

# Official visit to Bern and Neuchâtel by the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs

**Bern, 12.12.2016 - Today, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter had a meeting in Neuchâtel with Chinese Foreign Minister WANG Yi as part of the latter's official visit to Switzerland. The two men discussed bilateral relations and various current international issues. China's leading diplomat also paid a courtesy visit to the President of the Swiss Confederation, Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, in Bern.**

Mr Burkhalter received the Chinese Foreign Minister at the Hôtel du Peyrou in Neuchâtel towards the end of the morning. Their official talks – held within the 7th round of political dialogue between Switzerland and China – were followed by a lunch.

During these talks, Mr Burkhalter and Minister WANG Yi – accompanied by their delegation – expressed pleasure at the steady progress in bilateral relations made on migration and in the political, economic and financial domains.

The issue of human rights was also addressed specifically through the importance that Switzerland attaches to the Human Rights Council. Switzerland and China have been conducting a human rights dialogue since 1991, with the last meeting on this subject held in Beijing in March 2016.

The delegations also spoke about Chinese President XI Jinping's scheduled state visit to Switzerland at the beginning of 2017. Preparations for this visit are under way. Mr Schneider-Ammann had extended an invitation to Mr XI during his visit to China in April 2016.

Finally, Mr Burkhalter and Mr WANG also raised a number of topical international issues during their meeting, in particular the situation in Syria and security in Asia.

Before leaving for Neuchâtel, early in the morning China's top diplomat paid a courtesy visit to the President of the Swiss Confederation in Bern. During their talks, Mr Schneider-Ammann spoke about the initial effects of the free-trade agreement with China and noted that there has been a promising increase in Swiss exports to the Chinese market since the agreement's entry into force. The two men also exchanged views on the prospects of the Asian Economic Area.

In the economic domain, China is Switzerland's biggest trading partner in Asia. During 2015, the total volume of bilateral trade exceeded CHF 31 billion, 9% up on the previous year.

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### **Address for enquiries**

Information FDFA  
Bundeshaus West  
CH-3003 Bern  
Tel.: +41 58 462 31 53  
Fax: +41 58 464 90 47  
E-Mail: [info@eda.admin.ch](mailto:info@eda.admin.ch)

EAER  
Erik Reumann, Press Spokesperson  
Tel.: +41 79 303 81 53  
E-Mail: [erik.reumann@gs-wbf.admin.ch](mailto:erik.reumann@gs-wbf.admin.ch)

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