

EU-China Summit - Beijing 23 October 2000

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European Commission President Romano Prodi attended the third EU-China annual Summit in Beijing on 23 October 2000, with Chinese Prime-Minister Zhu Rongji, the President of the European Council, Mr. Jacques Chirac, assisted by the European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Mr. Javier Solana. Commissioner for Trade Lamy, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs Solbes Mira and two French Cabinet Ministers also took part. The Summit concluded with a meeting with the President of the People's Republic of China, Mr. Jang Zemin. Mr. Prodi said: "We stand on the threshold of a new era in relations between Europe and China. In the economic field, China will soon join the WTO and our trade and economic development will benefit enormously. The euro has established itself as a major world currency. The Chinese leadership expressed its full confidence in the euro. Political dialogue has also been enhanced by the frank discussions we had on international issues and human rights."

The Summit discussions were frank and friendly and covered a wide range of issues of common interest and concern, including bilateral EU-China relations, developments in the EU and China respectively, and regional and international questions. The Summit contributed to the further deepening of relations, building on the previous summits held in April 1998 and December 1999 and taking place at a time that marks the 25th anniversary of the beginning of formal EU-China relations.

China's WTO accession was a key point for discussion. President Prodi urged China to complete the WTO negotiations quickly in order not to delay its entry into the WTO. The EU emphasised its willingness to share with China its WTO experience and to continue the technical assistance provided in order to make China's WTO accession a success.

Trafficking in human beings and illegal immigration were important new issues dealt with by the Summit against the background of the tragic events in Dover, where 58 Chinese illegal immigrants perished. President Prodi recalled the discussions he had with Prime-Minister Zhu Rongji in Brussels last July and welcomed the readiness of China to co-operate to fight illegal immigration. The summit addressed measures to take co-operation further in a number of important ways, including ongoing information exchange, public information campaigns, two-way exchange visits of technical experts, co-operation in fighting criminal networks involved in the trafficking of human beings and co-operation on the practical and legal aspects of the re-admission to China of Chinese citizens illegally residing in the territory of EU Member States.

Human rights were discussed at length and the Summit reviewed the EU-China human rights dialogue following the most recent round of talks on 29 September. President Prodi reiterated his wish to strengthen the dialogue and make it more results-oriented, thus contributing to tangible improvements in the human rights situation in China. President Prodi stressed particularly the importance of early Chinese ratification of the two UN Covenants. Prime-Minister Zhu expressed the hope that China will ratify the UN Covenant for social, economic and cultural rights before the end of the year.

In addition, the Summit reviewed bilateral economic and financial relations, as well as co-operation, in particular in the fields of science and technology, energy, information technology, environment, and human resource development.

The Summit also reviewed important developments in the EU and China. President Prodi stressed the far-reaching consequences of EU enlargement, which will create a new political and economic area of 500 million people.

The discussions on regional and international issues provided an opportunity to build on the views already exchanged at the ASEM Summit in Seoul, in particular the situation in the Korean Peninsula, the Western Balkans, disarmament and non-proliferation.

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