EC/China relations: building a comprehensive partnership

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PURPOSE : to present a new strategy for a maturing partnership with China. CONTENT : this policy paper adopted by the Commission sets out a framework that is intended to guide EU policy and action towards China over the next two to three years. The paper identifies six priorities for relations in the coming years, including sharing responsibilities in promoting global governance, supporting China's transition to an open society based upon the rule of law and the respect for human rights and promoting China's economic opening domestically and externally. The paper also contains a number of concrete proposals with a view to enhancing EU-China relations in key areas, including economic and trade relations and China's internal reform process. Finally, the paper intends to promote, the ongoing reflection in China about future policy towards the EU, which is to find expression in a policy paper later this year, the first ever of its kind in China's foreign relations. The appearance of this paper is evidence of the new importance China gives to the relationship. The Policy Paper contains a number of concrete proposals: - in the field of global governance, the paper suggests ways to raise the efficiency of the political dialogue. It also recommends to better address global and regional governance and security issues, such as non-proliferation and arms control, international crime or illegal migration, where the EU has a clear interest in a readmission agreement, and to enhance co-operation to promote the multilateral system and rules for global governance - human rights : at the same time, the paper stresses the need to increase the efficiency of the human rights dialogue, which is an essential component of the political dialogue, and to enhance its visibility and transparency. A special emphasis is put on the larger role that should be given to China's developing civil society in protecting and supporting individuals and communities disadvantaged by the ongoing economic and social changes; - promoting the economic opening of China : the paper underlines the need to strengthen the dialogue with the Chinese administration on the implementation of China's WTO Commitments and to work together to ensure success of the Doha Development Agenda, particularly on rules-related issues such as investment, competition, trade facilitation and transparency in government procurement. It also calls for a reinforcement of the dialogue on bilateral trade and investment issues and of the trade-related co-operation programmes; - strenthening cooperation : in order to assist China in its internal reform process, it is suggested that the existing dialogues (on environment, energy, science and technology, information society, etc.) be reinforced and that new dialogues be launched, e.g. in the fields of industrial policy, competition policy, education or human resources development; - raising the EU's profile in China : the paper envisages multiplying contacts, disseminating information and publications through internet and audio-visual media, organising public events like road shows or round tables, promoting people to people contacts (with special emphasis on the conclusion of an agreement on Authorised Destination Status (ADS) in the field of tourism),while ensuring full co-ordination with Member States. The Policy Paper will be transmitted to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for follow up. The EU's co-operation programme, which supports activities in many of the above areas will follow the aims set out in the Country Strategy Paper approved in 2002, although the National Indicative Programme (NIP) is to be adjusted this year to take account of some operational changes. Outside of the NIP itself, China will continue to be a major beneficiary of the EU's regional co-operation and research programmes, where new initiatives, for example in the fight against SARS, will begin shortly.