



## **Federal Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications**

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### **Switzerland agrees closer cooperation with China on transport and forestry**

**Bern, 30.05.2013 - Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard has signed two agreements in Beijing which will lead to closer cooperation between Switzerland and China in the fields of transport and forestry. The Head of the Federal Department for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC also met State Councillor Yang Jiechi and other ministers in the Chinese government.**

Ms Leuthard and Transport Minister Yang Chuantang have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that provides a framework for bilateral cooperation in the fields of road, rail and air transport. Specifically, they have agreed that Switzerland and China will cooperate on the development of technologies in transport security and environmental protection. In a series of discussions and workshops, experts from the two countries will cooperate on planning and developing integrated transport systems and large transport infrastructure projects, and constructing, maintaining and operating tunnels, bridges, roads and railways. Representatives from the administrative and technology sectors may also visit their counterparts. The Federal Council approved the agreement at its meeting on 15 May 2013.

Ms Leuthard has signed a further MoU with Zhao Shucong, head of the Chinese state forestry department. This agreement is designed to promote an exchange of expertise in forest management and protection. The Chinese authorities are interested in discovering how Switzerland manages its forests sustainably and how forest management is organised between forest owners and forest services. Switzerland, for its part, would like to address at source the problem of the introduction of forest pests - for example, from China. The Asian long-horned beetle is just one harmful organism which has recently been introduced into Europe.

Ms Leuthard paid a courtesy visit to State Councillor Yang Jiechi, minister responsible for foreign affairs, during which the recent visit to Switzerland by the Chinese Prime Minister was discussed as well as the free trade agreement, which is due to be concluded shortly.

She also held talks with the Chinese Minister of Water Resources, Chen Lei, regarding the cooperation between China and Switzerland in the field of natural hazards prevention, which has now been ongoing for more than ten years. Experts from both countries have built a climate measuring station in the Karakorum mountains in Xinjiang Province, 4700 metres above sea level, to observe a glacier and the formation of dangerous glacial lakes. New projects in other fields, such as dams, were also discussed. Federal Councillor Leuthard has invited Minister Chen to visit Switzerland's canton of Valais in spring 2014..

#### **Energy efficiency is key for Switzerland and China**

Ms Leuthard discussed the national and global developments in the energy sector with Vice Minister Wu Xinxiang, head of China's national energy authority. Both Switzerland and China are in the process of implementing measures to increase energy efficiency. However, the two countries have very different economic structures and are at very different stages of development: whereas Switzerland aims to stabilise its levels of power consumption, China would like to restrict its annual growth rate in power consumption to eight percent. China is pursuing a binding objective of reducing by 2015 energy intensity (units of energy consumption per unit of GDP) by sixteen percent compared with levels in 2010. The Top-10,000 programme committing the largest companies and the provincial governments to increase efficiency will play a large role in this. The Chinese government also intends to treble 2012-levels of domestic solar power production by 2014, in order to absorb some of the country's overcapacity in solar panel production. The ministers agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of energy.

Discussions with Environment Minister Zhou Shengxian centred on the implementation of the MoU signed in 2012 in which both countries agreed to facilitate the exchange of expertise and information in the fields of air pollution, waters protection, nature conservation and waste management. Switzerland has again declared itself willing to share its experiences in air quality control with China. Minister Zhou and Federal Councillor Leuthard discussed the most important results of the first meeting between the conferences of the parties to the three global chemical and waste management conventions, which took place at the beginning of May in Geneva.

Ms Leuthard is currently in Beijing at the invitation of the Water Resources Ministry. Tomorrow, Friday, she will travel on to Hong Kong, where she will hold talks with the transport and environment ministers of this special administrative district, as well as with representatives from

the business and scientific community.

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