

## PRESS RELEASE

### Swiss Centers China: 20 years of supporting Swiss companies in China

- *The Swiss Centers Foundation celebrated **its 20-year anniversary** with an event on October 16 in Neuchatel. Over twenty years, Swiss Centers has **served more than 350 companies** in China.*
- ***Jean-Jacques de Dardel**, the former Swiss Ambassador to China, **takes up the Presidency** of the Swiss Centers Foundation from 2020. The newly established Swiss Centers Group SA will serve as the executive business unit, providing practical services to assist the Swiss companies to be successful in the Chinese market.*
- *Besides supporting Swiss enterprises in the Far East, **Swiss Centers China also stepped up during the COVID-19 crisis** to manage the sourcing, quality-control and transport of life-saving PPE materials from China to Switzerland.*

Shanghai (October 16, 2020) – While celebrating its 20-year anniversary with an event in Neuchatel on October 16, the Swiss Centers experts looked back at two successful and exciting decades and discussed current and future challenges.

#### Lowering the hurdles

In 2000, Swiss Centers China (SCC, [www.swisscenters.org](http://www.swisscenters.org)) was founded as a non-profit, Sino-Swiss public-private partnership. Ever since, it has grown into the largest cluster of Swiss enterprises in Asia, with five locations in the East coast of China. “In the last twenty years, we have served more than 350 companies in China, SMEs as well as large enterprises. Our specialists helped establish 30 production companies and more than 50 commercial offices for Swiss companies,” summarizes Nicolas Musy, Delegate of the Board of SCC. From virtual or instant office space, ready-to-use workshops and showrooms all the way to government relations and technology transfer – Swiss Centers lowers the market entry barriers into China for Swiss companies.

“The year of 2020 also marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Swiss Chinese diplomatic relations,” comments Jean-Jacques de Dardel, the former Swiss Ambassador to China, who took up the Presidency of the Swiss Centers Foundation at the beginning of the year. “Through the years, China has become an important partner as the third largest market for Swiss exports. Swiss Centers has been an active contributor in facilitating the economic relations between the two countries, and I gladly took up this new role to engage, to facilitate and to support the Swiss businesses in working with China.”

The organizational structure of SCC has been adapted to expand the service spectrum and meet future challenges. The newly established Swiss Centers Group SA will serve as the executive

business unit. “We want to further develop and diversify our services to Swiss enterprises. Especially in times like these, with challenging logistics and restricted travelling, many companies need a strong representation in China and tailor-made organizational support to access the market efficiently,” explains Zhen Xiao, CEO of the Swiss Centers Group. “Our centers in China serve as a platform and a practical solution provider to meet such needs, whether it is to facilitate trade, to participate in fairs or to conduct digital marketing in China.”

With one of its centers located in the first China Pilot Free Zone at Shanghai and through its know-how and network, Swiss Centers has been a strong facilitator for many Swiss businesses in utilizing the Sino-Swiss Free Trade Agreement. In partnership with the Swiss Consulate in Shanghai, Swiss Centers organizes annual roundtables on FTA implementation with the officials of Shanghai customs and the Swiss business representatives. Together with the University of St. Gallen, Swiss Centers also conducts research and publishes the report on the utilization of the Sino-Swiss FTA.

### **Sourcing PPE**

The extraordinary challenges of 2020 showed how important a strong and practical competence in China can be. Upon request of the Geneva University Hospital and other Swiss institutions, Swiss Centers China oversaw and managed the sourcing, quality control and transport of masks and medical supplies to Switzerland. Altogether, more than 25 million masks and emergency room equipment were transported to Switzerland on repurposed SWISS passenger planes. Together with their partners, Swiss Centers have managed the complicated sourcing process in different Chinese provinces, controlling the quality and certification, dealing with the custom declarations and ensuring the timely delivery. “The PPE market was crazily volatile, and the tightening regulations from the customs made it extremely challenging,” recounts Nicolas Musy. “The Swiss companies and institutions rose to the challenge. This Covid crisis is painful, but it also brought out the best of the Swiss entrepreneurial and innovative spirit!”

Today, with the well-established supply chain of quality products, Swiss Centers continue to support hospitals, institutions, and enterprises for their needs of PPE.

### **Testimonies**

20-years on the ground support was appreciated by many Swiss companies, including the cutting tool specialist Fraisa Group and the health care consultancy Widler & Schiemann, both members of the Swiss Centers China.

*“While Fraisa had already been active in the Chinese market through trading partners since 1990s, the real significant growth came after our decision of having our own team in China. In 2018, Fraisa Group founded its Chinese subsidiary thanks to the outstanding network and support of the Swiss Centers and set up its office and warehouse in the Swiss Centers facility at the Shanghai Pilot Free Zone. Today we employ 12 people and generate a turnover of CHF 3 million with an annual growth rate of >20%. Even during the corona crisis, our growth in China has continued. The Chinese market is the biggest market for cutting tools and very important for us. And therefore we want to continue to invest in China, increase our market presence and expand the company there.”*

Thomas Nägelin, Sales & Marketing Director and Member of the Executive Board, Fraisa Group

*"We entered China because the country is undergoing a fundamental transformation in the health sector: an impressive growth of start-up companies that are developing innovative health care solutions. We can help our clients understanding the regulatory landscape in major markets such as the US and EU and set up the infrastructure. A second reason was the realisation that foreign companies wanting to enter the Chinese market need support to learn how to navigate the Chinese regulatory waters. When we decided to establish a commercial entity in China we got very effective support by experts of the Swiss Center Shanghai to navigate the Chinese legal and financial hurdles. We highly appreciate having the Swiss Center Shanghai as sort of anchor to our home country while doing business in China."*

Beat Ed Widler, Managing Partner, Widler & Schiemann, WSQMS



*Aline Ballaman (General Manager SCC), Zhen Xiao (CEO Swiss Centers Group), Jean-Jacques de Dardel (President Swiss Centers Foundation), Nicolas Musy (Delegate of the Board of SCC).*



*Mr. Lorenzo Stoll, Head of Western Switzerland at SWISS and Mr. Zhen Xiao, CEO of the Swiss Centers China.*



*The SWISS Boeing 777 landed in Geneva on April 21.*

**About Swiss Centers China (SCC):** Founded in 2000 as a non-profit, Sino-Swiss, public-private partnership, Swiss Centers China is by far the largest cluster of Swiss enterprises in Asia. With five locations strategically located on the dynamic East coast of China (Shanghai and Tianjin), SCC does not only offer virtual and instant office space as well as ready-to-use workshops and showrooms, but also supports member companies with government relations, technology transfer and a broad network of experts. SCC served more than 350 companies in China – both SMEs and large enterprises. Among others, the Swiss Centers experts have established 30 production companies and more than 50 commercial offices for Swiss companies. SCC also conducts surveys and expert analyses of China's business opportunities and challenges, and at the same time promotes the *Swiss Made* brand and Switzerland as a country for innovation and an industrial leader. For more information, kindly visit: [www.swisscenters.org](http://www.swisscenters.org).

**Media Contact:** Bernhard Hagen, Tel: +86-138-1834-8244, [press@swisscenters.org](mailto:press@swisscenters.org)