



## Press release

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# Official visit to People's Republic of China by Ignazio Cassis

**Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, visited Beijing on 6 and 7 February, marking the resumption of the strategic dialogue between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China. This visit was part of Mr Cassis's tour of the Asia-Pacific region. Discussions in Beijing centred on priority bilateral issues and current international affairs.**

As part of his Asia-Pacific tour, Mr Cassis visited China on 6 and 7 February 2024. He was received in Beijing by his counterpart Wang Yi, director of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee Foreign Affairs Commission Office, and paid a courtesy call on Vice President Han Zheng. The meetings marked the resumption of regular dialogue between the Swiss and Chinese authorities. This visit is the first by a federal councillor to China since 2019 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Deepening the 'strategic partnership'

Mr Cassis and Mr Wang discussed the 'innovative strategic partnership' established between Switzerland and China in 2016, the main instrument of which is the strategic dialogue between the two countries' foreign ministries. The two ministers' discussions centred on international cooperation policy, trade and climate policy, as well as human rights issues – which are also the topic of a separate dialogue.

A review of the existing bilateral dialogues, in particular on economic, financial and scientific cooperation, allowed for an assessment of the dynamism and development potential of relations between the two countries. The two parties discussed the need to modernise the free trade agreement between the two countries. Support for Swiss companies in China and investment conditions were also discussed. The two ministers also discussed the simplification of visa procedures.

China remains Switzerland's third-largest trading partner, after the European Union and the United States. A new China strategy for the period 2025–28, setting out



Switzerland's objectives, values and interests in relation to China, will be submitted to the Federal Council at the end of 2024.

### **Promoting peace**

The two ministers also discussed the UN Security Council, in which Switzerland is an elected member until the end of 2024. They exchanged views on the war between Russia and Ukraine. Peace in Ukraine was the subject of extensive talks. Ways and conditions for peace were discussed, particularly in connection with Switzerland's commitment to organising a high-level conference on peace in Ukraine.

### **Tour of the Asia-Pacific region**

Mr Cassis' visit began with stops in India and South Korea. On 5 February, Mr Cassis met with Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in New Delhi. Discussions focused on strategic aspects of bilateral relations, such as the free-trade agreement. Potential ways of achieving a lasting peace in Ukraine were also on the agenda during the talks in India. On 6 February in Seoul, Mr Cassis and Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based international order and stressed the importance of multilateral diplomacy. As non-permanent members of the UN Security Council in 2024, Switzerland and the Republic of Korea discussed their joint efforts to promote peace and security, with a focus on Eastern Europe and East Asia.

On 8 February, Mr Cassis will conclude his trip with an official visit to the Philippines.

### **Link:**

[China Strategy 2021-2024](#)