



Working meeting with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Davos

Bern, 21.01.2015 - President Simonetta Sommaruga, Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf and Federal Councillor Alain Berset today met with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at the Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. Talks focused on cooperation in the business and finance sector.

President Simonetta Sommaruga played host to Li Keqiang in the Town Hall in Davos. In her welcoming address, President Sommaruga recognised the excellent relationship that the two countries have enjoyed for many years and praised the bilateral relations which this year mark their 65th anniversary. She also stressed the importance of the free trade agreement between China and Switzerland, which came into force in July 2014, and underlined the importance of the dialogue on cooperation in various sectors, such as the environment, finance, migration and education.

As part of regular talks on migration covering a variety of topics, negotiations were recently concluded on an agreement to abolish the visa obligation for diplomatic passports. The agreement has now been initialled. In addition, President Sommaruga and Premier Keqiang agreed to hold the next round of bilateral talks on human rights in Switzerland in March.

Federal Council welcomes efforts to establish Chinese banks in Switzerland

China is pressing ahead with the internationalisation of its currency, the renminbi (RMB). Switzerland has a clear interest in playing its part in this development and establishing its financial centre as a hub for RMB business. The Federal Council is looking forward to welcoming Chinese banks to Switzerland and appreciates the very advanced efforts being made to establish these banks here.

In order to take account of the growing needs of Swiss and Chinese businesses in the financial sector, support has been given to efforts to optimise the general conditions for developing RMB transactions in Switzerland. Further important steps have been taken in this direction with the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and People's Bank of China (PBOC), and Switzerland's allocation of an investment quota of RMB 50 billion under the Chinese RMB Qualified Institutional Investor QFII Programme. Federal Councillor Widmer-Schlumpf intimated that she would use her working meeting in Beijing in early February to maintain the current momentum and to increase cooperation with China in the financial sector.

Strengthening cultural ties

Home affairs minister Alain Berset expressed the wish to strengthen cultural ties between China and Switzerland. He commended the current agreement on cultural property, which came into force in January 2014.

Agreements signed

On the fringes of the meeting, Federal Councillor Alain Berset and Zhang Yong, the minister responsible for the Chinese Food and Drug Administration (CFDA), signed a bilateral agreement relating to food, medicinal products and medical devices, and cosmetics. The agreement aims to increase cooperation between government authorities. A regular exchange should help foster a mutual understanding of the respective systems and the general legal position in the two countries.

In addition, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL) renewed their agreement on cooperation on scientific matters, which was concluded in 2010 for an initial five-year term. Thanks to the success of this cooperation, the agreement has been extended for a further five years.

In addition to the Federal Council delegation and the Chairman of the Governing Board of the Swiss National Bank, Thomas Jordan, four state secretaries were present at the meeting: Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, State Secretary for Economic Affairs (SECO), Yves Rossier, State Secretary FDFA, Jacques de Watteville, State Secretary for International Financial Matters, and Mario Gattiker, State Secretary for Migration.