EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004 **** 2009

Delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China

D-CN PV(2009)0211-01

MINUTES

of the meeting of 11 February 2009, from 15.00 to 16.00 BRUSSELS

The meeting opened at 15.00 on Wednesday, 11 February 2009, with Dirk Sterckx (Chair) in the chair.

1. Adoption of draft agenda

(PE 417.518)

The agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of minutes of the meeting of 20 November 2008

(PE 414.668)

The minutes were approved.

3. Chairman's announcements

Mr. STERCKX announced that Commissioner Louis Michel would not be present at the meeting due to illness, but had been replaced by Mr. Peter Craig McQuaid who could answer questions in his place. He thanked Mr. McQuaid for attending the meeting. He announced that Mr. Dehaene had also apologised for absence.

Mr. STERCKX asked that members email the Secretariat with any comments or questions they might have on the November delegation visit to Beijing and Shanghai.

Mr. STERCKX noted that the memorandum on safety in coal mines had been signed.

Mr. STERCKX also announced that the EU China summit, which had been postponed in December 2008, had now been rescheduled and would probably take place in Prague in April, although exact dates still needed to be finalised. He said that there was once again a better atmosphere in relations with China, and that the recent troubles were now in the past.

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4. Presentation by Mr Peter Craig McQuaide, Head of Unit at the European Commission DG Development on the activities of the EU and China in Africa.

Mr. MCQUAID introduced himself as the Head of Unit responsible for the dossier in the Commission's DG Development concerning international relations with non EU states. He said that the department had been working on relations with China in the context of Africa for a number of years. He noted that the communication regarding this matter had been adopted in October 2008 and the Council had adopted conclusions in November, supporting it.

Mr. MCQUAID said that the purpose of trilateral cooperation was to bring two relationships together. He stressed that strategic partnerships between the EU and Africa and between the EU and China were two very different partnerships but that it was thought advantageous to have a trilateral dialogue since cooperation would help Africa improve its international position and help China with integration into the world community. He said that it would also reinforce the strategic partnerships that already existed. He stressed that it was about cooperation and not about competition or dividing up Africa and her resources.

Mr. MCQUAID outlined four major sectors that the trilateral dialogue would focus on. These were: peace and security; infrastructure; the environment and the sustainable management of natural resources; and food security and agriculture. He pointed out that there could be no development without security and vice versa.

Mr. MCQUAID noted that EU was involved in peacekeeping in Africa. He added that China was also present in peace keeping operations in Africa and said that there was already dialogue with China over Africa. He stressed that infrastructure was essential for development to take place. He added that Africa had outlined what its missing links were in its infrastructure and that both the EU and China had been extremely active in this sphere. He said that many countries were dependent on commodity resources for their export revenue and growth and that management of these resources was essential if these countries were to have a sustainable future. He said that there were many international initiatives in this field, drawing attention to a recently signed agreement between the Commission and the Chinese state forestry administration on a bilateral partnership on forestry between the EU and China. He noted that the Commission was also supporting agreements which helped with sustainable forestry but added that there were a number of areas where support was being given to the sustainable management of resources. He noted that food security was an essential challenge and that support should be offered for sustainable agriculture through African programmes, as suggested by the Chinese side.

Mr. MCQUAID admitted that this was a novel and difficult approach and that while it would be easier to work separately, this was not in Africa's or in the world's interests. He said that the prospects of trilateral cooperation had received a cautious welcome from the Chinese authorities and that talks were in progress with the African authorities about this cooperation being welcomed by the African Union and separate African countries. He added that there already existed some triangular cooperation between Northern providers and emerging economy assistance providers with developing countries. He said that these approaches were gaining traction and were a good means of bringing together different knowledge, experience and skills of different countries including new partners which had experiences of their own in development of their economies and societies and in recent eradication of poverty.

Mr. STERCKX opened the floor up to questions.

Mr. FUNERIU said that he felt the trilateral cooperation was neglecting the sector of education, noting that both China and the EU were very active in updating education and research. He added that education was very important for the African continent, and that there were many links between Europe and Africa in terms of educational projects. He pointed out that there was nothing in the trilateral approach concerning education or research and said that Africa did not have a very strong research system but that its immense biodiversity could be good for research projects, as well as possibilities for biomedical and energy research. He asked if education was purposefully left out of the trilateral agreement because he felt that education should be one of the key aspects of cooperation.

Mrs. DOYLE stated that there was a big issue with science diplomacy and Africa, which was especially important in getting investment in research and for access to results. She said that a conference had been held on 'science diplomacy in Africa' in March 2008 in which the Commission was involved, as well as many other interested players and wanted to know if the Commission was developing relations in this area. She stressed the huge importance of the scientific arena and for coordination in that area.

Mr. WATSON asked if China was interested in ACP countries, sub-Saharan countries or the African continent as a whole. He also asked what their views on the Middle East and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were. He asked if the focus was on cooperation with particular countries, and whether if they were interested in such areas as disease-prevention and control, alleviation of the AIDS pandemic, infrastructure commitments in terms of energy, telecoms and transportation. If so, he added, what projects could the EU and China work on together, noting that the EU was the world's largest donor of aid, and wondering if China would be willing to help share this burden. He asked if there had been any discussions with them on the EPAs which encouraged trade beyond borders and what opportunities could be worked on in this respect.

Mr. MCQUAID emphasised that this was a European proposal to develop a relationship and dialogue concerning the development of Africa, and not a trilateral agreement. He said that it had started as a set of EU proposals and was open to counter-proposals and further development. He said that the proposal concerned Africa as a continent but that they were interested in cooperation with the African Union in particular, because the EU was supporting the AU as part of their strategy. He added that they were also interested in cooperation with individual countries because the Chinese presence and dealings with Africa were mostly bilateral rather than regional or continental, and also because many of the issues concerned were often decided by national governments rather than by regional bodies.

Mr. MCQUAID pointed out that there already existed a broader range of activities with Africa which did include education and research and science. He said that education was not considered a key area of cooperation but was dealt with elsewhere because it was never intended to cover every possible sector. He noted that this did not close any doors for future projects in this area. He added that China had proposed to cooperate on health, but that the Commission felt that this was supported in other areas and the Commission had brought forward the areas where they felt cooperation would be most beneficial.

On infrastructure, Mr. MCQUAID said that a number of countries, including China, were not members but at least observers of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA) where all external bodies meet to coordinate infrastructure for Africa. He mentioned a number of links between the ICA and China and the growing encouragement for China to join as a member.

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He said that there were no particular activities planned to be implemented on infrastructure yet but that this might emerge later on in the year.

Mr. MCQUAID said there had been no detailed discussions with China on the EPA yet but that the Commission was supporting trade beyond borders.

Mr. PANAYATOV said there were a lot of possible areas to work on in the sphere of energy and the environment. He said both Chinese scientists and Europe had a lot of technologies to deal with global warming. He asked how the cooperation would be realised in the future and said that an early start was necessary for combating climate change.

Mr. WEBER said that a trialogue process would be very beneficial. He asked what Mr. MCQUAID thought of the impact of the economic crisis on aid from the EU and China to Africa, noting that recent aid figures from China stood at \$5 billion in 2006 and had been expected to rise substantially until 2010. He asked if that pace of aid would be sustained following the economic crisis. He noted that EU aid had some conditions, concerning a number of considerations to do with areas such as human rights and the environment. He noted that Chinese aid was characterised by its neutrality and asked what the main principles which might be applied in a trialogue and if there would be any change in Chinese aid, with regards to adding conditions.

Mr. WATSON mentioned that the EU had close links with both China and Taiwan, and asked if there would be any similar discussions with Taiwan, or if something of that nature would jeopardise relations with China.

Mr. MCQUAID talked briefly about the organisation of a seminar on global warming, which he said was largely being organised by the Parliament. He said that cooperation between the relevant communities in Europe and China for the benefit of Africa on global warming was welcomed but that the European Commission did not plan on taking on all these issues. He did however stress that combating climate change was an important objective in development policy.

Mr. MCQUAID said that the impact of the financial crisis was severe for developing countries. He said the Commission was considering a number of ways of how adjusting their development cooperation to meet the immediate effects of the crisis on developing countries, and how it could be made more rapid and flexible. He said that it was difficult to monitor the impact on the volume of aid since EU states had international commitments for giving aid which the Commission monitored, but he added that this would be a very difficult year for states to meet their commitments. He said that he was not in a position to note what the Chinese response to the crisis in terms of aid might be, or what impact the crisis was having on Chinese aid.

Mr. MCQUAID noted that values and approach to aid were different from China and that this was recognised in discussions. He said that EU aid was now less conditional than in the past. He said there were still some fundamental values such as democracy, human rights and rule of law, but that budget support was not as politically conditional, adding that greater trust was placed in the recipient governments, and that there was less short term policy prescriptive conditionality. He said there was talk and dialogue over differences, involving think tanks and academics. He said there was also debate within China and hoped that China understood the EU stance better. He noted that there was common ground between the two sides.

Mr. MCQUAID said that there had been approaches from the Taiwanese organisation, the Chinese International Cooperation Agency, interested in cooperation and that Taiwan was involved with countries that recognise it but that this was limited to four countries in Africa. He said the Commission was prepared to cooperate with Taiwan in the countries in which it was active

Mr. STERCKX asked what the background to this was and what the reaction was in China when first approached by the Commission. He asked what role the European Parliament had to play in this and mentioned that there would be a delegation visit from China in April.

Mr. MCQUAID said that the communication had been adopted in October 2008. He said there had been a number of discussions on this but they would have liked to have had reflections at the summit meeting which had been postponed. He said that Mr. Michel had gone to China in 2008 to make contacts about the communication at an official level, and also with Africa. He said that the possible role of Parliament would be to offer support for proposals and in presenting, promoting and explaining the benefits of such an approach.

Mr. STERCKX thanked Mr. McQuaid for standing in for Mr. Michel and wished Mr. Michel all the best for a speedy recovery.

5. 2009 Programme of activity

Mr. STERCKX reminded members that there would be an EU-China Interparliamentary Meeting in the week of 13 April in Brussels, and that there would be a preparatory meeting in Strasbourg on Tuesday 12 March at 9.00. He noted that the draft agenda for the IPM had been sent round. He suggested that under point three it might be useful to add EU, China and Africa cooperation.

He also said there would be a Bureau visit to China in the week of 6 April.

6. Any other business

Mrs. DOYLE wanted an explanation for the termination by Eutelsat of the broadcaster New Tang Dynasty Television (NDTV). She said she was disappointed at this step, coming after the opening up of China during the Beijing Olympics and asked if this issue could be resolved.

She also highlighted the case of a Christian Human Rights lawyer, Mr. Gao Zhisheng who was forcibly taken from his home on the 4 February 2009. She noted that he had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. She urged that the Chinese officials in Belgium should do everything possible to organise his release, and added that his family were subject to a lot of attention by the Chinese authorities.

Finally she said that there had been a so-called 'strike hard' campaign in Tibet and asked for a full explanation of why this was happening. She said it seemed to be an intensification of the hard line policies of the PRC against peaceful dissenters and asked why China was spoiling the reputation it had made for itself during the Olympics.

Mr. STERCKX said that he would write a letter to the Ambassador in connection with Gao PV\768683EN.doc 5/9 PE419.569v01-00

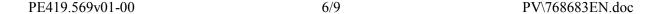


Zhisheng, and also would mention the point about Eutelsat and the NDTV. He said he would look at this issue once again and come back to it either through writing an official letter or through clear information on the current position in China. For the third case he said this should be addressed in April with their Chinese counterparts but said that he felt he was not able to broach this issue in a letter to the Ambassador at this stage. He preferred a debate on the matter when the Parliament would meet the Chinese delegation in April. He noted that there would certainly be an exchange of views and other action may be taken as seen fit.

7. Date and place of next meeting

The next meeting will take place in Strasbourg at 9.00 on Thursday 12 March 2009

The meeting closed at 16.00.



ΠΡΙCЪCTBEH JIUCT/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/ ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/ΚΑΤΑΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/ LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRS/DALYVIŲ SĄRAŠAS/JELENLÉTI ÍV/ REĠISTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŚCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/LISTĂ DE PREZENŢĂ/ PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÄSNÄOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA

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Dirk Sterckx(P), Henri Weber(VP)	
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Daniel Petru Funeriu, Manolis Mavrommatis, Vladko Todorov Panayotov, Rihards Pīks	
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Philip Bushill-Matthews, Avril Doyle, Bogdan Golik, Jiří Maštálka, Graham Watson	
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Craig McQuaide (DG DEV)

Phil (DG DEV)

Други институции/Otras instituciones/Ostatní orgány a instituce/Andre institutioner/Andere Organe/Muud institutsioonid/
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Mr Zhong Ronglai, Mr Zhang Hong (Chinese embassy)

Други участници/Otros participantes/Ostatní účastníci/Endvidere deltog/Andere Teilnehmer/Muud osalejad/Επίσης Παρόντες/Other participants/Autres participants/Altri partecipanti/Citi klātesošie/Kiti dalyviai/Más résztvevők/Partecipanti ohra/Andere aanwezigen/Inni uczestnicy/Outros participantes/Alţi participanţi/Iní účastníci/Drugi udeleženci/Muut osallistujat/Övriga deltagare

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