Resolution on the situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China)

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China).

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA, EPP, and ECR groups.

Parliament calls on the Chinese Government **to stop immediately the cultural destruction threatening Kashgar's architectural survival** and to carry out a comprehensive expert inquiry into culture-sensitive methods of renovation, to **end all forced resettlement and social marginalisation of Kashgar's Uyghur population**, and to compensate all previous victims for the losses suffered. It notes that the reconstruction programme's official justification of earthquake fortification does not necessitate complete demolition of traditional buildings, one other option being culturally sensitive renovation.

Members recall that in 2009 the Chinese Government announced a USD 500 million ‘Kashgar Dangerous House Reform’ programme of urban reconstruction, which has been progressively destroying the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar, the plan beíng to **demolish 85% of the traditional Old City**, replace it with modern apartment blocks, and convert the remaining old parts of the city into mixed Sino-Uyghur tourist sites. They note that Beijing continues to exclude the city of Kashgar from bids for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation **(UNESCO) world heritage status**, such as the planned transnational application to achieve protection of several cultural sites on Central Asia's Silk Road. The city of Kashgar is an internationally significant site of unique architectural heritage with historical and geographical importance as an ancient centre of trade and tourism, and it retains highly symbolic value for the cultural identity of the region's Uyghur and Hui populations, as well as for China's cultural diversity. The Chinese authorities are asked to make every effort to **develop a genuine Han-Uyghur dialogue,** to adopt more inclusive and comprehensive economic policies in Xinjiang aimed at strengthening local ownership, and to protect the cultural identity of the Uyghur population.

Members call on the European External Action Service to devise additional measures in the context of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights in order to protect the human and cultural rights of China's ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups. They also calls on EU representatives and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to **intensify talks on human rights and minority rights** with China, and to **make the human rights dialogue more effective and results-oriented**.

Parliament goes on to note that Beijing has engaged in destructive housing modernisation in other parts of China through its various local ‘development plans’, demolishing historic buildings and forcibly resettling residents, and that China is continuously implementing repressive ethnocultural policies in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). It urges the Chinese Government:

- to adhere to its constitutional obligations by adequately supporting Kashgar's and XUAR's cultural traditions, which are strongly influenced by the Uyghur identity;
- to take more measures to prevent illegal trade and smuggling activities, which contribute to the loss of Chinese civilisations' heritage;

- to review the existing regulation and law on the protection of cultural relics in order to adapt the current changing lifestyle of the minority ethnic group which sometimes, unaware of its treasures, makes inappropriate use or declines protection of its cultural heritage; states that an educational campaign at national level on this issue should be promoted;
- to assess the possibility of including the city of Kashgar in the joint application with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for the Silk Road's UNESCO world heritage designation;
- to stop all discriminatory and repressive policies towards the Uyghur and Hui populations, and to respect their fundamental right to freedom of cultural expression, having regard in particular to Tursunjan Hezim, a former history teacher, who, after a secret trial, has been sentenced to seven years in jail, and also other activists who have been sentenced in recent months.