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Media Release

60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and China

13.09.2010

Tuesday 14 September will mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China. Since 1950, and especially since the policy of opening and reform in China, bilateral relations have steadily intensified and diversified. In the course of 2010, various events will be held in Switzerland and in China to celebrate this anniversary.

Switzerland was one of the first western countries to recognise the government of the People's Republic of China. Diplomatic relations were established on 14 September 1950. This laid the foundations for the good, varied and dynamic relations that Switzerland and China enjoy today.

The People's Republic is one of Switzerland's main partners in Asia, as underlined by the numerous and regular visits at the highest level between the two countries. In January 2010, Deputy Prime Minister of the State Council of the People's Republic of China Li Keqiang paid an official visit to Bern. This was followed by an official visit in July by WU Bangguo, speaker of the Chinese parliament. In June Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey travelled to Beijing and Shanghai and conducted the political dialogue on bilateral regional and global issues on the basis of the memorandum of understanding signed in 2007. In August of this year in Beijing, President of the Confederation Doris Leuthard signed a statement of intent with China on the start of negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement.

There is a wide spectrum of subjects in the bilateral agreements between the two countries, including politics, business, migration, science and technology, education, environment, health, tourism and culture. Contacts at the level of parliament, cantons, provinces and towns as well as civil society (researchers, artists, tourists) have steadily intensified in recent years. In 1991 Switzerland initiated its first ever human rights dialogue - with China. It has continued regularly since then, focusing in each case on different priority areas.

Since 2002, China has been Switzerland's main trading partner in Asia. Bilateral trade relations are developing very dynamically. Today China is our third largest supplier globally and is the fourth largest export market for Switzerland after the EU, the USA and Japan. Switzerland is one of the few western countries to have a positive trade balance with China. It is represented by an embassy in Beijing to which a Swiss Business Hub is attached and by three general consulates in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Since 2008 Swissnex in Shanghai has been promoting networking between educational institutions in China and in Switzerland.

In the course of 2010 various events will be organised to celebrate the anniversary year. On 14 September Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey will open the photograph

exhibition Happy@60 initiated by the FDFA. It will be opened simultaneously in Bern and in Beijing. For this exhibition, Chinese photographer Zhu Yinghao and Swiss photographer Petri de Pità were commissioned to portray the lives of 60-year-old men and women in China and Switzerland from the viewpoint of happiness. In Shanghai Swiss light artist Gerry Hofstetter will illuminate Shanghai landmarks - the Lupu Bridge (on 13. 9.) and the prestigious marine promenade Bund (on 14 and 15.9.) to mark the 60th anniversary.

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Last modification: 08.09.2010

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