The Foreign Policy Centre

Progressive Thinking for a Global Age

Press Release

8th November 2005
For immediate use

China-EU summit tackles thorny issue of human rights

A major conference, attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon John Prescott MP and State Councillor Tang Jiaxuan bringing together key players from the EU and China today debated China's relations with countries who abuse human rights and break international law. The conference, organised by the Foreign Policy Centre, the Centre for European Reform and the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences was held during the state visit of the Chinese Premier, Hu Jintao.

STEPHEN TWIGG, Director of the Foreign Policy Centre today said:

"China's relationship with countries such as Sudan, Iran and Zimbabwe are a worrying example of a government putting the national interest of obtaining oil ahead of the protection of human rights and the non-proliferation of WMD.

"The fact that Sudan has abused human rights in Darfur and elsewhere; Zimbabwe has systematically attacked its own citizens; and Iran is intent on developing nuclear weapons while saying 'Israel should be wiped off the map' suggests that China is on very weak ground in its support for such regimes.

"We do not live in the age of Westphalia anymore. The Chinese government cannot defend its support for tyrannical regimes on the grounds that the abuse of human rights is an internal matter. In a post 9/11 age, the interests of human beings with individual rights are more important than an outdated notion of national sovereignty. This is equally true for Western countries – who are often guilty of double-standards when it comes to doing deals with Conservative Arab regimes. It is crucial that the EU and China engage in a constructive fashion, but the EU, as a collective body, should encourage China to use its diplomatic and economic leverage to bring about change amongst its allies."

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Editor's Notes

1. 'China and Globalisation' – EU-UK-China Policy Dialogue, hosted by the Foreign Policy Centre, the Centre for European Reform and the Chinese Academy for Social Sciences, was held at the Reform Club on Tuesday 8th November 2005

2. 'Preventing the Next Cold War: A View from Beijing', authored by Andrew Small is published by the Foreign Policy Centre, a progressive global think tank based in London and Beijing. More details are available at http://fpc.org.uk/publications/179

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