EU AND CHINA HOLD HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

The European Union and the People’s Republic of China held the 31st round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue on 29 May 2012 in Brussels. This new round of the dialogue allowed a wide-ranging and frank exchange of views on human rights between the two sides.

Under the general topic of criminal punishment and deprivation of liberty, China and the EU discussed issues such as residential surveillance and arrest, house arrest, treatment of petitioners, detention in prisons and solitary confinement. China presented its concerns regarding the issues of xenophobia and racial discrimination internationally and in the European Union; the EU explained its policies to combat racism and xenophobia.

The EU also raised a number of issues of concern within China, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities (notably Tibetans, Uighurs and Christians), the treatment of refugees from North Korea, the rule of law and the legal profession, freedom of expression and the treatment of civil society.

The EU handed over a list of individual cases of concern and raised a number of other cases during the dialogue itself. The Chinese side handed over a reply to 25 cases on the list provided in June 2011 by the EU side.

The EU and China exchanged views on cooperation with the UN Human Rights Council and with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The EU and China also discussed their priorities for forthcoming sessions of the UN Human Rights Council.
The EU reiterated to the Chinese delegation its wish to continue holding the dialogue twice each year, and its disappointment that China had not agreed to a second session of the dialogue in 2010 and 2011. The EU regrets China’s stance concerning the frequency and modalities of the dialogue.

The EU delegation was led by Gerhard Sabathil, Director for North-East Asia and the Pacific, European External Action Service, and the Chinese delegation was led by Chen Xu, Director General for International Organisations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

After the formal dialogue had taken place, the Chinese delegation paid a courtesy call on 30 May to Pierre Vimont, Executive Secretary-General of the EEAS, which was then followed by a working-level meeting on the structure of the human rights dialogue and completed by a field visit to a law court and a detention facility in Denmark.