

PRESS RELEASE

Teamwork and innovative spirit: 10 million masks and emergency room equipment for Swiss hospitals flown from Shanghai on repurposed planes

- *Two flights of repurposed SWISS passenger airplanes, an Airbus A340 and a Boeing 777, brought 10 million medical masks and emergency room equipment from Shanghai to Switzerland. One more flight is planned for early May.*
- *“Wild East”: The price of polypropylene non-woven, the raw material of masks, has been multiplied by 20 since January. Mask prices have been multiplied by 5. Fluctuating quality, unreliable supply chains and changing export regulations make professional sourcing inevitable.*
- *In order to supply the Swiss hospitals quickly and with the best quality material possible, experts of China Integrated and the Swiss Centers China managed the sourcing and logistics process, while quality control is done with SGS and its laboratory in Shanghai.*
- *This initiative complements the efforts of public authorities, hospitals, and private individuals to ensure the supply of Switzerland with protective medical equipment.*

Shanghai (April 23, 2020) – Exceptional times call for exceptional measures: On April 12 and 21, two repurposed SWISS passenger airplanes, an Airbus A340 and a Boeing 777, landed in Zurich and Geneva and brought much needed medical masks and emergency room equipment from China. In early May, a third flight is planned to bring more goods. “With these three flights, we transport over 12 million medical masks of the types IIR and II, emergency room equipment as well as gowns and gloves for hospitals in Switzerland. We work on continuing to transport medical supplies on weekly basis in collaboration with SWISS,” reports Nicolas Musy, Delegate of the Board of Swiss Centers in China (SCC), a non-profit organization that lowers the market entry barriers into Asia for Swiss companies.

The SWISS planes were specifically prepared to transport the important goods. Mr. Lorenzo Stoll, Head of Western Switzerland at SWISS: “In the Boeing 777, where usually 340 passengers travel, 215m³ of material was stored in the cargo hold, the passenger cabin and in the overhead luggage space. It was the first SWISS cargo flight from Shanghai to Geneva.”

Sourcing in the “Wild East”

Experts of China Integrated (www.ch-ina.com) and the Swiss Centers China (www.swisscenters.org) were responsible for the sourcing and quality control of the medical equipment in China, a task that requires inventive spirit and a hands-on approach in times like these: “The price of polypropylene, the raw material of masks, was multiplied by 20 since January. Mask prices have gone up 5 times and continue to rise. 38’000 new mask companies have popped up all over the country in 2020 – for some, mask machines have become cash printers,” explains Mr. Musy.

All of this made obtaining fast deliveries from trustworthy, high-quality suppliers nearly impossible. Furthermore, business practices have changed in the midst of the crisis. Mr. Zhen Xiao, CEO of the Swiss Centers China: “Manufacturers require 100% prepayment and announce the delivery date after they received the payment. Some of them refuse on-site inspections. The whole process is very difficult to manage.” In addition, the export control measures in China have tightened and new regulations are issued at any time with immediate effect, potentially preventing the loading of cargo when a chartered plane is already on the way and paid for.

Quality control in SGS laboratory

The type IIR masks for Switzerland were bought from different manufacturers in China’s Hubei province, where the Coronavirus first appeared in late 2019. Emergency room equipment was sourced from Shenzhen in China’s South. Before being shipped, inspections are conducted by SGS, one of the world’s leading inspection, verification, testing and certification companies.

Swiss innovative mindset and teamwork

Networks of long relationships and friendships in China, good will and cooperation, ingenuity, solution-oriented mindsets, and persistence from many Swiss organizations pooled together allowed to overcome the numerous difficulties in record time. This initiative complements the efforts of public authorities, hospitals, and private individuals to ensure the supply of Switzerland with protective medical equipment. Mr. Zhen Xiao concludes: “Crises are painful, but they also have their positive sides. This one joins people together and brings out the best of the Swiss entrepreneurial and innovative spirit!”



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



Millions of masks where usually passengers sit. Swiss Centers China, China Integrated and SWISS airlines organized the sourcing and transport of much needed medical equipment for Swiss hospitals.



Mr. Patrick Odier, Managing Partner of the Lombard Odier Group with Mr. Bertrand Levrat, CEO of the Geneva University Hospital.



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 300 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.

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