

# EU-China Leaders' Meeting: Upholding EU values and interests at



The European Union and China held a Leaders' Meeting via videoconference on 14 September 2020. An EU-China Leaders' meeting with the participation of leaders of all EU member states was initially scheduled to take place on this date. President of the European Council, Charles Michel, President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the Federal Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, for the Council Presidency, conducted the videoconference with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The meeting provided an opportunity to follow up on discussions at the [22<sup>nd</sup> EU-China Summit](#) (22 June). The meeting was important to maintain the momentum of EU-China high-level exchanges in order to achieve concrete results in line with EU interests and values.

The comprehensive agenda of the Leaders' meeting covered trade and investment, climate change and biodiversity, the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as international affairs and other issues.

With regard to the negotiations for an ambitious EU-China Comprehensive Investment Agreement (CAI), while both sides registered progress on the rules regulating the behaviour of State-owned-enterprises, on forced technology transfer and on transparency of subsidies, the EU emphasised that more work was urgently needed on the issues of rebalancing market access and on sustainable development. The EU called on China to step up its ambition on these issues. The two sides reaffirmed their objective of closing the remaining gaps before the end of the year. The EU side emphasised that high-level political engagement would be required within the Chinese system to achieve a meaningful agreement.

On other trade and economic issues, the EU reiterated its call on China to engage in future negotiations on industrial subsidies in the WTO. The EU stressed that, in line with China's stated commitment to open up and ensure that EU producers are fairly treated on the Chinese market, more needed to be done to improve market access in the agri-food trade, financial services and the digital sector. The EU also again made clear its concerns on overcapacity, both in traditional sectors such as steel and aluminium as well as in high tech.

The two sides welcomed the signature of the EU-China Agreement on Geographical Indications which will improve access to the Chinese market especially for high-quality European agricultural products.

The EU underlined the need for reciprocity and a level playing field in the area of science and technology, underpinned by high ethical and integrity standards. Leaders welcomed and agreed to continue the high level digital dialogue. They looked forward to concrete progress on ICT standards, product safety and research and innovation.

On climate change and biodiversity, the EU encouraged China to strengthen its climate commitments in terms of peaking carbon dioxide emissions and setting the goal of climate neutrality domestically. The EU also stressed the importance of a moratorium in China of building coal-fired power plants and financing their construction abroad, at least as part of a global initiative. The EU also encouraged China to launch its national emission trading system soon. The two sides agreed to establish a High-Level Environment and Climate Dialogue to pursue ambitious joint commitments on these issues.

The EU noted that joint commitments by both sides on biodiversity could be a game-changer at global level and China has a key role to play as host of the Conference of the Parties next year. An ambitious global agreement would be a major achievement.

On the COVID-19 response, the EU emphasised the shared responsibility to participate in global efforts to stop the spread of the virus, boost research on treatments and vaccines, and strengthen the role of the World Health Organisation, including through the full implementation of the World Health Assembly resolution of May 2020. The EU also underlined that the recovery measures should support the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy. China's full engagement in G20 efforts to support low-income countries and effectively implement the G20 – Paris Club Debt Service Suspension Initiative will also be essential.

With regard to Hong Kong, EU Leaders voiced their grave concerns about the erosion of the fundamental rights and freedoms following the imposition of the national security law on Hong Kong on 30 June, which is contrary to China's international commitments. They also reiterated the EU's concerns at the postponement of the Legislative Council election and the disqualification of candidates.

The EU reiterated its serious concerns about the treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, the situation of human rights defenders, as well as the limitations to freedom of expression and access to information. The two sides agreed that the Human Rights Dialogue will take place as a physical meeting in China later this year.

On regional and international issues, the EU referred to the escalating tensions in the South China Sea, urging for self-restraint and a peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law. Leaders welcomed the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha. They also confirmed their commitment to upholding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran nuclear deal).

The EU also expressed readiness to continue to discuss the Strategic Agenda for Cooperation 2025, which can only be concluded once significant progress has been made in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Investment Agreement.

An EU-China Leaders' meeting with the participation of the Heads of State and Government of the EU member states and President Xi is foreseen to be held in 2021.

[Visit the meeting page](#)