

Statement on EU-China relations

by Commissioner Füle on behalf of the HR/VP

Strasbourg 13 March 2013

President, Honourable Members,

On behalf of HRVP Ashton, I welcome this balanced report by the rapporteur, Mr BELDER, setting out the European Parliament's views on the developing European Union-China relationship. It comes at the right time when new leaders will take office in Beijing and define the future of China in the next five years.

China is a key strategic partner for the European Union and increasingly a significant player on the world stage.

HRVP Ashton is committed to enhancing the European Union's relationship with China in world affairs. We have an on-going close collaboration - on Iran where China is playing a constructive role in the E3+3 talks and on fighting piracy off the coasts of Somalia. China has actively contributed to the adoption of sanctions on North Korea— side by side with the rest of the UN Security Council and the international community.

Mr Belder's report highlights that China's political and economic involvement in Africa has contributed to economic development. There is also an increasing political engagement in Africa. Like the European Union, China supports the African Union and other African regional organisations. Fighting against piracy off the coasts of Somalia was the first ever Chinese naval mission outside its neighbouring seas, in good

collaboration with the Atalanta mission. China joined the European Union escorting World Food Programme shipments to Somalia in a spirit of burden sharing.

We are placing particular importance on the security aspects of the European Union-China relationship. We will cooperate in this field from crisis management to counter-piracy, from non-proliferation to counter-terrorism.

China in the last three decades has achieved significant social progress, with hundreds of millions of people moving out of poverty. These improvements still need to be translated into better promotion and defence of human rights.

We remain concerned by the reports on the human rights situation in China. The rules on detention of suspects could certainly improve if China aligned itself with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that it has signed but not ratified yet.

During the course of 2012, the European Union has paid particular attention to the Tibetan human rights situation as the HRVP stated in this House last June and in a statement on Tibetan self-immolations last December. Our line is well known and has not changed: we reiterate our call to the concerned parties to resume a meaningful dialogue.

The European Union intends to continue closely monitoring the overall human rights situation in China and we will not hesitate to speak our mind publicly.

President, Honourable Members,

The European Union-China relationship is one of the most intense on the economic front, one of the largest in terms of people-to-people exchanges – and our formal European Union-China dialogues cover almost all conceivable areas. We must secure improved market access and a level-playing field for European Union business, negotiating a substantial European Union-China Investment Agreement to contribute to the creation of growth and jobs on both sides. We must identify common ground between the Europe 2020 and China's 12th Five-Year-Plan such as renewable energy, clean vehicles and information technology.

With our know-how, we want to contribute to greener cities in China and share our experience on issues like emissions reduction, water security and rural development. And of course we will continue to encourage China to abide by international human rights standards and promote the rule of law, for the benefit of its economy, social stability and its respectability abroad.

I look forward to listening to the views of the European Parliament in the debate that follows.

Thank you.