

*European Economic and Social Committee*

## 8th MEETING OF THE EU CHINA ROUND TABLE

### Joint Statement

#### Preamble

1. The EU-China Round Table held its eighth meeting in Brussels on 14 and 15 December 2010.
2. The Round Table was jointly established by the China Economic and Social Council (CESC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in accordance with the Joint Statement of the 9th China-EU Summit in Helsinki on 9 September 2006.
3. The dialogue between members of organised civil society which takes place at the EU-China Round Table is part of the EU-China strategic partnership and contributes to people-to-people friendship and mutual understanding.
4. At this meeting, members from both sides held extensive discussions on the rights of the child. The meeting also reviewed the Round Table's work over the past four years and proposed action plans for the future.
5. Members reaffirm the importance of the role of social dialogue, especially in this difficult economic context. A tripartite workshop on social dialogue was held in Brussels attended by the ILO and Belgian representatives, during which practical experience of social dialogue was discussed. The workshop illustrated that constructive dialogue with social partners can make a major contribution to harmonious labour relations, reduction of unemployment, improvement of working conditions and social security systems and sustainable development in the long run.

#### The Rights of the Child

1. Following their first working session on the rights of the child (Chongqing, July 2010), the members of the Round Table again acknowledged the importance of maintaining and mainstreaming the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) by embodying them in law, integrating them into policies, promoting public awareness-raising and education, and ensuring their implementation in practice.
2. Members reaffirm that children must be recognised as citizens with their own rights that are to be protected.

3. Members reiterate the responsibility of the State in safeguarding the rights of the child, noting with satisfaction the broad legal and policy framework adopted in China and in the EU in supporting the rights of the child. However, the Round Table believes that more efforts need to be made for the genuine implementation of this framework by all the stakeholders and the State in particular.
4. Members urge their respective authorities to give greater consideration to the role that can be played by civil society in bridging the gap between legislation and its implementation, and to support their initiatives.
5. Members also call on their respective authorities to provide adequate support for children through social security systems, with particular regard to health and social allowances. Adequate social security benefits should be provided even when there are heavy budget constraints due to the economic crisis, in line with Article 4 of the UNCRC.
6. Members wish to draw the attention of their respective authorities to the increased number of children in poverty, which adversely affects children's life and education.
7. It is necessary to increase support for the social services that protect the rights of the child, with particular regard to training staff working with children.
8. An awareness-raising campaign should be launched on growing risk factors affecting children, such as violence against children, competition and psychological pressure on children, poor working conditions or unemployment of the parents, growing inequalities and social exclusion, and the impact of climate change.
9. Special protection should be given to children who are in situations of particular vulnerability. Such children face greater risks in their lives because of social, political, economic and geographic exclusion. Vulnerable and socially excluded groups experience particularly poor levels of health and education. Trafficked children, migrant children, Roma children and unaccompanied minors should be given specific attention.
10. Alert systems and other early warning mechanisms should be put in place for children at risk, such as the 116000 hotline for missing children, which is one of the EU's most recent achievements. Members agreed to research and present a proposal on EU-China cooperation to prevent and combat human trafficking and to protect child victims.
11. Effective access to justice, the active participation of children in administrative and court proceedings and the implementation of international principles to protect children are key.
12. Freedom of expression and the participation of children should be promoted and special provisions adopted to favour their access to education and culture.
13. The China-EU Year of Youth (2011) and Year of Culture (2012) should provide an opportunity for joint activities and exchanges between children and young people from China and from Europe.

## **Review of the Round Table's work**

1. Members welcome the fact that the China–EU Round Table is built on such unique characteristics: it is non-governmental, bilateral, interactive and inclusive. These characteristics have proved to be an excellent basis from which to forge constructive and fruitful dialogue.
2. The mutual trust that has been established between the members of the two sides is one of the Round Table's greatest achievements. Exchanges between Chinese and European members during and outside the formal setting of meetings have also become more frank and open, leading to greater mutual understanding.
3. One of the major advantages of the Round Tables is that they encourage frank discussions which bring added value beyond formal inter-state diplomacy and the other political and technical dialogue mechanisms in place between China and the EU, thus enriching the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership. Greater use should be made of this unique opportunity.
4. Provided the atmosphere is one of trust, mutual respect and transparency, and to the extent that both parties are in agreement, this Round Table format makes it possible to address some difficult economic and social issues. Full respect for the different historical, economic, political and cultural background of each of the parties should be taken into account when seeking common ground.
5. The Round Table has shown that organised civil society can play an important role in enhancing communication between EU and China, as well as between governments and the general public. It can help build up people-to-people friendship, nurture social consensus and support the advancement of EU-China relations.
6. With civil society often well placed to observe and understand unfolding economic and social change, the Round Table also allows for an exploratory approach and better mutual understanding.
7. Each Round Table meeting usually examines two major topics and both sides prepare, before the meeting, reports on the topics to be discussed. So far the Round Table meetings have covered a wide range of topics, ranging from economic and social rights to trade and investment, from recycling industries to sustainable development, and so on.
8. Both sides give a highly positive assessment of the achievements of the Round Table mechanism so far and would put forward the following recommendations for its future work:
  1. Both sides agree that the membership of the Round Table should maintain continuity so as to ensure sustained mutual trust and sound experience on which to build. Moreover, on certain topics to be discussed, experts in the related field can also be invited where necessary so as to raise the standard of discussion and dialogue.

2. When preparing reports on topics to be discussed, both sides could also seek expert advice so as to strike a proper balance between expertise and other views.
3. In selecting future topics for discussion, account should be taken of (1) priority issues on economic, social and environmental matters that concern both sides; (2) urgent topical issues (3) the issues that help build up the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership and that help foster the constructive role of civil society from both sides.
4. With a view to ensuring continuity and follow-up activities, rapporteurs should continue to undertake research into some topics already discussed within the Round Table.
5. The recommendations adopted by the Round Table should be more policy-oriented, constructive and easy to operate so that they can be used as the basis for substantial results.
6. In a spirit of innovation, new areas of cooperation should be encouraged and explored.
7. Both the EESC and the CESC should strengthen communication and cooperation with the relevant authorities so as to ensure the recommendations and policy proposals are given serious and earnest consideration by decision-makers on each side, including at the Summit level.
8. Both sides reaffirm the value and effectiveness of the Agreement on Implementation of the EU-China Round Table Mechanism between the EESC and the CESC jointly signed by CESC president Wang Gang and his counterpart Mario Sepi on May 18, 2009 in Tianjin, China, and agree to renew it for another two years.
9. During their ninth meeting, the two sides agree to discuss two topics: 1) inclusive regional development and 2) sustainable development with a focus on greening the economy. Time and place of the next meeting will be decided later.

This Joint Statement will be submitted to the 2011 China-EU Summit.

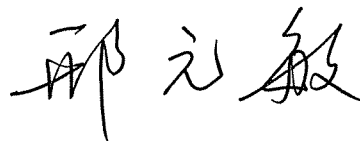
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