EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights

On 25 June 2013, the European Union and the People's Republic of China held the 32nd round of the "EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights" in Guiyang (Guizhou), China. The Human Rights Dialogue was preceded by a field trip in Guizhou, which included a visit to Guiyang City Christian Church, Pianpo Village, where 97% of the population belongs to the Buyi ethnic group, and an EU-China Environmental Governance Project designed to increase environmental justice for the people of Guizhou. There was also a meeting with the Governor of Guizhou province, Mr Chen Mingming.

The EU delegation was led by Gerhard Sabathil, Director for East Asia and the Pacific in the EU’s European External Action Service. The Chinese delegation was led by Li Junhua, Director General for International Organisations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. The EU delegation is expected to make a courtesy call on the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs and other ministries on 26 June.

The Dialogue allowed the two sides to have a detailed exchange of views on a wide range of human rights issues, with a specific focus on recent developments in China and in the European Union as well as cooperation in international fora and institutions.

The dialogue was conducted in a frank atmosphere. It provided an opportunity for the EU to express concerns about what is happening in China regarding the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities; deprivation of liberty, criminal and administrative punishment.

The EU also asked about the measures taken so far by China to ratify the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights, signed in 1998, in view of China's undertaking made during the 2009 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to ratify the Covenant at an early date.
For its part, the Chinese side raised a number of questions, including the treatment of minorities in Europe, including Roma people and Muslims, as well as specific incidents involving Chinese nationals in some EU Member States. China also asked questions about the extent to which the financial crisis is affecting social and economic rights, including access to healthcare, education and housing, and exacerbating xenophobia in Europe.

Over lunch, the two sides discussed cooperation in international human rights fora, especially in view of China's second UPR on 22 October this year. They also exchanged views on the country situations currently on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, including Burma/Myanmar, DPRK and Syria.

For the first time, a joint Press Briefing was organised immediately after the dialogue in Guiyang.

The EU and China have yet to fix a date for the next legal experts' seminar, due to take place in September in Beijing.

As the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue has, with short interruptions, taken place twice annually since 1995, the EU expects the second annual round of the Dialogue to be held in Europe in the second half of 2013.