

Brussels, 23 September 2008

Mandelson in China to raise trade and investment issues

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson will travel to China today for a four-day visit. He will co-chair the 23rd EU-China Joint Economic and Trade Committee with Commerce Minister Chen Deming. He will also discuss the current global economic situation and EU-China trade and investment ties with Vice Premier Wang Qishan and other senior Chinese government officials. Commissioner Mandelson will also travel to Tianjin, where he will deliver a speech on challenges for foreign investment in China and participate in the World Economic Forum.

Speaking ahead of the trip, Commissioner Mandelson said: "In this difficult economic and political climate, it is transparency, openness, and cooperation that will help us weather the storm. The EU and China need to resist protectionism and forge a positive trade and investment agenda."

Commissioner Mandelson has consistently argued that although EU-China trade continues to grow, there is still an imbalance in the relationship. The EU is still facing a sizeable and increasing trade deficit with China – about EUR160 billion in 2007. The Chinese market is still relatively closed to the goods and services Europe seeks to export, and lacks effective enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Barriers 'behind the border' in the Chinese market are costing European businesses more than EUR20 billion every year in lost business. In his speech in Tianjin, Commissioner Mandelson will highlight the importance of an open investment relationship for EU-China economic ties.

Highlights of Commissioner Mandelson's trip to China:

- Thursday, 25th September (Beijing): 23rd EU-China Economic and Trade Joint Committee (with Commerce Minister Chen Deming); Meeting with Vice Premier Wang Qishan.
- Friday, 26th September (Beijing): Meeting with Lou Jiwei, Chairman of China Investment Corporation; Press Conference at the EU Delegation.
- Friday, 26th September (Tianjin): Dinner and Speech on Investment hosted by the European Chamber of Commerce in China.
- Saturday, 27th September (Tianjin): Participation in World Economic Forum meeting in Tianjin. Plenary session: The Global Economic Outlook.

Background

The EU-China Joint Economic and Trade Committee was established in 1985 through the Trade and Economic Cooperation Agreement between the EU and China, in order to promote trade and economic cooperation. The Joint Committee meets annually, the venue alternating between EU and China. The meeting is chaired at ministerial level.

China is the single most important challenge for EU trade policy. China has re-emerged as the world's fourth economy and third exporter, but also an increasingly important political power. EU-China trade has increased dramatically in recent years and now totals over EUR 300 billion. China is now the EU's 2nd trading partner behind the USA and the biggest source of imports. The EU is China's biggest trading partner.

For more on the EU-China trade relationship see

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/bilateral/countries/china/index_en.htm