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Media Release

Human rights dialogue between Switzerland and China

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The eleventh round of the human rights dialogue between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China was held on 9 and 10 March 2011 in Bern in an open and constructive atmosphere. Particular emphasis was given to the status of minorities. The discussions also focused on various cooperation projects, for example in the area of the administration of punishments and on the dimension of human rights in the economy.

Switzerland and the People's Republic of China have been conducting a human rights dialogue since 1991 with the aim of encouraging an improvement of the human rights situation. To this end, the dialogue is supplemented by an exchange of experts.

The discussions focused in particular on issues such as the death penalty, torture, the status and situation of minorities in Switzerland and China, freedom of religion, as well as on issues related to detention in the two countries, to the UN Human Rights Council's Review Conference and the Universal Periodic Review.

A visit on 10 March to the bilingual city of Biel enabled more in-depth discussions on the status of minorities and also included a presentation of the French-speaking minority in the Canton of Bern, of the administration of a bilingual city and of a pilot bilingual education programme.

The parties agreed to continue a number of cooperation projects, such as an exchange of experts in the field of the administration of punishments as well as on the dimension of human rights in the economy.

The delegation of the People's Republic of China was composed of experts in the fields of human rights, justice, public security, the economy, minorities and religions. The Swiss delegation was headed by Paul Koller, Ambassador for Human Rights Issues, and was comprised of representatives of the FDFA, the Federal Department of Home Affairs and an external expert on the administration of punishments.

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