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Commissioner Busquin in China to strengthen co-operation in science and technology

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Commissioner Busquin in China to strengthen co-operation in science and technology

European Union Research Commissioner Philippe Busquin will visit the People's Republic of China from April 6-11 to broaden EU-China relations and reinforce co-operation in science and technology. Space policy and nuclear fusion research, and in particular the ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) project, will top the agenda of meetings with Chinese authorities. A delegation of high-level European business and space sector executives will accompany the Commissioner on the visit. During the trip to China, Commissioner Busquin and China's Science and Technology Minister, Xu Guanhua, will sign a joint statement outlining their mutual commitment to furthering science and technology co-operation. They will announce the establishment of a High Level Steering Group on EU-China Space Co-operation. Commissioner Busquin will also speak at Tsinghua University and make technical visits to joint research projects and facilities in Wuhan, Hebei, Nanjing and Shanghai during the trip. Commissioner Busquin will continue his Asian journey with a visit to South Korea on 12-13 April.

"The EU and China can both benefit greatly from improved co-operation in the fields of science and technology," Commissioner Busquin said. "Much has already been achieved, particularly in the fields of biotechnology, food safety, SARS, energy and nuclear fusion, space technologies and new materials. But more must be done. To boost Europe's competitiveness on the world stage we must continue to build on our achievements by increasing co-operation in new areas."

Science and technology co-operation to boost EU and Chinese economic growth

By improving co-operation between the EU and China's science and technology

sectors, the EU aims to develop a common way of analysing and solving global problems relating to food safety, natural resource management, the knowledge and digital divide, poverty-linked infectious diseases and environmental safety. Future co-operation will also focus on priorities such as biotechnology, the environment, information technology, nano-technology and fusion energy. A co-operation agreement between Euratom and China is being negotiated. Progress in these areas can enhance competitiveness and economic growth in both Europe and China.

Visit to build on history of EU-China co-operation

Co-operation between European and Chinese research organisations, industry, universities and researchers has grown since a bilateral science and technology agreement was signed in late 1999. These links were further strengthened when an EU-China office for the promotion of research co-operation was established in June 2001 in Beijing.

The office has helped Chinese scientists to access the European Research Framework Programme. In 2003, the EU launched a special €9 million scheme to help China and other Asian countries to undertake research to combat Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The EU-China science and technology agreement is due to be renewed later this year.

EU-China space and satellite navigation co-operation

At the joint EU-China High Level Workshop on Space Co-operation on April 7th the Commissioner, and the accompanying delegation, will launch an EU-China dialogue on space policy and discuss plans to establish a long-term partnership between the EU and China in space activities. Discussions will focus on space science and technology, global navigation satellite systems, commercial applications of space technologies, the training and mobility of scientists, Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security (GMES) and exploration of the solar system and deep space.

Both Europe and China are actively involved in satellite navigation services, with many potential benefits to flow from mutual co-operation. In Europe, the GALILEO programme aims to provide high precision global satellite navigation services. In 2003, a co-operation agreement was signed between the EU and China. The implementation of this agreement is ongoing, with the EU-China Galileo Training and Co-operation Centre set up in Beijing last year. The centre aims to raise awareness about Galileo as well as improving training and industrial partnerships between Europe and China.

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During the visit to China, Commissioner Busquin will also discuss the state of play of negotiations on the ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) research project on nuclear fusion energy. ITER will provide a major step forward for the advancement of fusion science and technology on the way towards fusion power production. The European Union, Japan, Russia, China, South Korea and the United States are partners in negotiations to jointly construct and operate ITER. The construction of ITER is estimated to cost around €4.5 billion.

The outstanding issue is the choice between the European candidate site of Cadarache, in France, and the other candidate site of Rokkasho-Mura, in Northern Japan. Consensus could not be reached at a Ministerial meeting held in Washington on December 20th 2003, or at further technical and bilateral meetings. ITER partners are therefore further studying the characteristics of the two candidate sites, while also considering a "broader approach" with the inclusion of other complementary elements of nuclear fusion research. The Commission is actively contributing to these discussions in order to reach consensus for ITER in Europe.

For further information please visit:

International scientific co-operation <http://www.cordis.lu/fp6/inco.htm> http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/iscp/index_en.cfm?page=Welcme&type=other

Space policy <http://europa.eu.int/comm/space>

Fusion energy research and ITER http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/energy/fu/fu_en.html <http://www.iter.org/>

Annex

Members of the accompanying delegation on Space Research:

AZÁRRAGA Alvaro - CEO, SENER

BARRETT David - Co-ordinator of Galileo Project, Thales Beijing Representative Office

BARROUX Pierre - Chief Representative, EADS

BAUSCH Romain - CEO, SES Global

BELLONI Antonio - Managing Director and Chief Representative, Beijing Office, Finmeccanica

BEN AMOR Sami - Vice President, China Alcatel Space

Alcatel China Investment Co., Ltd

BERGQUIST Karl - ESA

BOUVIER Antoine - CEO, EADS, ASTRIUM

CULHANE John Leonard - ESSC-ESF, University College London

DRESCHER Jürgen - DLR

ENSSLIN Klaus - CEO, KAYSER-THREDE, Germany

FRANSAER Dirk - CEO, VITO, Belgium

GROGNARD Peter - CEO, SEPTENTRIO

JANICHEWSKI Stéphane - Director of Strategy, CNES, France

LAVERTY John - CEO, PINPOINT FARADAY, UK

METTHEY Jack - European Commission, Director Space and Transport Research

SOURISSE Pascale - President of Eurospace, ALCATEL

SOUTHWOOD David - Director of Science, ESA

SWEETING Martin - CEO, SSTL, UK

TUCCI Maurizio - Chief Executive Officer, Alenia Spazio Finmeccanica Group

WITTIG Sigmar - Chairman of Executive Board, DLR