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## The Federal Authorities of the Swiss Confederation

### **Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin signs agreement on scientific and technological cooperation between Switzerland and Japan**

**Bern, 10.07.2007 - Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin and Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso signed a bilateral agreement in Tokyo today on future scientific and technological cooperation between Switzerland and Japan. The agreement falls in line with the strategy laid out in the Federal Council's Message on the Promotion of Education, Research and Innovation for the years 2008-2011 whereby Switzerland's ties in the field of education and research are to be expanded to include suitable non-European partner countries that are interested in bilateral cooperation.**

Following recent years of round table discussions on science and technology (S&T), Switzerland and Japan have now entered into a bilateral agreement in this area. While the agreement establishes the terms of future cooperation it does not indicate the priorities or themes that will guide the two countries' joint research endeavours. These matters will be ironed out in separate discussions within and between the public and private sector in both countries. Along this line, Swiss and Japanese institutions will play an important role. Having worked together on several occasions in the past, these institutions share a strong interest in many different scientific fields, ranging from life sciences, nanotechnologies and information and communication technologies to environmental sciences, humanities and social sciences.

In each country, various institutions will be chosen to act as Leading Houses, which means that they will be called upon to coordinate bilateral cooperation between the two countries and ensure that all universities and research institutes are involved at the national level.

Funding for bilateral S&T activities will come mainly from each country's existing institutions that are responsible for promoting research. In Switzerland, these include the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), the Innovation Promotion Agency (CTI) and individual participating universities. Switzerland's two federal institutes of technology (ETH in Zurich and EPFL in Lausanne) as well as their respective research institutes will also play a major role in cooperation with Japan. Their commitment to international bilateral cooperation is explicitly stated in the Federal Council's performance mandate for 2008-2011.

#### **Development of Swiss bilateral scientific and research policies**

The S&T agreement with Japan falls in line with the bilateral strategy described in the Message on the Promotion of Education, Research and Innovation for the years 2008-2011. Switzerland intends to sign similar agreements on education, research and innovation with suitable non-European partner countries that have made outstanding achievements in scientific and technological fields. Within the framework of the Message, a credit of CHF 43 million has been set aside to help fund specific cooperation activities pursued by Swiss universities.

Alongside Japan, the Federal Council's list of priority countries also includes China, India, Russia, South Korea, South Africa, Brazil and Chile. Implementation of the strategy is at various stages in each priority country.

Bilateral agreements in the area of S&T were already signed with India (EPF Lausanne as Leading House) and China (ETH Zurich as Leading House) back in 2003. It was on the basis of these agreements that pilot programmes in the fields of life sciences and ICTs could be developed and funded. The outcome of these pilot programmes was very positive: considerable potential for cooperation was observed and there was strong interest expressed to work with Swiss scientists. Cooperation will therefore be developed in the coming years.

In terms of scientific cooperation with Russia, South Korea and South Africa (University of Basel as

Leading House) bilateral agreements should be signed within the year. The FDHA's State Secretariat for Education and Research is still in the information-gathering phase as far as bilateral scientific cooperation with Brazil and Chile is concerned.

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