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EU strategy towards China

European Parliament resolution on the Commission communication to the Council and the European Parliament on a EU Strategy towards China: Implementation of the 1998 Communication and future steps for a more effective EU policy (COM(2001) 265 – C5-0098/2001 – 2001/2045(COS))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Commission communication (COM(2001) 265 – C5-0098/2001),
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled "Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships" (COM(2001) 469),
- having regard to the Commission report to the Council and the European Parliament on the implementation of the communication "Building a comprehensive partnership with China" (COM(2000) 552),
- having regard to its resolution of 12 June 1997 on the Commission communication on a long-term policy for China-Europe Relations (COM(1995) 279)¹,
- having regard to the Commission communication "Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China" (COM(1998) 181),
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 29 June 1998 endorsing the above communication,
- having regard to the EU-China Bilateral Agreement of 19 May 2000 paving the way for China's accession to the WTO,
- having regard to the numerous EU-China cooperation projects, in particular, but not exclusively, in the field of human rights,
- having regard to its resolution of 20 January 2000 on the human rights situation in China²,
- having regard to the tens of thousands of Chinese citizens transported each year by criminal traffickers across Asia and Eastern Europe to the European Union,
- having regard to its earlier resolutions on China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 1992 on the situation in Tibet³,

¹ OJ C 200, 30.6.1997, p. 158.

² OJ C 304, 24.10.2000, p. 209.

³ OJ C 21, 25.1.1993, p. 78.

- having regard to the address to the European Parliament by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on 24 October 2001,
 - having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2001 on Beijing's bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games¹,
 - having regard to the Fourth EU-China summit held in Brussels on 5 September 2001,
 - having regard to the exchange of views on EU-China relations held in the European Parliament on 12 September 2001,
 - having regard to the discussions held during the visits of the EP's Delegation for Relations with the People's Republic of China to that country in November 2000 and of the Chinese Delegation to the European Parliament in September 2001,
 - having regard to the decision taken by the 4th WTO Ministerial Conference meeting at Doha, Qatar on 9-14 November 2001 on the admittance of China and Chinese Taipei to the WTO,
 - having regard to the 7 January 2002 meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on an anti-terrorism strategy,
 - having regard to Rule 47(1) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defence Policy and the opinion of the Committee on Industry, External Trade, Research and Energy (A5-0076/2002),
- A. whereas there is a need for continuing, enhanced cooperation between the EU and China, based on an intense dialogue, taking account of their vast mutual interests,
- B. whereas policy towards China must necessarily take the following three key factors into account: economic considerations, China's role in world politics and regional order and security issues, together with the development of human rights and of the rule of law,
- C. whereas the Commission has been examining ways of furthering the EU-China partnership, and whereas the European Parliament fully supports the EU's position, in particular as expressed in the EU-China summits, held annually since 1998, which have provided a platform to give added momentum to the EU-China relationship; and whereas separate dialogues and meetings between the relevant officials on both sides on numerous issues of mutual concern take place,

¹ OJ C 65E, 14.3.2002, p. 365.

- D. whereas an overall framework for political dialogue between the EU and China was first formalised in 1994 through an exchange of letters,
- E. whereas the thus far successful political, social, economic and cultural experiences of Hong Kong and Macao represent a significant and concrete start to such dialogue and cooperation,
- F. concerned nevertheless about the fact that the Chinese government appears intent on forcibly separating 11,000 mainland-born children of Hong Kong permanent residents from their parents by removing them to the mainland,
- G. whereas the Olympic Games to be held in China in 2008 could prove a major opportunity for the deepening of cooperation in all fields if China puts an end to human rights violations and makes substantial progress in the democratisation of its political system,
- H. whereas the human rights situation in China still causes serious concern, as the crackdown on fundamental freedoms continues and torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and executions are still used to punish peaceful dissent and against religious communities,

Introduction

1. Welcomes the Commission communication;
2. Welcomes the new progress made in developing EU-China relations over the last three years;
3. Takes note of China's positive response to the communication and urges China to take the necessary concrete steps to demonstrate its willingness to tackle a broad swathe of issues which are of major concern to the EU;
4. Welcomes China's support in the international fight against terrorism and, in particular, its recent rapprochement with India over mutual security issues, in spite of long-standing territorial disputes and notwithstanding its long-term friendship with Pakistan; stresses, however, that anti-terrorist measures can never excuse human rights abuses, such as repression of ethnic groups and religious communities;
5. Welcomes China's undertaking to assist in the reconstruction of Afghanistan; believes that this project could serve as a specific benchmark for cooperation between China and the EU;
6. Recalls its resolution of 13 June 2001 on the Commission working document: Perspectives and Priorities for the ASEM Process (Asia Europe Meeting) into the new decade (COM(2000) 241 - C5-0505/2000 - 2000/2243(COS))¹; urges the Chinese Government to take a more favourable attitude to the early enlargement of ASEM, in particular as regards India and other countries;

¹ OJ C 53 E, 28.2.2002, p.227.

7. Recognises that the partnership between the EU and China on the basis of equal status and mutual advantage has expanded considerably in recent years; notes that it is necessary, however, in order to consolidate these relations on the basis of partnership, to strengthen and further develop dialogue in the political, economic, scientific and cultural fields;
8. Notes the need for an intense cultural dialogue between Europe and China; proposes in this context that Member State universities create/expand their departments of Chinese studies and invites the Commission to study the possibility of enlarging the existing programmes, e.g. Tempus, in order to promote projects for reciprocal university exchanges;
9. Acknowledges that the beginnings of democratic representation at municipal level constitute a step in the right direction towards participative democracy at both regional and national level;
10. Cannot over-stress the fact that the EU has a profound interest in a stable, prosperous, open China which embraces democracy, free market principles, human rights and the rule of law, and that it must pursue policies which help China further endeavours in this direction;
11. Notes that the dialogue between the EU and China on the rule of law, civil society and democracy is becoming increasingly intense; this dialogue should be accompanied by public and/or private initiatives and measures such as exchanges of schoolchildren and students, the setting up of contact groups of Members of Parliament and stronger cultural links;
12. Stresses the importance of the successful experiences of the Hong Kong and Macao regional and special autonomies in widening and deepening cooperation between the EU and China in the political, cultural, economic and social fields;
13. Calls on the Chinese government to facilitate the family reunion of children born on the mainland with their Hong Kong permanent resident parents, in accordance with the findings of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

Trade

14. Congratulates China on its recent accession to the WTO, and expresses its support for the progress made so far in its economic and social reforms, but stresses that much greater progress on the application of the rule of law in China is essential to the full integration of China into the global market place;
15. Is fully conscious that WTO accession marks a major development in China's relations with the rest of the world and that it will change both China's existing trading system and China itself; notes that the next few years will test the regime's capacity to adapt to a changing world on its own doorstep, but takes the view that economic progress can only succeed in tandem with political and social progress; expects China to give evidence that it is able to deal satisfactorily with the social and labour problems which will arise as a result of WTO accession; is convinced that in the longer term the EU, the US, Japan and

other industrialised countries, working together with China, will have to develop and implement programmes in the rural and disadvantaged areas, outside the booming cities, to combat increasing inequalities and create educational opportunities for the majority of the Chinese population who live there;

16. Recognises nonetheless that, despite improved economic prospects for many Chinese, this has not alleviated the need for more economic restructuring and a more even geographical spread of economic development to reduce the threat of even higher unemployment and social displacement in the future;
17. Expresses its concern at the steady rise in the number of industrial disputes since 1998; urges the PRC to authorise the establishment of independent trade unions and to institute at the earliest opportunity a social protection system geared primarily towards the unemployed, whose numbers are set to swell as a result of China's accession to the WTO;
18. Notes the claim sometimes made by Community documents and officials that China's accession to the WTO is creating a dynamic economic environment in China and transforming its economy into an export-driven economy, but also realises that China's potential rests with a vast territory and a population where only the inhabitants of the richest areas located along the coast form a market, both characteristics of a 'continental economy' driven by internal demand, meaning that there is a need for the Chinese authorities to build up efficient internal cohesion policies;
19. Is aware of the fact that with China's entry to the WTO, WTO rules and procedures will define a new context of economic and political relations of China with the US and EU (and Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan as well), and China will have to separate business from government, which will imply a serious change in the framing of economic development of China;
20. Welcomes in this regard the cooperation agreements that the EU has with China in the field of social security, given the high level of unemployment already existing in China, which is likely to grow;
21. Notes that China and the EU are already major trading partners and welcomes the continued growth in EU-China trade and the rising levels of EU direct investment in China; expects that the implementation by China of its terms of accession will contribute in a major way to reducing barriers to trade and investment, and entail a more balanced trading relationship;
22. Notes that, while existing programmes such as the EU-China Scholarship 2000 Project Programme and the Junior Managers Project Programme between the EU and China to promote reciprocal exchanges in the field of technology and know-how have achieved some success, they must be stepped up;
23. Notes that the strengthening of EU-China relations and the expansion of EU-China dialogue across the board render the existing EU-China trade and cooperation agreement largely obsolete, and calls on the Commission to bring forward proposals for an updated partnership agreement, in line with the development of a consistent and comprehensive EU common strategy towards China;

24. Recognises China's leading role with the G77 countries and calls on the Chinese Government to fulfil this role within the WTO whilst respecting the legitimate economic concerns of neighbouring countries;
25. Is seriously concerned about the high levels of pollution caused by China's industries and expects China to take serious measures to protect the environment; emphasises that Trade and the Environment is an essential component of the WTO agreement and urges the Chinese Government to play a full and positive role in promoting sustainable development, as required by the WTO agreement, both within China itself and globally; welcomes the general willingness of the Chinese Government to cooperate on environmental protection, and also the wide range of activities by the existing NGO community in this area; therefore calls on the Commission to ensure that sufficient support and know-how relating to environmental protection are channelled in China's direction; calls on the Chinese Government to continue and reinforce its dialogue and cooperation with the EU on global environmental issues, e.g. climate change;

Taiwan

26. Is convinced that the EU's adherence to the one-China policy is directly linked to its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the dispute through negotiation, dialogue and confidence-building measures without any threat of force, and therefore cannot accept that China reserves the right to use military force in its disputes with Taiwan;
27. Draws to the attention of both parties the indisputable fact that a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan question is crucial if political and economic stability in the region is to be reinforced and maintained in the medium- to long-term;
28. Believes, in this regard, that the participation of Taiwan in ASEM could be a step forward as to the resumption of a genuine dialogue between Beijing and Taipei with a view to developing cross-Straits relations;
29. Recognises the importance of the democratic process in Taiwan and takes note of the results of the December 2001 parliamentary elections; urges the two parties to engage in talks as soon as possible;
30. Emphasises that any arrangement between China and Taiwan can only be achieved on a mutually acceptable basis; expresses the view that the future of cross-Straits relations will depend on both sides' willingness to demonstrate flexibility, and on their capacity to be imaginative in proposing steps to resume dialogue; takes the view that, given Taiwan's achievements as regards the establishment of a fully-fledged democratic system, social pluralism and the rule of law, the will and approval of the 23 million people in Taiwan must be respected and accounted for in the light of a hopefully peaceful solution between the parties;
31. Deplores the fact that, in November 2001, the Member States did not grant visas for President Chen Shui-Bian to visit Europe; urges the Council and the Member States to honour their commitment to the fundamental rights of freedom to travel and issue visas to the President and all high-ranking officials of Taiwan for private visits to the European Union;

32. Welcomes recent moves by the PRC towards cross-Straits ties and the wish expressed that direct mail services, trade, air and shipping links across the Straits be activated as soon as possible in order to promote all types of exchanges and other confidence-building measures;
33. Notes that Taiwan eased restrictions on direct investment in the PRC in November 2001 and plans to take further liberalisation steps from early 2002, including the introduction of direct trading links; notes, however, that Beijing has yet to respond to the move; urges the PRC to respond favourably, particularly in view of the implementation of China's and Chinese Taipei's commitments following their accession to the WTO and in the interests of improving cross-Straits relations;
34. Urges the Commission to fulfil without delay its commitment to open an EU information office in Taipei;

Human rights

35. Notes that China has signed and ratified the UN Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and urges China to ratify as well the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights without delay;
36. Endorses the human rights dialogue between the EU and China as a useful tool to engage China on this issue, but regrets that it has yet to lead to many tangible results and remains extremely concerned with the overall situation of human rights in China; consequently instructs its Human Rights Division to draw up an annual report on the development of human rights in China to be discussed by its competent committee, and instructs its competent committee to ensure that the Commission and the Council are properly represented and participate fully in the discussions on these reports;
37. Urges the Commission and the Member States to exert a more effective control on products coming from China, making clear to the Chinese authorities that the EU can in no way accept products coming from forced labour camps; calls on China to put an end to this practice;
38. Urges the Commission to propose at the next EU-China summit an increase in the number of joint ad hoc programmes aiming at fostering democracy and civil society, developing the rule of law and respect for human rights and supporting independent media;
39. Expresses its indignation at the increasingly high number of executions in China, and at the links to the supply of body parts for human transplantation, and demands that the Chinese Government abolish the death penalty, declare a moratorium on the execution of persons already sentenced to death, and accelerate judicial reforms in order to eliminate the use of torture and the violation of human rights in the country; furthermore condemns the 'widespread and systemic use of torture against political dissidents, Tibetan activists, migrant workers, people accused of violating the one-child-per-family policy', and religious, social and ethnic minorities, as documented in a February 2001 report from Amnesty International;

40. Notes with concern the strict rules imposed by the Chinese authorities on media and electronic communication; calls on the Chinese Government to lift the restrictions that limit citizens' access to the Internet;
41. Calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that, in all their dealings with the Chinese Government, it cooperates fully with the competent authorities within the EU and also within those countries, notably of the former Soviet Union, which serve as transit routes, in order to eliminate illegal migration of Chinese nationals towards the EU, not only to prevent all forms of human trafficking, exploitation and suffering, but also to eradicate criminal activity;
42. Calls upon China to seize the opportunity of the Olympic Games of 2008 to abide by international human rights standards and to intensify general cooperation; calls for a monitoring procedure to be put in place to ensure that China honours its international obligations in the field of human rights in the run-up to this event; draws attention to the importance of preserving Beijing's architectural heritage while large-scale infrastructure projects are carried out ahead of the Olympic Games;
43. Calls on the Chinese Government fully to recognise and respect fundamental social, cultural and political rights of religious, ethnic and other minorities as well as their cultural specificities, including the freedom of religious practice;
44. Reiterates its view that greater economic freedom cannot yield lasting benefits without the concomitant fundamental human liberties and rights as laid down in the various UN covenants and other relevant international agreements and conventions, including those covering the protection of the global environment, which China has now signed;
45. Urges China to respect its obligations as a signatory to the CITES convention and to pay more attention to cruel and inhumane treatment of animals;

Tibet

46. Underlines the demand made in its abovementioned resolution of 15 December 1992 concerning the autonomy of Tibet and invites the Chinese Government to accept the five-point plan of the Dalai Lama as a basis for negotiations on Tibet;
47. As regards Tibet, is aware of a slight relaxation recently of religious restrictions on lower-level government employees, students and State company workers; however, notes that in both the regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, religious freedom continues to be severely restricted and people suspected of nationalist activities or sympathies are still subject to particularly harsh restrictions; is furthermore extremely preoccupied at the large number of nuns and monks who remain imprisoned and by the ongoing question of religious, political and cultural freedom; draws the attention of the Chinese Government to the importance of protecting the natural environment and the religious and cultural heritage of Tibet; appeals to the Chinese Government to respect and protect the religious and cultural identity of the people of Tibet;
48. Welcomes, in this regard, the consistent stand of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as regards realising genuine self-government for Tibet within the People's Republic of China through peaceful negotiations, shares his grave concern at the systematic destruction of

the Tibetan environment, traditions, culture and religion, at the ever-worsening political situation of the Tibetan people and at the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet, and endorses his appeal for urgent international pressure on Beijing, as expressed in his address to the plenary session of the European Parliament of 24 October 2001; urges China, in this connection, to halt immediately the controversial plan of large-scale immigration to Tibet with regard, in particular, to the 20 000 people who are due to move into the Dulan region of Qinghai Province; calls on the Chinese Government to resume direct negotiations with His Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions, with a view to defining a new, real statute of full autonomy for Tibet, with the only exceptions being foreign and defence policy;

49. Reiterates its call to the Council to appoint an EU Special Representative for Tibetan Affairs so as to contribute effectively to the peaceful resolution of this issue, facilitating the resumption of negotiations and cooperating with the Tibetan Government in exile;
50. Reiterates its call to the Commission, the Council, the Member States and the international community in general to give serious consideration to the possibility of recognising the Tibetan Government in exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people if the Beijing authorities and the Tibetan Government in exile do not, through negotiations organised under the aegis of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, sign an agreement on a new statute for Tibet;

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51. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chinese National People's Congress.