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European and Chinese Mayors sign urbanisation charter

European and Chinese Mayors signed the EU-China Cooperation Charter and agreed to join synergies in the field of sustainable urbanisation at the first EU-China Mayors Forum held last Thursday 20 September in Brussels.

The event, co-organized by the Covenant of Mayors Office and the Chinese Association of Mayors with the support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy brought together some 300 stakeholders, mostly from European and Chinese cities. The Chinese delegation, composed of 100 delegates included the Vice-Mayors of the Chinese mega-cities of Beijing, Chongqing, Tianjin and Shenzhen. The Mayors of Dublin (IE), Gothenburg (SE), Helsinki (FI), Oldenburg (DE) and Milton Keynes (UK) and the President of the Barcelona Province were also present, among other European city leaders.

Qiu Baoxing, Vice-Minister for Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People's Republic of China stressed that "*China is aware of the challenges of urbanisation and is willing to learn from Europe's experience and social integration model. It is not sufficient to build highways, we need to provide green transportation for our citizens*". Building low-carbon eco-cities and sustainable transport systems are Chinese utmost priorities and several of the country's mayors called for the support of their European counterparts, be it twinned cities or commercial partners. Hu Lishan, Vice-Mayor of Wuhan urged for "*Western and Eastern intelligence*" to build a sustainable future for Chinese and European cities.

All European Mayors recognised the fruitful relationships they maintain with China and reinforced their willingness to pursue existing partnerships via the Covenant of Mayors initiative. Pekka Sauri, Vice-Mayor of Helsinki warmly encouraged the cooperation between the Covenant of Mayors signatories and the Chinese Association of Mayors. Henk Kool, Vice-Mayor of The Hague announced that his city will be hosting the Dutch branch of the National Academy for Mayors of China, a platform that aims at sharing experiences between both countries.

What is certain is that Mayors play an essential role in the path towards sustainable urbanisation. As stated by European Commissioner Andris Piebalgs, "*local solutions are often the way to solve global issues, with strong partnerships we can improve the life of millions of people*". More concretely, the European Commissioner announced the launch of a new tender (EC-LINK) that will assist Chinese cities in adopting energy and resource-efficient ecological solutions by sharing experiences on sustainable urbanization. The EU-China Mayors Forum is to become the key dialogue structure of this new undertaking. The statement was fully supported by Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, President of the Committee of the Regions, who announced that his organization is ready to support the Covenant of Mayors initiative and to participate in the exchange of good practices with the Chinese Association of Mayors.

The Covenant of Mayors is a voluntary commitment taken by over 4,000 local and regional authorities to improve the quality of life of their citizens through the implementation of sustainable energy policies. Since February 2012 the Covenant of Mayors is the pivotal European platform for the EU-China urbanisation partnership, acting as counterpart of the Chinese Association of Mayors

More information:

Covenant of Mayors initiative: http://www.eumayors.eu/index_en.html

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