Resolution on Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs

2021/2644(RSP) - 20/05/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 599 votes to 30 with 58 abstentions, a resolution on Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and ECR groups.

Chinese sanctions against EU lawmakers

The resolution stressed that the Chinese sanctions imposed in March 2021 on several European entities and political representatives, including five Members of the European Parliament and the Subcommittee on Human Rights, were a retaliatory act in response to the EU decision to enact restrictive measures against four Chinese officials over human rights abuses against the Muslim Uyghur minority in the Xinjiang region.

The Members in question are Reinhard Bütikofer (The Greens/EFA, Germany), Michael Gahler (EPP, Germany), Raphaël Glucksmann (S&D, France), Ilhan Kyuchyuk (Renew Europe, Bulgaria) and Miriam Lexmann (EPP, Slovakia).

The resolution considered that the Chinese retaliatory sanctions, which are not based on international law, constitute an important backsliding in EU-China relations. They considered it crucial for the EU and all its institutions to stand united against this attack against European democracy and in defending our common values.

The Presidents of the Council and the Commission are urged to issue a clear statement that China’s sanctions against elected politicians will not be tolerated. Parliament considered it appropriate and necessary that the VP/HR and EU Member States raise this issue in bilateral exchanges with their Chinese counterparts at all levels and asked that Parliament be kept informed of these efforts.

Parliament condemned in the strongest possible terms the baseless and arbitrary sanctions imposed by the Chinese authorities, which amount to an attack on freedom of speech, on academic freedom and on the international commitment to and understanding of universal human rights. It urged the Chinese authorities to lift these unjustified sanctions.

The resolution strongly condemned this new attempt, and previous attempts, by the Chinese state and nonstate actors to interfere in the democratic life of the European Union and of its Member States and spread disinformation in public debates.

Trade relations

Parliament regretted that several international companies, notably in the apparel and textiles sector, have been subject to an extensive and widespread boycott after expressing concern about the reports on forced labour in Xinjiang and taking the decision to cut supply-chain ties with Xinjiang. The Commission and the European External Action Service are advised to swiftly finalise a supply-chain business advisory with guidance for companies on the exposure to risk of using Uyghur forced labour and providing support in urgently identifying alternative sources of supply.

Rebalancing EU-China relations

Parliament considered that any consideration of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI), as well as any discussion on ratification by the European Parliament, has justifiably been frozen because of the Chinese sanctions in place. It demanded that China lift the sanctions before Parliament can deal with the CAI, without prejudice to the final outcome of the CAI ratification process.

Parliament highlighted the urgent need to re-balance EU-China relations through the adoption of a toolbox of autonomous measures including: legislation against distortive effects of foreign subsidies on the internal market; an international procurement instrument; supply-chain legislation with mandatory due diligence requirements which also provide for an import ban on forced labour goods; an enhanced and strengthened EU Foreign Investment Screening Regulation; an effective anti-coercion instrument; additional targeted measures under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, as necessary, in order to continue addressing repressions in Xinjiang and Hong Kong and aimed at China putting an end to all the violations.

Hong Kong

Parliament called on the Chinese and the Hong Kong authorities to restore confidence in Hong Kong's democratic process and to immediately end the persecution of those who promote democratic values. It deplored the lack of unity in the Council of the EU over the adoption of measures to address the crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong and urged the VP/HR and the Council to propose and adopt conclusions on Hong Kong irrespective of a lack of unanimous support and demands that Member States' extradition treaties with China be suspended.

The European Council is also called on to take a firm stance against the Chinese sanctions and to adopt conclusions on the matter.

Transatlantic cooperation

Lastly, the EU is called on to increase its coordination and cooperation with the US within the framework of a Transatlantic Dialogue on China, including in regards to a coordinated approach to measures to address human rights violations and requests that this dialogue provide a strong parliamentary dimension.