



The Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation

Switzerland and China celebrate the entry into force of their free trade agreement

Bern, 01.07.2014 - Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann opened the ceremony to mark the entry into force of the free trade agreement between Switzerland and China at the Rhine port in Basel on Tuesday afternoon. This is the most important free trade agreement for Swiss foreign trade since the agreement with the European Union in 1972.

The comprehensive free trade agreement between Switzerland and China enters into force on 1 July 2014, almost a year to the day since Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann and his Chinese counterpart, Minister of Commerce Gao Hucheng, signed the agreement in Beijing on 6 July 2013. Swiss business, especially the export industry, has been keenly awaiting this day because its access to the Chinese market improves compared to that of its European competitors.

Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann invited representatives from business and government to the ceremony at the Rhine port in Basel, a place that best represents Switzerland's gateway to the world. The Chinese minister of commerce will be represented at the ceremony by China's ambassador to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Yu Jianhua. A ceremony to celebrate the free trade agreement will also be held simultaneously in the People's Republic of China. The director of SECO, State Secretary Marie-Gabrielle Ineichen-Fleisch, will be representing Switzerland at the celebrations in Beijing.

The People's Republic of China is Switzerland's most important trade partner in Asia. With a trade volume of over CHF 20 billion last year, China is the third most important trade partner worldwide after the EU and the USA.

The free trade agreement improves mutual market access for goods and services. With the agreement's entry into force, customs duties on the vast majority of bilateral trade will be abolished in full or in part (transitional periods apply in some areas), and legal certainty in bilateral economic relations and in the protection of intellectual property will be improved. Taken together, the free trade agreement and the bilateral agreement on labour and employment issues, which was concluded at the same time and which entered into force on 9 June, contribute to long-term economic development.

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