EC/China relations: building a comprehensive partnership

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PURPOSE: an evaluation of current EU -China relations combined with proposals for strengthening existing ties. CONTENT: this Commission Communication is based on the 1998 Communication "Building a Comprehensive Partnership with China". Whilst the later document focused on long term options, this Communication focuses specifically on short to medium term objectives. In its Communication the European Commission assesses the current political and economic landscape in China with a view to proposing a number of Action Points aimed at furthering the interests of the EU in China. The key suggestions proposed by the Commission in this report are: - Engaging China in the international community. Specific measures would include better integration of agreed scheduling talks at all levels combined with codifying the framework for EU-China political dialogue. - Supporting China's transition to an open society. Measures proposed include, inter alia, developing human rights-related assistance programmes in support of the rule of law. - Integrating China further in the world economy. With China's accession to the WTO imminent the European Commission sees continuing EU-China co-operation on issues related to the WTO as vital. Action Lines proposed by the Commission encompass the finalisation of China's WTO accession; close monitoring of the correct implementation of China's WTO commitments and implementing EU assistance programmes to make WTO accession a success. Further measures deemed appropriate for the integration of China into the world economy are the strengthening of EU-China business to business dialogue and the reinforcement of efforts to deal with bilateral trade disputes. - Making better use of EU co-operation programmes. Proposals here contain the development of a Country Strategy paper; the promotion of sustainable development; the encouragement of good governance initiatives; the promotion of the rule of law; support for economic and social reform; the fight against poverty and the promotion of equal rights between men and women. - Raising the EU's profile in China. With only a limited budget and with the world's largest population as its target audience, formenting closer relations with China is clearly going to be a daunting task. Nevertheless, the Commission Communication proposes specific measures in which to enhance the EU's profile in China. These include, raising the EU's profile through information packages targeted at the media, opinion formers, schools and colleges. Other methods suggested are user-friendly, regularly updated websites and the creation of an established alumni association of those involved in EU co-operation programmes.