

Press release – September plenary session opens in Brussels



As the COVID-19 emergency continues, President Sassoli expressed his regret that the difficult decision had to be taken not to hold the September part session in Strasbourg. The President thanked MEPs and the French authorities for their support and voiced his wish for a return to Strasbourg as soon as possible.

President Sassoli expressed solidarity with the family of Jozef Chovanec, who died having been detained in Charleroi airport in February 2018. “The respect for human rights is a key value of the European Union. We support the demand for a full investigation to ensure clarity on the case, and call for explanations from those responsible”, said the President, adding that the case has already been referred to the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee and the EP will follow the investigation closely.

Changes to the agenda

Monday

Two legislative files, pursuant to Rule 163, will be voted on during the first voting session starting at 19:15:

- Sustainable rail market in view of COVID-19 outbreak, and
- Draft Amending Budget no 8 to general budget 2020 (Emergency Support Instrument for purchasing vaccines).

Three reports on the appointments of the Chair and two independent members of the Central Counterparty Supervisory Committee (CCP) have been added to the votes on Monday.

The information concerning the distribution of votes is available on the website of the European Parliament under the section "Priority information".

The changes to the agenda with timing of votes and including requests for urgent procedure on legislative files related to COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

Requests by committees to start negotiations with Council and Commission

Decisions by committees to enter into inter-institutional negotiations (Rule 71) are published [on the plenary website](#).

If no request for a vote in Parliament on the decision to enter into negotiations is made by Tuesday 12.00 midnight, the committees may start negotiations.

Information on the extraordinary remote participation procedure is available [here](#).

[EU-China Leaders' Meeting: Upholding EU values and interests at](#)



The European Union and China held a Leaders' Meeting via videoconference on 14 September 2020. An EU-China Leaders' meeting with the participation of leaders of all EU member states was initially scheduled to take place on this date. President of the European Council, Charles Michel, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, for the Council Presidency, conducted the videoconference with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The meeting provided an opportunity to follow up on discussions at the [22nd EU-China Summit](#) (22 June). The meeting was important to maintain the momentum of EU-China high-level exchanges in order to achieve concrete results in line with EU interests and values.

The comprehensive agenda of the Leaders' meeting covered trade and investment, climate change and biodiversity, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as international affairs and other issues.

With regard to the negotiations for an ambitious EU-China Comprehensive Investment Agreement (CAI), while both sides registered progress on the rules regulating the behaviour of State-owned-enterprises, on forced technology transfer and on transparency of subsidies, the EU emphasised that more work

was urgently needed on the issues of rebalancing market access and on sustainable development. The EU called on China to step up its ambition on these issues. The two sides reaffirmed their objective of closing the remaining gaps before the end of the year. The EU side emphasised that high-level political engagement would be required within the Chinese system to achieve a meaningful agreement.

On other trade and economic issues, the EU reiterated its call on China to engage in future negotiations on industrial subsidies in the WTO. The EU stressed that, in line with China's stated commitment to open up and ensure that EU producers are fairly treated on the Chinese market, more needed to be done to improve market access in the agri-food trade, financial services and the digital sector. The EU also again made clear its concerns on overcapacity, both in traditional sectors such as steel and aluminium as well as in high tech.

The two sides welcomed the signature of the EU-China Agreement on Geographical Indications which will improve access to the Chinese market especially for high-quality European agricultural products.

The EU underlined the need for reciprocity and a level playing field in the area of science and technology, underpinned by high ethical and integrity standards. Leaders welcomed and agreed to continue the high level digital dialogue. They looked forward to concrete progress on ICT standards, product safety and research and innovation.

On climate change and biodiversity, the EU encouraged China to strengthen its climate commitments in terms of peaking carbon dioxide emissions and setting the goal of climate neutrality domestically. The EU also stressed the importance of a moratorium in China of building coal-fired power plants and financing their construction abroad, at least as part of a global initiative. The EU also encouraged China to launch its national emission trading system soon. The two sides agreed to establish a High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue to pursue ambitious joint commitments on these issues.

The EU noted that joint commitments by both sides on biodiversity could be a game-changer at global level and China has a key role to play as host of the Conference of the Parties next year. An ambitious global agreement would be a major achievement.

On the COVID-19 response, the EU emphasised the shared responsibility to participate in global efforts to stop the spread of the virus, boost research on treatments and vaccines, and strengthen the role of the World Health Organisation, including through the full implementation of the World Health Assembly resolution of May 2020. The EU also underlined that the recovery measures should support the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy. China's full engagement in G20 efforts to support low-income countries and effectively implement the G20 – Paris Club Debt Service Suspension Initiative will also be essential.

With regard to Hong Kong, EU Leaders voiced their grave concerns about the erosion of the fundamental rights and freedoms following the imposition of

the national security law on Hong Kong on 30 June, which is contrary to China's international commitments. They also reiterated the EU's concerns at the postponement of the Legislative Council election and the disqualification of candidates.

The EU reiterated its serious concerns about the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, the situation of human rights defenders, as well as the limitations to freedom of expression and access to information. The two sides agreed that the Human Rights Dialogue will take place as a physical meeting in China later this year.

On regional and international issues, the EU referred to the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, urging for self-restraint and a peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law. Leaders welcomed the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha. They also confirmed their commitment to upholding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal).

The EU also expressed readiness to continue to discuss the Strategic Agenda for Cooperation 2025, which can only be concluded once significant progress has been made in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

An EU-China Leaders' meeting with the participation of the Heads of State and Government of the EU member states and President Xi is foreseen to be held in 2021.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

[EU-China Leaders' Meeting: Upholding EU values and interests at the highest level – Joint press release by President Michel, President von der Leyen and Chancellor Merkel](#)



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[Remarks by President Charles Michel after the EU-China leaders' meeting via video conference](#)



I'm pleased that we could speak by video conference with President Xi, together with Ursula (von der Leyen) and Angela (Merkel). Unfortunately, our physical meeting in Leipzig wasn't possible.

Europe needs to be a player, not a playing field. Today's meeting represents another step forward in forging a more balanced relationship with China.

We strive for a relationship that delivers on our mutual commitments. That generates concrete results for both sides. Results that are also good for the world. In some areas, we are on the right track. In others, more work needs to be done.

We made it clear where we stand. Where we agree, and where we disagree. Real differences exist and we won't paper over them. But we are ready to engage. Ready to cooperate where we can, and ready to roll up our sleeves to find concrete solutions. And on those difficult issues, we conveyed a clear and united European message: we want a relationship with China that is based on reciprocity, responsibility, and basic fairness.

Today we addressed 4 key topics:

1. Climate change
2. Economic and trade issues
3. International Affairs and Human Rights
4. COVID-19 and economic recovery

China is a key global partner in reducing global greenhouse gas and tackling climate change. And we encourage China to be even more ambitious.

The EU is setting the bar high – carbon neutrality by 2050. And we count on China to show similar leadership by implementing the Paris Agreement.

We have a robust trading relationship with China. The EU is China's first trading partner. On average we trade over 1 billion euros a day.

Trade can energise our economic recovery. But we want more fairness. We want a more balanced relationship. That also means reciprocity and a level playing field. That's why we welcome today's signature of the Agreement on Geographical Indications. It's a big step in the right direction. We are working on a comprehensive investment agreement and concrete results in other important areas.

And in the digital domain, we defend our vision of a free, open and secure cyberspace. For the good of our people and our societies. As global players, the EU and China have global responsibilities. This means upholding the rules-based international order.

The national security law for Hong Kong continues to raise grave concerns. The EU and our Member States have responded with one clear voice. Democratic voices in Hong Kong should be heard, rights protected, and autonomy preserved. We called on China to keep their promises to the people of Hong Kong and the international community.

We reiterated our concerns over China's treatment of minorities in Xinjiang

and Tibet, and the treatment of human rights defenders and journalists. We asked for access for independent observers to Xinjiang and we called for the release of the arbitrarily detained Swedish citizen Gui Minhai and two Canadian citizens.

We agreed to discuss these issues in detail at the Human Rights Dialogue in Beijing later this year which will also include, we hope, a field visit to Tibet.

We called on China to refrain from unilateral actions in the South China Sea, to respect international law, and avoid escalations.

Covid-19 remains a deep and urgent threat. Only collective and transparent action will send this virus to the history books. There is only one way to find a vaccine and deploy it in all countries ... that's global cooperation.

We expect all countries, to cooperate with the impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation of the international health response to COVID-19, and support the WHO to identify the source of the virus.

We encourage China to pursue an economic recovery that leads to structural reforms and that shapes a greener, more sustainable economy. This includes implementing the G20 Action Plan to drive sustainable global growth and reduce global tensions. And in Africa, China should be engaged in multilateral efforts on debt relief that will spur economic recovery.

En conclusion, nos discussions aujourd'hui ont été extrêmement importantes. Nous mesurons bien que parler, dialoguer est important mais cela ne suffit pas, il s'agit de transformer nos messages en actes.

Nous sommes déterminés à continuer à être engagés avec la Chine pour promouvoir nos valeurs, pour défendre nos intérêts. Nous voulons une relation équilibrée, fondée sur le respect pour les intérêts mutuels.

Nous considérons que la réciprocité, la transparence doivent être au cœur de l'engagement porté par l'Union européenne.

[Visit the meeting page](#)

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