

EU- China High Level Environment and Climate Dialogue (HECD)

Report of the second meeting, 27 September 2021

The meeting was a very cordial, 45 minutes video conference between Executive Vice President Frans Timmermans (EVP) and Vice Premier Han Zeng (HZ).

In the opening remarks, both participants mentioned the value of EU-China cooperation, with the EVP focusing on the urgency of action and HZ on the role of multilateralism and importance of building trust. EVP congratulated China for the recent announcement by President Xi, pledging to stop the construction of coal-fired energy plants abroad, and asked for more details.

In the part on EU and China's progress and challenges on climate policies,

- EVP mentioned the legally binding nature of EU's objective to reduce emissions by at least 55% in 2030 and to become climate neutral by 2050 and illustrated the key elements of the Fit for 55 package, including the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.
- On the Chinese side, HZ insisted on the commitment by China to peak emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060. He mentioned that China has overachieved its 2020 targets and will deliver on the 2030 target as well. On how to achieve the mid and long term targets, he mentioned that a task force, led by himself, is finalising its work (on the "1+n" plans) and that a detailed report will be published in the next 10 days (i.e. by October 6). Moreover the Chinese updated NDC and LTS are going through internal procedures before being submitted to the UNCCC soon [implicitly, before the COP]. HZ also mentioned that we should not be worried too much about high emissions in Q1 2021. This is because the baseline was very low last year due to COVID.

In the discussion on achieving higher cooperation on environment and climate between, China and EU:

- HZ mentioned 3 main lines of cooperation:
 - 1) Strengthen the governance of our cooperation mechanism and formalise it to increase trust, policy cooperation and market cooperation
 - 2) Increase practical cooperation in key areas: biodiversity protection, renewables, low-carbon technologies as well on the ETS
 - 3) Work on multilateralism to strengthen the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including by working together to carry-out joint projects to support developing countries' efforts to reduce emissions
- EVP congratulated China for its efforts, in particular in the areas of ETS and overseas coal. He also raised concerns on China's forecast emissions growth and asked if China's current climate targets are sufficient to limit the increase of emissions expected due to the growth of its economy in the years to come. He also asked for more details on the date and level of emissions' peak and on the pledge to stop coal plant construction abroad [no reply from China]. He also mentioned the importance of fighting deforestation and cutting methane emissions and asked China to join the Global Methane Pledge or take similar unilateral action.

- On UNFCCC COP26:

- EVP reiterated that on climate finance the EU has done its part and for the COP to be a success China needs to submit a more ambitious NDC and Long Term Strategy and that an agreement needs to be found on Article 6 and also on transparency and reporting, amongst others.
- HZ started by mentioning that the Chinese priority is for the implementation of the Paris Rule book (Art 6) and stated that all parties should show how they plan to translate their goals into concrete policies. They have high expectations for COP26 and China is ready to play a constructive role.
HZ mentioned that the key concerns of developing countries are about Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and climate finance where the EU should push others to deliver. He also cited the importance of technology transfer and capacity building. He finally mentioned that, including for China, adaptation is as important as mitigation.

- On CBD COP15:

- HZ said that China, as president of the COP, has prepared a balanced declaration and there is a need to reach a consensus on it so that practical implementation can start swiftly.
- EVP reminded the interdependence of climate goals and biodiversity loss. He mentioned that for ensuring an ambitious outcome for CBD COP 15 we need physical meetings of the COP and of its subsidiary bodies, but also realistic objectives. EVP expressed that we need an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework with strong provisions on means of implementation as well as stronger mechanisms for implementation, monitoring and review. He insisted on the EU strong support the 30x30 target for protected areas, while mentioning the other crucial elements.
As regards biodiversity financing, EVP reminded President Von der Leyen announcement of a doubling of the Commission's international financing for biodiversity. This represents a doubling of the doubling that was agreed in 2012. EVP also mentioned that UNFCCC COP26 will be important to build support for nature-based solutions and to ensure that climate finance provides also a significant contribution to biodiversity.

On a possible joint press communique, EVP stated that we need to address updated elements on ambition and not only list current pledges and actions.

Both participant agreed on holding the next meeting in person before COP 26.