China-Europe relations: long-term policy relations

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By unanimously adopting (with one abstention) Edward MCMILLAN-SCOTT's (EPP, UK) report on a long term policy for China/Europe relations, the Committee called for a cooperative rather than a confrontational relationship. The policy proposed, which mixes developing trade and a more active Parliament to Parliament dialogue on human rights, could be summed up as "not just business as usual but also politics as usual". In view of China's size and the role it has to play on global issues, the report called for China's full involvement in the system of international political, economic and commercial relations. Along with a closer interparliamentary dialogue, the Council and Commission should work with a view to conclude a framework economic and cooperation agreement which must include a suspension clause in case of human rights violations. The EU/China cooperation should also deal with environmental protection issues, with the EU and the Member States providing the necessary expertise to help the build up of China's internal market on the principle of sustainable development. The introduction of legislative reform compatible with a market economy and the provision of specific guarantees for foreign investors is important. Moreover, the report urges the introduction of constitutional democracy in China on the basis of universal principles including the rule of law, freedom of opinion and association, the right to a fair trial and the extension of full private property rights to agricultural land. The report called for a closer dialogue with China in all international fora but saw no justification for the lifting of the EU arms embargo imposed in 1989. It also called on China to give an undertaking that it will not resort to force to settle its disputes with Taiwan. China is invited to develop peaceful relations with Taiwan in order to promote stability in the region. The report considered that much still has to be done in order to achieve full respect of human rights. It called on China to abolish the death penalty, to proclaim a moratorium on executions, to expand cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and to allow humanitarian organizations regular access to those held in prisons while providing for adequate medical care for all detainees. Furthermore, the report "calls on the Chinese government to accept the Dalai Lama's proposal which, without raising independence as a preliminary issue, calls for the resumption of negotiations on the basis of recognition of the cultural and religious autonomy of the Tibetan people and its right to self-government". It also urged the Chinese government to allow Wei Jingsheng, to receive the Sakharov Prize he was awarded by the EP in 1996 in person. The report stressed that the future of Hong Kong and Macao and the maintenance of their political, social and economic freedom is a matter of determining importance for the EU. The EP will be monitoring the situation closely.