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Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga meets Chinese Minister for Justice Wu Aiying

Bern, 29.10.2013 - Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga, head of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP), met the Minister for Justice of the People's Republic of China, Wu Aiying, on Tuesday in Bern. The visit focussed on co-operation between the two countries in judicial matters and on co-operation within the dialogue on human rights aimed at strengthening democracy and the rule of law.

During their meeting the two ministers discussed the dialogue between Switzerland and China on human rights. The dialogue is planned to continue in November and aims to bring about a lasting improvement in the protection of human rights. Mrs Sommaruga emphasised the importance of this dialogue: human rights, she said, were an essential basis for peace and stability. It was important to strengthen the judicial system, promote constitutional democracy and protect minority rights, as well as strengthen the role of civil society whose task it was to follow government activity with a critical eye. This, in turn, required the freedom of expression, Mrs Sommaruga said.

In the field of legal co-operation, the two ministers discussed a possible agreement on exchanging experience and information in various judicial matters. Talks also covered the possibility of a co-operation agreement on mutual assistance. Back in May 2013, Switzerland and China agreed to establish a task force to work together at an operative level and identify possible difficulties in co-operation between the two countries.

As part of the dialogue on human rights Switzerland and China have maintained a long-standing exchange on the execution of sentences. On Monday the Chinese justice minister visited the Federal Supreme Court in Lausanne, where she was informed about the Swiss judicial system, cantonal responsibilities and the tasks of the Federal Supreme Court. She also paid a visit to the Witzwil penal institution in the Bernese Seeland region to acquaint herself with the features of serving custodial sentences in an open prison.

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