

EU-China relations

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Bastiaan BELDER (EFD, NL) on EU-China relations.

It highlights that the EU-China strategic partnership is of great importance for relations between the EU and China and that this relationship is paramount for finding answers to global concerns, such as global and regional security, the economic crisis, energy security, the promotion of democracy and human rights, as well as in creating a framework to address bilateral concerns between the EU and China.

However, according to Members, a strategic partnership requires a **strong commitment to mutual responsibility** and a good level of confidence, and must be based on universal values.

(1) EU-China Strategic Partnership and cooperation: the report supports and encourages the almost 60 sectoral dialogues between the EU and China, with the conviction that an enhanced and highly developed partnership will be mutually beneficial to both the EU and China. Members wish, however, to see a strengthening of these dialogues in the fields of human rights, the environment, security, energy and in particular the fight against counterfeit products, in view of its impact on public health and safety. Moreover, they state that the **concept of strategic partnership must be better defined** and call for increased trade and economic relations with China to go hand in hand with considerable progress in the political dialogue on human rights and the rule of law.

Members expect Member States to give the European External Action Service (EEAS) and especially its Delegation in Beijing a **clear mandate** to strengthen the EU-China Strategic Partnership. They also call for the EU to implement a **long-term strategy** vis-à-vis China, providing operational coordination both between the institutions of the Union and between the Union and its Member States.

The report emphasises that China is not only the world's second-largest economy and biggest exporter in the global economy, but also an increasingly **important political power**.

(2) Internal situation: the report recognises the significant progress made as regards social policy. However, a successful economic policy is seriously threatened by **corruption** scandals. Members believe that only **effective political reforms** aimed at shaping inclusive, democratic and accountable institutions that reflect China's ethnic, religious, political and social diversity will pave the way for building sustainable growth and stability.

As regards **forced abortions**, although they are **strictly illegal** in China, family-planning officials repeatedly coerce women into inhumane practices, such as forced abortions or sterilisation. Members support Chinese voices calling for an **end to the one-child policy**.

(3) Human rights and democracy: Members admire and support the courage and activism of those Chinese citizens acting in socially responsible ways to promote and defend universally recognised social and human rights. The report urges the Chinese leadership to **encourage civil responsibility** and to comply with **minimum social standards**. Members underline the importance of compliance with, and rapid implementation of, **all International Labour Organisation rules**, including the right freely to form independent trade unions. Members take the view that **the EU should not allow market access for goods which have been produced by means of child labour** or in facilities which gravely violate international labour standards and human rights, such as prison camps.

The Chinese authorities are called upon to reconsider their policy on **capital punishment**.

As regards the freedom of the **media**, the report stresses that the Strategic Partnership between the EU and China includes freedom of the media on a reciprocal basis and it deplors the control and **censorship of the internet** by the Chinese authorities.

On **religion**, Members urge the Chinese authorities to pull back on policies and practices that curtail any citizen's fundamental right to **freedom of religion and belief**.

The report acknowledges efforts made in the area of controlling and carefully applying the **death penalty** in China, but remains concerned at the fact that the Chinese Government is still maintaining its policy of not releasing details of the number of prisoners executed annually, keeping information on the death penalty a state secret.

(4) External situation: the report urges China to use its **global position** in a more responsible way, in particular in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), where it holds a permanent seat and a right of veto. It stresses, in this connection, the need for China to abandon its veto position on any UNSC resolution allowing intervention in Syria in order to halt the civil war. Members call on China to review its policy of "non-interference in countries' internal affairs" in cases of severe breaches of international humanitarian law. The report considers that China can play a pivotal role in stabilising **Afghanistan** through a soft power approach and urges the development of close cooperation between the EU and China on this issue.

Members call on the EU to remain vigilant about the political, economic, social and environmental impact of China's growing investments in **Africa**.

The report encourages China, the world's biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, to play a more proactive and constructive role in promoting cooperation within the global community in order to tackle **climate change**.

Lastly, Members urge China to make it an absolute priority to ensure legal certainty for foreign companies, by upholding the principles of equality, reciprocity and corporate social responsibility.