



## Press release

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# Switzerland strengthens cooperation with China on the environment

**Switzerland and China will cooperate more strongly to ensure that economic growth can be shaped in a more sustainable and environmentally-sound manner. To that end, Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard and the Chinese Trade Minister Chen Deming signed a Memorandum on the intensification of technical cooperation in the field of environmental technology in Zurich on 26 February 2009. The head of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs and the Chinese Trade Minister opened an economic and trade forum with the aim of intensifying relations between Swiss and Chinese companies.**

In view of China's massive and sustained economic growth, the Chinese industrial sector faces the need for significant expansion and modernisation. As such it is increasingly confronted with environmental and climate policy challenges, which require the more efficient use of resources (energy, water, raw materials) and the use of modern technologies. It is against this backdrop that China is interested in stronger cooperation with Switzerland.

Switzerland's cooperation with China should follow on from the successful experiences to date in the field of climate and trade policy. As part of economic development policy, SECO, for example, has contributed to the drafting of a national waste strategy in China, which encourages the economically and environmentally sensible recycling of waste electrical and electronic equipment and concepts to reduce the environmental footprint. Now the focus should shift to the targeted strengthening of environmental technology exchanges between the two countries at company level. To this end, a joint working group is to be established to examine the potential for cooperation in the areas of technology transfer, energy efficiency, renewable energies and the efficient use of resources and submit proposals on the shape of this cooperation.

As announced during the visit by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to Bern in January, Trade Minister Chen Deming is conducting an economic mission to Switzerland accompanied by a high-level, official delegation with representatives from 100 Chinese companies. The reason for the visit is to make a concrete contribution to tackling the economic crisis, prevent protectionism and re-establish confidence in trade. Some Swiss firms have concluded agreements to that effect with Chinese companies. The occasion has also been used as an opportunity to organise a Sino-Swiss economic and trade forum to focus on environmental issues.

Economic relations between Switzerland and China have long been outstanding. The many government-level consultations have played a decisive role in that respect. China is already one of the most important foreign markets for the Swiss economy. Bilateral trade with China has developed extremely dynamically in recent years. In 2008, economic exchanges with China even reached new record levels (exports to China: CHF6.11bn (+12.8%); imports from China: CHF4.99bn (+4.4%); balance of trade: CHF+1.12bn, an increase of +8.8% compared to the previous year). Switzerland is consequently one of the country's to run a balance of trade surplus with China.

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