

Wednesday, 12 December 2007 - Strasbourg

EU/China summit - EU/China human rights dialogue (debate)

Ana Maria Gomes (PSE). - (PT) At the Summit, Europe spoke clearly about how China is perverting WTO rules, failing to respect workers' rights, exporting products that are harmful to health, pirating technology and impeding European access to the Chinese market. The Chinese leaders were not used to hearing the EU speak so frankly and they retaliated by holding up the joint declaration for a few days, but the European leadership regrettably failed to keep up the pressure: not only did it make unacceptable concessions on the referendum in Taiwan, it did not contradict the 'One China Policy' and it did not confront Peking on the subject of serious human rights problems. Because there was not time, President José Sócrates told Portuguese journalists, sometimes these things are discussed over dinner.

The death penalty and the release of prisoners held since the Tiananmen Square massacre: these are among the reasons why this Parliament is in favour of maintaining the embargo on arms to China. Arbitrary detention and trial, corruption and forced evictions, persecution and repression of journalists and Internet users, repression of Tibetans and minorities, responsibility for the tragedies in Darfur and Burma: none of these fundamental issues was on the Summit's agenda. Clearly the EU is not alone in having a duty to call Beijing to account before it holds the 2008 Olympic Games. If the International Olympic Committee mediates about the quality of the air, why not judge Beijing on respect for the Olympic ideal in its relations with its own citizens and those of other countries? No one, least of all the EU Council and Commission, can continue to neglect the fight for freedoms and human rights in China. This is a marathon that will only gain impetus in the context of the 2008 Olympics. Not only does it affect millions and millions of Chinese, it will have consequences for the whole of humanity.