

8th EU-China Business Summit: An important forum for open discussion on challenges and opportunities

The 8th EU-China Business Summit on 20 September in Brussels brought together the highest level of CEOs from Europe and China. European and Chinese political leaders, including Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, European Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister Didier Reynders also attended and addressed the participants.

Organised by BUSINESSEUROPE and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade – in cooperation with the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, EU-China Business Association and EUROCHAMBRES – the event, held in parallel to the EU-China Political Summit, served as an important forum for an open discussion about the current and future challenges and opportunities shaping the business environment in China and the European Union.

Participants of the business summit expressed their concern about the ongoing global economic crisis and the slowdown in the Chinese economy. The business leaders discussed the challenges in innovation to remain competitive and to be able to adapt to local and global market demands. They looked at the ways of strengthening investment opportunities to boost growth by encouraging companies to invest and agreed that the EU and China should pursue an ambitious bilateral strategy to further open their markets by launching investment treaty negotiations.

BUSINESSEUROPE President Jürgen R. Thumann said: *“China is already the EU's 2nd largest trading partner and its fastest growing export market. European companies are very keen on doing more business with and in China. The EU and China need to rely on partnerships for growth. But partnerships can only work well if they are beneficial to all parties involved. Therefore the strong economic dialogue that removes trade and investment impediments is central to the EU-China relationship.”*

Arnaldo Abruzzini, Secretary General of EUROCHAMBRES, said: *“Amidst the uncertainties we, Europeans, are facing in our home region, we wish to send a strong signal that EU-China relations remain crucial to overcome the current crisis. Despite dissensions, we need to pursue an open dialogue, to avoid protectionist temptations and to create the conditions for a harmonious and balanced business relationship for companies from both sides, especially smaller ones.”*

Davide Cucino, President of the European Union Chamber of Commerce said: *“More than ever before in modern history, the global economy depends on cooperation between Europe and China. Europe’s open investment environment not only offers Chinese companies opportunities to enter a large mature marketplace, it also brings direct benefits that can help lift Europe out of its economic malaise. Likewise, European companies can be a catalyst to assist China shift its economy towards quality-driven sustainable growth, which is probably the primary challenge facing the global economy today. So, while today’s Business Summit’s theme of cooperation was apt, it also taught us that such necessary cooperation can only stem from an acknowledgement that fostering investment and healthy competition in an open marketplace is the most important goal.”*

Sir David Brewer CMG, President of the EU China Business Association said: *“Today’s Business Summit has yet again given European and Chinese businesses a tremendous opportunity to meet and discuss issues of common interest. Significant scope exists for even broader and deeper trade and investment links between the EU and China that will benefit our peoples. Now, as much as at any time in recent history, we need businesses to lead the way in driving economic recovery.”*

Contacts:

EUROCHAMBRES: Guendalina Cominotti, +32 (0)2 282 08 66, cominotti@eurochambres.eu

BUSINESSEUROPE: Peter Vertessy, +32(0)2 237 65 03, p.vertessy@businessseurope.eu

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