



Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Department for Asia and the Pacific Region

Summary of Government communication – the work on issues concerning China

Introduction

In light of China's growing global influence and the new opportunities and challenges this entails, the Government describes in this communication to parliament Sweden's relations with China and the approach the Government takes in issues concerning China.

Sweden's relations with China

Sweden's relations with China extend back to the 18th century and the Swedish East India Company's activities. Sweden recognised the People's Republic of China in 1950 and became the first western country to establish diplomatic relations with the new China. China is now Sweden's largest trading partner in Asia and eighth largest trading partner in terms of trade in goods. Around 10 000 Swedish companies trade with China and more than 600 Swedish companies are established there. For many of these countries, their presence in China is of central importance for development, production and contact with a rapidly growing and dynamic market. At the same time, Chinese and foreign companies have not been able to operate under the same conditions in China and internationally, and this is why Sweden and the EU are now pursuing the importance of equal terms and conditions.

Sweden's relations with China are characterised by opportunities and challenges. The Government embraces a broad dialogue with China, and there are extensive contacts in a large number of areas. Many global issues,

such as climate change and a smoothly-functioning international trade order, can only be resolved together with China. In other areas, such as human rights, China is working in a way that undermines international cooperation. The ties are negatively affected by a number of bilateral problems. One of these is the case of Swedish citizen Gui Minhai, who is being detained in China.

The EU – a cornerstone of Sweden’s policy on China

The Government’s approach to China takes its cue from the EU’s strategy regarding China from 2016. The Government’s communication is based on the EU’s strategy and describes how it is implemented nationally. The EU’s strategy makes clear that the EU is to interact with China within areas where we have mutual interests, such as economy and trade, environment and health. The EU is also to make requirements of China with regard to respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights, market access and the rules-based multilateral international order.

The Government’s approach to China

- The Government’s approach to China is defined from a holistic perspective. The Government will always base its work on Swedish and EU interests and values in dealings with China.
- It is of central importance to Sweden that the EU conducts a common and clear policy on China. This approach is based on the EU’s strategy and describes how it is implemented nationally.
- It is important to take advantage of the opportunities offered by developments in China and manage the challenges that arise.
- Increased collaboration on issues concerning China within and between the public sector, business sector and civil society is important.
- We must improve our knowledge of conditions in China.

The work ahead

The Government sees a need to invest in knowledge of China in all parts of society. The Government is initiating work on clarifying how knowledge can best be improved, and how existing expertise on China in Sweden can be better coordinated and strengthened. This work includes preparing the establishment of a national knowledge centre on China.

The Government will work to ensure that awareness of China is introduced into all relevant parts of the EU's work.

Developments in China, Sweden and the world in general do not stand still. This approach will therefore need to be regularly adjusted and adapted to changing circumstances.