



Joint Statement

18th meeting of the EU-China Round Table

14 December 2021

Brussels/Beijing

1. The EU-China Round Table held its 18th meeting in Brussels on 14 December 2021 in a hybrid format that allowed for both physical and remote participation.
2. The opening session of the Round Table was addressed by the co-chairs, **Christa Schweng**, EESC President, and **Zhang Qingli**, CESC Chairman, guest speakers Ambassador **Zhang Ming**, Head of the Mission of the People's Republic of China to the EU, and **Gunnar Wiegand**, Managing Director for Asia and Pacific of the European External Action Service, and **Dimitris Dimitriadis**, President of the EESC's External Relations Section.
3. During the working session, chaired by **Guo Jun**, CESC Vice-Chairman, members of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and delegates of the China Economic and Social Council (CESC) discussed the written reports drawn up by the two parties.

The Round Table

4. endorses the following aspects of the report *Post-Covid Economic Recovery and Possible EU-China Cooperation*, drafted by EESC rapporteur Ellen Nygren and co-rapporteur Ágnes Cser:
5. Cooperation and exchange need to be a lively field of activity, based on mutual respect, reciprocity, and interest in learning from each other. Civil society organisations can bring much value to this.

6. More and better international cooperation among civil society organisations and their inclusion is needed, whether based on a trade agreement, an investment agreement or on some other kind of partnership.
7. The EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is built on bilateral dialogues, consisting of three pillars - political, economic and sectoral - as well as people-to-people exchanges. These dialogues, which are already in place, are valuable platforms for cooperation and exchange and should be further developed and strengthened.
8. Economic recovery and trade relations are inseparable from adherence to and respect for our fundamental values. In a crisis and in a moment of trial, human rights, free speech and market freedoms are more important than ever. Both sides should promote the common values of humanity and respect for our histories and customs, as well as for our fundamental values.
9. Examples of possible areas for EU-China cooperation for economic recovery are: fighting global health problems; green transition and tackling climate change; EU-China High-Level People-to-People Dialogue; culture, education and science; digitalisation; trade and investment; employment, social protection and poverty reduction; exchange of best practices regarding social security systems; initiatives related to occupational health and safety; measures to improve working and living conditions in both rural and urban areas; international standards and promoting the implementation of these in practice, such as the ILO core conventions.
10. We underline the value of continued and developed EU-China cooperation for mutual exchanges and synergy effects, since many undesirable effects of the COVID-19 crisis can be better addressed in a coordinated way. We live in a world where some challenges are universal and therefore better fought and dealt with through international cooperation than unilaterally in each country or region. Instead of looking at differences and barriers that hinder cooperation, we should look at what we can do to achieve mutual gains. Economic and social development go hand in hand. Therefore, it is important to involve representatives of civil society organisations in all kinds of cooperation between countries and to always monitor the social effects of economic and scientific activities.
11. Existing platforms for cooperation between the EU and China should be strengthened, such as the EU-China Round Table and the existing bilateral dialogues. The European Commission should involve the EU-China Round Table in its activities relating to civil society and make better use of its expertise. Civil society organisations should be more actively involved in future EU-China cooperation, to ensure that people in general benefit from what is done and to help decision-makers in the countries concerned gear their policy for economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis to areas that improve the living conditions of their citizens.

12. endorses the following aspects of the report *Explore the economic and trade potential for win-win cooperation between China and the EU*, drafted by CESC rapporteur **Ji Zhiye**:
13. China and the EU need to explore new areas of economic and trade cooperation:
 - the green economy can provide new momentum for China-EU cooperation. For instance, in the field of green technology, China and the EU can work together to carry out R&D in green technologies to advance energy conservation and emission reduction, develop circular economy, facilitate industrial transformation and upgrade, and cultivate green lifestyles,
 - the digital economy should be a new focus in China-EU cooperation. More cooperation in cross-border e-commerce, the Internet financial platform and the construction of electronic infrastructure should be fostered,
 - high-quality infrastructure construction may become a new highlight of China-EU cooperation. Both China’s Belt and Road Initiative and the EU’s Global Gateway focus on infrastructure. The BRI can align with the Global Gateway by jointly conducting planning, financing, rule-making, and third-party cooperation in the field of infrastructure construction.
14. endorses the following aspects of the report *Cooperation between China and EU in WTO reform*, drafted by CESC co-rapporteur **Tu Xinquan**:
15. China and the EU have broad and solid consensus on the issue of WTO reform. First of all, both China and the EU are firm defenders, supporters and practitioners of multilateralism, and both hope to maintain the stability and development of the multilateral trading system. Second, both China and the EU strongly call for and support the normal operation of the dispute settlement mechanism and resuming the appointment of members of the Appellate Body as soon as possible. Third, both China and the EU actively support the expansion and upgrading of WTO rules, especially negotiation and formulation of rules on some new issues. Fourth, China and the EU both strongly support the concept of sustainable development and advocate the coordination of trade policies to support global efforts to combat climate change and environmental degradation.
16. The economic foundation of China-EU cooperation must be strengthened, so that the two sides can jointly make more and greater contributions to preserving world peace, stability, common development and prosperity.

Plans for the 19th Round Table and future work

17. Both parties are pleased with the interesting, high-quality discussions that have taken place, which help each to better understand the views of the other party.
18. Both sides agree that the 19th meeting of the EU-China Round Table will be held in the second half of 2022 in China, the COVID-19 pandemic permitting, or else remotely via a videoconference. For the 2022 Round Table, written reports will be drafted on the *Economic and Social Impacts of Green and Digital Transition*. A second subject may possibly be selected later by joint decision.
19. This Joint Statement will be submitted to the next EU-China Summit and to the political authorities of both parties.

Brussels, 14 December 2021

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Christa Schweng
President
European Economic and Social Committee

Zhang Qingli
Chairman
China Economic and Social Council