



Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme

ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE NON GOUVERNEMENTALE AYANT STATUT CONSULTATIF AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES, DE L'UNESCO,
ET DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE ET D'OBSERVATEUR AUPRES DE LA COMMISSION AFRICAINE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME ET DES PEUPLES

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION
OF HUMAN RIGHTS

FEDERACION INTERNACIONAL
DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS

الفدرالية الدولية لحقوق الانسان

Commissioner Peter Mandelson
EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG Trade
200 rue de la Loi
B-1049 BRUSSELS

Paris, July 3, 2006

Dear Commissioner Mandelson,

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) is an international non-governmental organization with its headquarters in Paris, bringing together 141 national human rights organizations throughout the world with the goal of promoting respect for the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. FIDH is writing today to urge you to ensure that human rights concerns are addressed in the forthcoming conference on “EU Trade and Investment with China: Changes, Challenges, and Choices,” to be held in Brussels on 7 July 2006.

Although the EU and China have been engaged in a dialogue on human rights since 1997, the results of this dialogue have been limited. It is becoming increasingly important to address the issue of human rights in the context of economic activities by private actors. Human rights violations in China remain serious and extensive. Repression of any form of dissent is still widespread – against pro-democracy activists, cyber-dissidents, journalists, workers and underground churches and religious practitioners. In addition, social unrest is on the rise in different regions of the country, due to a deterioration of the economic and social rights for the majority of Chinese people. Economic liberalization, significant foreign investment, and the current high growth rate have benefited only a minority of the population, spreading discontent among peasants and workers. Unpaid wages, forced relocations and disruptions, and increased corruption, particularly at local level, fuel this discontent.

FIDH believes that human rights must be addressed in a meaningful way within the context of trade and investment. If the EU is to truly embrace human rights as a cornerstone of its policy, it is imperative that the human rights dialogue extends to its economic activities.

To further this goal, FIDH is conducting a campaign – Keep Your Eyes Open – calling for consistency at the international level and for companies to publicly support and adhere to the United Nations Draft Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises with Regard to Human Rights.

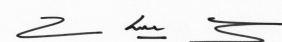
This text, drawn up by the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights sets out, in a single document, the rights and obligations derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the conventions of the International Labour Organization, that are applicable to companies and States.

The “Keep Your Eyes Open” campaign is aimed at businesses and at each and every one of us. It focuses on China in view of its current profile as a driving force of global growth. Despite its economic strength, it remains a country in which violations of fundamental human rights too-regularly occur.

Rather than closing their eyes to this situation, businesses that invest in China can contribute to bringing about a real change by seeking to ensure respect of human rights within their spheres of influence. The Draft Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations provides them with the best framework for such actions.

FIDH therefore calls upon the Commission to urge companies to behave responsibly, notably by supporting and implementing the Draft Norms on the Responsibilities of Transnational Corporations. The European Union should stand strong in its commitment to human rights and advocate for adherence to human rights norms, including in circumstances when trade with China is involved.

Sincerely,



Sidiki Kaba,
President of FIDH

CC:

Commissioner Günter Verheugen, Vice-President of the European Commission, Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry

Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy

Commissioner Joaquin Almunia, Commissioner for Economic and Monetary Affairs

Director-General David O’Sullivan, Director General for Trade

Director-General Eneko Landaburu, Director General for External Relations

President Elmar Brok, Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, European Parliament

President Enrique Barón Crespo, Chairperson of the Committee on International Trade, European Parliament

President H el ene Flautre, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights, European Parliament