EC/China relations: implementing the 1998 communication, measures to strenghten the Community policy

2001/2045(COS) - 08/09/2000 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE : to present a report on the implementation of the communication "Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China" CONTENT : on 25 March 1998, the Commission adopted this communication aiming in particular to engage China further in the international community and to support China's transition to an open society and to integrate China further into the global economy. To achieve these aims, the Commission hoped, inter alia, to upgrade the political dialogue, encourage China's interest in ASEM and Asian regional issues, and strike the right terms for China's accession to the WTO. The Commission would also use the EU's experience and expertise to add value in assisting China's reform process, and to add human rights, the environment and sustainable development to the agenda. Since the Communication was adopted, the EU-China relationship has greatly intensified. The first annual EU-China summits in 1998 and 1999 laid the groundwork for a more broadly based political dialogue. At the same time, an increasing succession of meetings and dialogues at all levels, and in numerous areas of concern both to the EU and to China, improved communication and promoted mutual understanding. The agenda dialogue has been expanded to include regional security, economic and trade issues, and human rights. This could be broadened further, as noted in the 1998 Communication, to include other global issues such as illegal immigration and eventually drug-trafficking, money laundering and organised crime. On 19 May 2000, the EU and China signed a Bilateral Agreement, paving the way for China's accession to the World Trading Organisation (WT0). Once China joins the WTO, a key challenge for the EU will be to develop mutually acceptable methods to monitor and assist with China's compliance with its WTO commitments. The EU will also continue to address remaining market access barriers. The EU's Co-operation Programme with China has expanded steadily and now largely focuses on supporting sustainable development to assist China's overall reform process. The Programme's priorities and contents will be reviewed in order to keep up with the pace of constant change, as well as to improve the impact and visibility of EU assistance to China. Because of the magnitude of the challenges China faces, the Commission will also need to define further those areas that can benefit most from EU co-operation. It is clear, however, that the priorities will include socio-economic reform, human resources development, education, the environment, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law. The Commission's efforts will concentrate on sustainable development projects in the agreed priority areas, but the EU will continue to be flexible and ready to adapt to new challenges and changing situations, as and when they occur. In line with agreed EU policy on global poverty reduction, the Commission will also continue to bear in mind, when formulating new co-operation projects, that 11.5% of China's population still live in absolute poverty - with an income of less than USD 1.00 per day. In accordance with the recently adopted European Community Development Policy, the EU will also improve delivery and better implementation of agreed projects. The time is now ripe to explore whether the dialogue into thoseareas where, as foreseen in the 1998 Communication, both the EU and China have an interest in exchanging views and working together can be broadened. These areas should include, for example, the fight against illegal drug trafficking, organised crime, money-laundering and illegal immigration. These issues of global importance have long been of concern to the EU. They will be of increasing concern to China, particularly as Chinese leaders fully realise the challenges these issues pose to social stability. Some of these issues could, after exploratory talks with Member States, be included on the agenda of forthcoming sessions of the EU-China political dialogue, including the next EU-China Summit, scheduled to take place on 23 October 2000.