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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell
on behalf of the European Commission
(19.4.2021)

The EU has expressed clearly its position on Tibet on several occasions, in multilateral fora public debates¹, and bilaterally with Chinese interlocutors. The situation in Tibet and Xinjiang was raised at the EU-China Summit on 22 June 2020², and at the EU-China leaders' meetings on 14 September³ and 30 December 2020⁴. In the framework of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, the EU has consistently expressed concerns about restrictions on the freedoms of religion and belief, on freedom to education in a minority language, and on arbitrary detentions and enforced disappearances of Tibetans. Recent reports of unacceptable mass labour transfer schemes targeting Tibetans raise serious concerns.

The EU is committed to ensure respect of international human rights law and standards, including the prohibition of forced labour and child labour, the protection of victims of human and labour rights violations. It also promotes the ratification and effective implementation of the 'fundamental' International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions not yet ratified by China.

Negotiations on the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) were concluded in principle at the end of 2020. In the CAI, China committed in particular to continued and sustained efforts to ratify ILO Conventions on Forced Labour (Convention 29 and the 2014 Protocol) and on the Abolition of Forced Labour (Convention 105). The EU will call on China to respect this commitment. As confirmed recently by the EU-Korea free trade agreement (FTA) Panel⁵, the commitment with regard to ratification is binding, and China needs to take concrete steps towards that objective.

As regards the possible adoption of EU restrictive measures (sanctions) against individuals and entities, these are adopted by the Council acting by unanimity.

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/75884/hrc43-item-4-human-rights-situations-require-councils-attention-eu-statement_en

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/85812/hrc45-item-4-human-rights-situation-require-councils-attention-eu-statement_en

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/22/eu-china-summit-defending-eu-interests-and-values-in-a-complex-and-vital-partnership/>

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/09/14/eu-china-leaders-meeting-upholding-eu-values-and-interests-at-the-highest-level-joint-press-release-by-president-michel-president-von-der-leyen-and-chancellor-merkel/>

⁴ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/12/30/eu-china-leaders-meeting-delivering-results-by-standing-firm-on-eu-interests-and-values/>

⁵ <https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=2238>