EC/China relations: building a comprehensive partnership

1998/2067(COS) - 25/03/1998 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: outlining a new partnership policy between China and the European Union. SUBSTANCE: In July 1995, the Commission adopted a communication of great importance on future relations between China and the European Union (COM(95) 279-COS0282). In view of recent political and economic developments in the country (the ambitious programme of economic reform underway since 1997, more responsible international commitment of China towards Cambodia and Korea and the peaceful handover of Hong Kong etc.), the Commission takes the view that policy regarding this country must be reviewed and strengthened. It accordingly proposes a new strategy based on a long-term vision of Cino-European relations seeking to achieve the five following objectives: (1) engage China further, through an upgraded political dialogue, in the international community: in particular by proposing annual high level summit meetings between the EU and China to encourage the participation of China in the ASEM process to make the G7 more aware of issues affecting China to involve China more closely in international arms control, cooperation in combatting drugs, matters of regional security, strengthening the autonomy of Hong Kong and preparing for a peaceful handover to China of Macao; (2) supporting China's transition to an open society based on the rule of law and the respect for human rights: China should be persuaded to sign, ratify and implement United Nations' Agreements on human rights and the ILO Agreements, to strengthen bilateral dialogue on human rights and to complement it with a programme of specific cooperation programmes, promote the rule of law and strengthen civil society; (3) integrating China further in the world economy: further impetus should be given to WTO accession negotiations allowing China to benefit from transition periods, improve strategies to gain access to the European market, pursue gradual and reciprocal removal of EU and Chinese quantitative restrictions, develop comprehensive EU investment programme, conclude bilateral agreements in specific sectors, adopt new anti-dumping regulation and promote the use of the euro as an international currency; regarding social issues, it is necessary to develop cooperation in the use of human resources and concentrate on environmental and sustainable development issues. It is also necessary to reduce regional disparities and strengthen cohesion; (4) making Europe's funding go further: in particular, facilitating rapid funding of small projects developed by China and increasing synergy with the European Union, investigating a means of expanding EIB activities and improving the implementation of cooperation projects; (5) raising the profile of the European Union in China: by setting up a Commission Press and Information Service in Beijing, increase the number of Chinese visitors to Europe, increase the intensity of cultural exchange, increasing the presence of the EU at conferences devoted to Chinese affairs and expanding cooperation between China and Europe at university level.