



## Media release

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### Switzerland and China celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relations

**The President of the Swiss Confederation, Simonetta Sommaruga, exchanged congratulatory messages with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday to mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries.**

“Especially in these times, when global exchanges are hindered by this pandemic, I would like to highlight the resilience of our relationship,” said President Sommaruga. “Despite different political, social and economic systems and major historical upheavals, our relationship over the last 70 years has remained grounded in openness and mutual respect. Both of our countries value international law, universal values, free trade, multilateral institutions and better protection of the environment.”

President Xi said in the telegram to President Sommaruga: “I attach great importance to the development of Sino-Swiss relations. On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I would like to work with you in a joint effort to constantly promote the Innovative Strategic Partnership between China and Switzerland in order to benefit our two countries and peoples.”

Switzerland and China formally established diplomatic relations on 14 September 1950, eight months after Switzerland officially recognised the People’s Republic of China on 17 January, making Switzerland one of the very early Western countries to do so.

Building on a foundation of trust and confidence, the bilateral relationship has continuously strengthened over these seven decades. More recent milestones include: Switzerland becoming the first continental European country to acknowledge China’s market economy status in 2007; a comprehensive bilateral Free Trade Agreement in 2013, the first between China and a continental European country; Switzerland joining the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank as one of the first European members; and in 2016, Switzerland and China entering into an Innovative Strategic Partnership, the first of its kind.

Switzerland and China have also seen frequent reciprocal visits of top officials since the 1990s. Jean-Pascal Delamuraz was the first Swiss President to visit China in 1996. Three years later, President Jiang Zemin paid a state visit to Switzerland, the first state visit by a Chinese president to Switzerland after the establishment of diplomatic ties. More recently, President Xi Jinping visited Switzerland in 2017, followed by Swiss President Ueli Maurer’s visit to China last year.

The private sector has played a central role in deepening Sino-Swiss ties, particularly after China's reform and opening up: Swiss elevator maker Schindler formed the first Sino-foreign industrial joint venture in 1980; Swiss bank UBS became the first foreign bank in 2018 to take a majority stake in its securities joint venture. China has remained Switzerland's biggest trading partner in Asia and its third largest trading partner globally since 2010; Switzerland is China's sixth largest trading partner in Europe.

Collaborations in education and culture have also flourished over the last decades, at state-provincial- and city-levels. In 1982, Zurich became the first Swiss city to establish a partnership with Chinese city of Kunming. The number of twinning provinces and cities have grown to 19 since. Switzerland was the first European country to open a tourism office in Beijing in 1998. The two countries delivered a major tourism collaboration in 2017, the "Switzerland-China Year of Tourism"; China now serves as Switzerland's third largest foreign source market for tourism and 2019 saw more than 1.8 million overnight stays by Chinese tourists.

Switzerland and China now hold regular dialogues on a large range of issues, including environment, development cooperation, human rights, education, science and finance.

The Ambassador of Switzerland to China Bernardino Regazzoni stated: "Switzerland will continue to engage with China in a spirit of pragmatism and openness, together facing - and providing solutions - to common global challenges."

**Additional link:** [Sino-Swiss bilateral relations](#)

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