Subject: Your request for access to documents of 3 February 2020
Our ref: 2020/033

Dear Ms Spearing,

Thank you for your request for access to documents, which the EEAS has examined in the framework of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001.

The Graph of EU-China Dialogues Architecture can be consulted on the following link: https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/2015_november_eu-china_dialogue_architecture.jpg

Among the dialogues you refer to, the ones for which the EEAS is responsible are the following ones:

- High Level Strategic Dialogue
- Political Directors Dialogue
- EUSR and Special Envoy Meetings
- Political Dialogue on Asia
- Security and Defense Dialogue
- Non-proliferation & Disarmament Dialogue

Different directorates-general of the European Commission are in the lead for the dialogues of the 3rd pillar you mention. They will respond to you separately.

We have considered whether the ‘meeting agendas, minutes or other relevant documents concerning the various EU-China Dialogues,’ which you enlist in your request and for which EEAS is in the lead could be released to the public. These dialogues are held in the spirit of openness between the diplomatic actors but under the umbrella of confidentiality, which means that the diplomatic interlocutors can discuss topics – often sensitive ones – in an open manner but with the understanding that such discussions will remain within the diplomatic

circles and will not be released to other international actors or the public. The public release of the meetings’ agendas and minutes would reveal the concrete issues discussed from which sensitive information could be deducted and revealed. Such a release would put our international counterparts into an uncomfortable position since they did not intend to reveal this information, in order to avoid the interference of internal or international actors into these topics.

Therefore, our examination concluded that their disclosure would be detrimental to the Union’s relations with China and harm the possibility to maintain the environment of mutual trust, thus negatively affecting the possibility of holding such dialogues in the future or their substance. A public release of such information would jeopardize both the EU’s relations with China and the aims of the bilateral dialogue.

We have also examined the possibility of granting partial access to the reports of the dialogue concerned [Article 4(6) of the Regulation]. However, for the reasons we have explained above, we believe that all parts of the documents are covered by the above mentioned exception, and therefore no such access can be granted at this time.

Therefore, I regret to inform you that we are not in a position to disclose the requested documents, neither as a whole or partially, since it could seriously undermine the EU's international relations [as per Article 4(3), first subparagraph, of Regulation 1049/2001].

Should you wish this position to be reviewed, you may confirm your initial request within 15 working days.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

Gabriele Visentin