



Press release

Thursday, 8 June 2006

Head of the European Environment Agency visits the President of the Confederation Leuenberger

Switzerland has been a member of the European Environment Agency (EEA) since 1 April 2006. To start the concrete implementation of the agreement between Switzerland and the EU, on 8 June 2006, EEA Executive Director Professor Jacqueline McGlade and Lars-Erik Liljelund, Chairman of the EEA Management Board came to Switzerland for a working visit. During their conversation with President Moritz Leuenberger they discussed the state of the environment, perspectives in Europe and the EEA assessment of Swiss environmental policy.

For many years Switzerland appeared as a white area in the middle of maps of the state of the environment in Europe. This situation changed on 1 April 2006, as part of the second bilateral agreements, with Swiss membership of the European Environment Agency (EEA, see fact sheet 1). As a full member of the EEA, Switzerland will take part in the European Environmental Information and Observation Network (EIONET, see fact sheet 2). Thus from now on it will be possible to compare Swiss data and those of the EU on the state of the environment.

During her country visit, and to start the cooperation with Switzerland as a full member of the EEA, on 8 June 2006 the head of the EEA came to Bern on a working visit. EEA Executive Director Jacqueline McGlade and the Chairman of the EEA Management Board Lars-Erik Liljelund appeared to be pleased at Switzerland's full membership. During their conversation with President Moritz Leuenberger they discussed the state of the environment, perspectives in Europe and the EEA assessment of Swiss environmental policy.

Federal Office for the Environment as an information hub

The Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) is responsible as national focal point for contacts and exchanges of data with the EEA. The Director of the FOEN (Dr Bruno Oberle) represents Switzerland on the EEA Management Board. During her

working visit, the head of the EEA therefore also met the Director of the FOEN and those at the FOEN responsible for cooperation with the EEA. Jacqueline McGlade and Lars-Erik Liljelund were given an overview of environmental observation and environmental reporting in Switzerland, and of the cooperation between the federal government and the cantons. Bruno Oberle also stressed that research and business can benefit from Switzerland's membership of the EEA, with the EEA calling for tenders for studies and projects worth 13 to 17 million Euros per year.

Information

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Annexes

- Fact sheet 1: EEA: the hub of European environmental data
- Fact sheet 2: EIONET: Environmental Information and Observation Network

Internet

- FOEN – Communication of 30 March 2006 on EEA membership:
<http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch/buwal/de/news/artikel/20060330/01358/index.html>
- FOEN – technical area of environmental observation:
http://www.umwelt-schweiz.ch/buwal/de/fachgebiete/fg_ubeobacht/index.html
- EEA website: <http://org.eea.europa.eu/>