

# EU-China Summit: Defending EU interests and values in a complex and vital partnership – Press release by President Michel and President von der Leyen



The European Union and China held their 22<sup>nd</sup> bilateral Summit via videoconference on 22 June 2020. President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, accompanied by High Representative Josep Borrell, hold the Summit meeting with Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang followed by exchanges with Chinese President Xi Jinping

President Michel said: *“EU-China relations have evolved in recent years. Our economic interdependency is high, and we must work together on global challenges like climate action, meeting the Sustainable Development Goals or dealing with COVID-19. Engaging and cooperating with China is both an opportunity and necessity. But, at the same time, we have to recognise that we do not share the same values, political systems, or approach to multilateralism. We will engage in a clear-eyed and confident way, robustly defending EU interests and standing firm on our values.”*

President von der Leyen said: *“The COVID-pandemic and a number of major bilateral and multilateral challenges show clearly the EU – China partnership is crucial, be it in terms of trade, climate, technology, and the defence of multilateralism. But for our relations to develop further, they must become more rules-based and reciprocal, in order to achieve a real level playing-field.”*

The EU-China summit had a comprehensive agenda addressing bilateral relations; regional and international issues, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic recovery.

The EU recalled the important commitments made at the 2019 EU-China Summit and stressed the need for the implementation of these commitments in a dynamic and result oriented manner as progress today is limited.

The EU strongly emphasised the need to advance negotiations for an ambitious EU-China Comprehensive Investment Agreement that addresses the current asymmetries in market access and ensures a level playing field.. Urgent progress is needed in particular on behaviour of State-Owned Enterprises, transparency on subsidies and rules tackling forced transfers of technology.

On economic and trade issues, the EU recalled the joint commitment to work constructively and expeditiously towards the resolution of a number of market

access and regulatory issues. The EU welcomed confirmation by China that the recent China-US "phase 1" deal will be implemented in full compatibility with World Trade Organisation (WTO) obligations and without discrimination against EU operators. The EU recalled its expectation that European exporters immediately benefit from trade facilitating measures in the agri-food sector.

The EU reiterated the urgent need for China to engage in future negotiations on industrial subsidies in the WTO, and address overcapacity in traditional sectors such as steel as well as high-tech areas.

The EU is looking forward to the signature of the EU-China Agreement on Geographical Indications in coming weeks and entry into force in nearest future.

The Summit was also an opportunity to discuss the importance of the digital sector to economies and societies worldwide. The EU stressed that the development of new digital technologies must go hand in hand with the respect of fundamental rights and data protection. The EU also raised outstanding issues on cybersecurity, disinformation.

Leaders had a substantive discussion on climate change. China is the EU's partner under the Paris Agreement, but needs to commit to decisive and ambitious domestic action to reduce emissions in the short term and to set a goal of climate neutrality at the earliest possible date.

The EU called on China to assume greater responsibility in dealing with global challenges through the rules-based international system, promoting international peace and security, and adhering to international standards to support sustainable development, especially in Africa.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU underlined the shared responsibility to participate in global efforts to stop the spread of the virus, boost research on treatments and vaccines, and support a green and inclusive global recovery. The EU stressed the need for solidarity in addressing the consequences in developing countries, notably as regard debt relief. The EU also called on China to fully participate in the independent review of lessons learned from the international health response to COVID-19, mandated by the resolution adopted at the last World Health Assembly. The EU also called on China to facilitate the return of EU residents in China.

On Hong Kong, the EU reiterated its grave concerns at steps taken by China to impose national security legislation from Beijing and considers those steps not in conformity with the Hong Kong Basic Law and China's international commitments, and put pressure on the fundamental rights and freedoms of the population protected by the law and the independent justice system.

The EU raise its concerns on the deteriorating human rights situation, including the treatment of minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, and of human rights defenders, as well as restrictions on fundamental freedoms. The EU also underlined its expectation that the Human Rights Dialogue will take place in China later in the year once the COVID-19 restrictions are eased. EU Leaders raised a number of individual cases, including the reports on

citizens who have disappeared after reporting/expressing their views on the handling of the Coronavirus outbreak, as well as the continued arbitrary detention of Swedish citizen Gui Minhai and two Canadian citizens – Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor.

The EU and China exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues, including Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal), Afghanistan as well as situation on the Korean Peninsula. The EU expressed concerns about the escalation of other regional conflicts and the importance of upholding international law in the maritime domain. We agreed to continue contacts in the future

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