

Minutes of the 3rd European Commission - China Dialogue on Environmental Policy at Ministerial Level

Beijing, 24 April 2008

At the invitation of Mr. Zhou Shengxian, Minister of Environmental Protection of China, Mr. Stavros Dimas, Environment Commissioner of the European Commission, visited Beijing on 24 April 2008. This visit marked the 3rd European Commission-China Dialogue on Environmental Policy at Ministerial Level. The two sides exchanged views and had in-depth discussions on progress and strengthening the mechanism of policy dialogue on global environment issues, progress of the bilateral cooperation, and on future priority areas.

I. Policy Progress

- Minister Zhou introduced the ongoing initiative of applying the Scientific Outlook on Development, and other strategic thoughts and policies for building a resource-efficient and environment-friendly society in a bid to address pressures on natural resources and environment caused by the rapid economic growth. And the priorities for environmental protection set out in the 11th Five-year Plan were also noted. Minister Zhou also introduced the progress made on energy-saving and emission reduction based on the forceful domestic measures and actions.
- Commissioner Dimas congratulated Minister Zhou on the promoting of the former SEPA to the cabinet level Ministry of Environmental Protection and expressed the hope that the newly established ministry, with its enhanced capacity for coordination of environmental policies, both with other ministries and with local government, will give additional momentum to environmental protection in China and globally.
- Commissioner Dimas mentioned some EU policy developments in the last year such as the entry into force of the new EU chemicals regulation

REACH¹, new air quality limit values, a Green Paper on the use of market-based instruments for environment and energy related policy purposes and a proposal to revise the directive on integrated pollution prevention and control.

II. Strengthening Mechanism of Dialogue

- The two sides agreed that the EC-China Dialogue on Environmental Policy at Ministerial Level is a valuable mechanism. Strong efforts have been made to achieve concrete results. It was also noted that political leaders of both sides gave further impetus to this dialogue at the EU-China Summit in November 2007 and the outputs of the EC-China Dialogue on Environmental Policy should be continually reported to the leaders on both sides.
- Both sides commended the arrangement of coordinators meeting which has been effective and efficient in monitoring the activities and preparing for the dialogue. They welcomed the agreement reached on a third bilateral Work Plan.

III. Global Environmental Issues

- Both sides recognized the challenge of addressing global environmental issues and achieving sustainable development and implementing the follow-up actions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.
- China and the EU have the common goal in addressing global environmental issues such as climate change, biodiversity conservation including illegal logging, ozone layer protection and the control of persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals such as mercury, and have both a strong interest in furthering the exchanges and consultations in this regard.
- For the upcoming COP9 of the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Bonn (Germany) on 19-30 May 2008, both sides recognised the importance of significantly reducing the loss of biodiversity by 2010. They discussed a number of issues, in particular the scientific criteria for the

¹ Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals

identification of vulnerable marine areas to be protected (MPAs); and the identification of the main components of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the sharing of benefits arising from their use (ABS regime);

- Concerning the International Environmental Governance, both China and the EU are of the view that it is necessary to enhance International Environmental Governance. China stresses that the process has to be taken step by step and should specifically pay attention to the concerns of the developing countries. Both sides are intent on engaging actively in the UN General Assembly resolution negotiations.
- Commissioner Dimas expressed strong appreciation for China's decision to support an earlier phase-out of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) agreed at the last meeting of the parties to the Montreal Protocol.

IV. Bilateral Environmental Cooperation

- Both sides expressed appreciation for the cooperative efforts ensuring the successful implementation of activities listed in the 2006-2007 Work Plan. They underscored the fruitful cooperation particularly in the following areas: the first EU-China Biodiversity Strategy Workshop held in Beijing in October 2006; the joint conference held in March 2008 on industrial pollution prevention and control and the "train the trainers" programme on integrated pollution prevention and control; the joint workshop held in Brussels in December 2007 on cooperation to stop illegal waste shipment from the EU to China.
- The importance of identifying clear objectives for the activities under the 2008-2009 Work Plan was stressed by both sides.
- Minister Zhou also summarised for Commissioner Dimas the outcome of the recent visit to Europe by representatives of the Ministry of Environmental Protection in the context of the institutional reform in China.
- Several joint cooperation projects between China and the European Commission were reviewed, and the good results achieved up to now were noted, such as the initial results of the EU-China Biodiversity Programme,

the EU-China Integrated River Basin Management Programme and the EU-China CDM Facilitation Project.

- China welcomed the EU's gracious contribution to capacity building for strengthening environmental protection in China.
- Regarding climate change, China appreciates the collaboration between the two sides in this field and hopes to further deepen this collaboration, especially the capacity building for the adaptation to the climate change.
- Both sides welcomed the EU-China Policy Dialogues Support Facility as a means to underpin environmental policy cooperation and agreed to make use of the facility where appropriate in order to support the Dialogue.

V. *Priorities and further actions*

- China underlined its priorities for possible future cooperation, *inter alia* in the following fields of capacity building for environmental protection: standards, legislation, technologies, environmental emergency preparedness and response, chemicals management, ecosystem services (in the context of a Task Force of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development) and demand-side policies. The EU expressed its willingness to cooperate on all these issues
- Furthermore, China is in the process of introducing several green economic policies, as outlined by Minister Zhou in the meeting, and expressed its interest in sharing experiences in the area of economic and market-based instruments with a view to enhancing the impact of these policies in China.
- There was also a discussion on the challenges of implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation and it was agreed to intensify cooperation on environmental governance with focus on public access to environmental information, public participation in decision-making and access to courts as well as promotion of citizen and civil society involvement including the role of the business sector. In this regards both sides expressed great expectation for the early inception of the EU-China Environmental Governance Programme.

- Cooperation on the links between biodiversity and climate change, the valuation of biodiversity and on integration of biodiversity considerations in environmental impact assessments and strategic assessments should also be carried out under the EU-China Biodiversity Programme.

VI. Conclusion

- Both sides were satisfied with the friendly atmosphere and fruitful outputs of this Dialogue.
- Commissioner Dimas expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation for the efforts of Minister Zhou in organizing the successful Dialogue.
- Minister Zhou expressed appreciation to Commissioner Dimas for coming to China to address environmental problems of mutual concern.
- Both sides agreed to hold the next environmental policy dialogue in the fourth quarter of 2008, in Brussels.



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