



News

China and Europe enhance cooperation

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China and the European Union (EU) signed a number of cooperative agreements on 8 December, some covering nuclear non-proliferation and technology transfer.

Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao met with Dutch prime minister Jan Balkenende, European Commission president Jose Barroso and other officials at the seventh annual summit between the two, held in The Hague, Netherlands.

Among the agreements signed were a Joint Declaration on Non-Proliferation and Arms Control, intended to enhance cooperation and eventually form the framework for a strategic partnership. The agreement is focused on compliance with nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation treaties, control of technology that could be used in atomic weapons programmes and the control of conventional arms.

A Euratom agreement was also signed, opening opportunities for both sides to benefit from knowledge sharing, technology transfer and cooperation in research and development. Europeans will benefit from access to new nuclear facilities in China while many in the bloc will be shutting down.

The agreement also includes a legal framework for bilateral cooperation in nuclear fusion research. The EU has described this as 'particularly important for future cooperation under the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (Iter)'.

China, along with Russia, is supporting the EU's bid to build Iter in France, while South Korea and the USA prefer Japan's bid. This deadlock has gone on so long that the EU has repeatedly signalled that it may be prepared to develop Iter alone, or with a smaller number of partners.

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