travel in Europe for Chinese passport holders.

On 27th November 2008, the Council of the European Union (EU) officially approved the entry of Switzerland into the Schengen area. This concludes a long process which started in 2002 with the launch of a second round of bilateral negotiations between Switzerland and the EU on increased cooperation, notably in the field of migration, visas and internal security. In the framework of Schengen cooperation, travel within the EU has been made easier as systematic identity controls at the common borders between the Schengen states (internal borders) are cancelled, while controls are intensified at Schengen external borders. At the same time a number of measures improves international justice and police cooperation in the fight against crime.

For Chinese passport holders, this development means concretely that Switzerland will start issuing Schengen visas on 15th December 2008 for maximal three months trips to Switzerland. This Swiss Schengen visa will also be valid to enter the territory of all other Schengen member states. Swiss official representations in China will adopt Schengen procedures when issuing visas. Conversely, Chinese passport holders with a valid Schengen visa issued by another Schengen member state will be able to enter Swiss territory without an additional Swiss visa.

As a non-European Union (EU) member situated in the heart of Europe and completely surrounded by Schengen member states, Switzerland's integration into the Schengen area represents a natural development and a further step in its cooperation with the European Union.

*For additional information, please check the following website
(<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs/asia/vchn/embbei/visa.html>)*

or contact the Visa Section of the Embassy of Switzerland at:

Telephone: 0086-10-85 32 87 55

Fax: 0086-10-65 32 62 10

Email: bei.visa@eda.admin.ch