

Cross-Party Group on China

Minutes of Meeting

Date: 2nd December 2020

Attendance

MSP Members

Dean Lockhart MSP

Colin Smyth MSP

Special Guests

Consul general Ma Qiang

Provost Alan Brown

Members

Siyi Chen

Lesley-Anne Campbell

Simon Macaulay

Dr. Judith McClure CBE

Dr. Roger Collins

Alistair Hamilton

Ruiqiao Zhang

Martin Bell

Enze Yin

Alexia Haramis

Yvette Jelfs

Jessica Guo

Ian Baxter

Nathan Woolley

Max Browning

Wilson Barrie

1: Welcome and Apologies

Dean Lockhart MSP opened the meeting welcoming members and guests to the latest meeting of the Cross-Party Group on China. He continued by welcoming the special guests who were addressing the group this evening, his Excellency Consul General Ma Qiang.

2: AGM

Dean Lockhart MSP were nominated for the roles and elected by the group to the role of Convener.

Colin Smyth MSP were nominated for the roles and elected by the group to the role of Deputy Convener.

Siyi Chen were nominated for the roles and elected by the group to the role of Secretary

3: Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes from the previous meeting were agreed to.

4: Consul General Ma Qiang

Convener Dean Lockhart MSP, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am delighted to join you for the third time in a row since I took office last October. I set great store on the role played by the Scottish Parliament in developing China-Scotland relationship. I appreciate CPG China's contribution to that relationship, particularly Dean's invaluable support and contribution. I truly value the opportunity to exchange views with all of you to jointly review the achievements of China-Scotland relations in the past year and to look into the new year.

The Consul General introduced the recently concluded Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee adopted recommendations for formulating China's 14th Five-Year Plan. The Consul General pointed out that by the end of October, China had provided assistance to 150 countries and 7 international organizations and exported over 179 billion masks, 1.73 billion protective suits, and 543 million testing kits. China is to materialize the COVAX facility backed by the WHO and work to make vaccines a global public good accessible and affordable to people around the world.

The consul general continued to express the two sides anticipate overcoming the impact of the COVID-19 and gradually resume dialogues and exchanges in all fields as soon as possible. MSPs and officials from the Scottish Parliament are welcome to visit China at a time convenient for both sides. The year 2021 will be an important year for coordinated global response to climate change. China Kunming and Glasgow will host COP15 and COP26 respectively. These are not only important events in China-Scotland relations but also bear great significance to global cooperation and governance on climate change and environmental protection.

The consul general concluded that joint response to this health emergency has been the main theme of Sino-Scottish cooperation in the past year. Facing the unexpected challenges, the two

governments and peoples have stood together and extended each other a helping hand. Our traditional friendship has been further strengthened and cooperation further deepened.

5: Trade, Business, E-commerce and China International Import Expo

Dean Lockhart MSP began by thank you Consul general.

Thank you very much for those opening remarks that covered the number of a wide rang of issues. One of the things you mentioned was the China International Import Expo, which I believe that a number of Scottish companies where in the attend in the Expo, physical attendance as well as in virtual attendance. One of the questions I had is when it comes to exhibitions and trade missions in China are things back to business as usual are like the attendance, for example at the import exhibition was that the attendance was similar to previous years.

Consul general Ma Qiang

There are about 30 Scottish companies attended the import exhibition in Shanghai last month. And that was a very successful exhibition for all. But we still face very serious situation from imported cases. So in that case, I think in situation like this, I think maybe like the virtual trade, like the Scottish chambers have done will be more common in the near future.

Dean Lockhart MSP

Very good to know and Stuart Hamilton from the Scottish Chamber of Commerce is very kindly joined us this evening and he can provide this with an update on the plans that the Chamber of Commerce have, both in terms of virtual trade missions, but hopefully some good old fashioned face to face trade missions as well.

Stuart Hamilton --- Scottish Chamber of Commerce

It's been really a very interesting thing for Scottish Chamber of Commerce because we did run the typical missions until we were unable to do so from March. And we had to switch our focus across to virtual trade missions very quickly indeed. We have actually phoned the new way of running missions with virtually online is working extremely well because it's giving businesses the opportunity to meet each other online. Testing test water if you like before they commit the all the time and the money actually. And to physically go over and when we do follow up with physical visits, they will be focused missions following up on conversations that have already providing promise. I suppose to both parties recently we've been in as far as the team was a concerned

machine but Glasgow Chamber and Scottish Chamber was itself been involved in China for some time. But most recently Scottish Chamber of Commerce has also general mentioned and run to virtual meetings online with Shandong, first of all, and then with Inner Mongolia and in the case of Shandong 26 Scottish companies take parts and in the case of Inner Mongolia 24 companies take parts. And already at this very early stage, there has been a 10 million pounds contract one and to establish a new distillery in Inner Mongolia. Stuart Hamilton introduced that they have established potential trade relations with Hangzhou, Shanghai and Nanjing.

Provost Alan Brown

Thank you very much Dean. I just to thank the Consul general for my support on the trip I had to Shijingshan back in January. Hopefully we can do another exchange project soon. We are hoping to sign a formal friendship agreement.

Yvette Jelfs

I think it was amazing because obviously as I just counted it last time, we were all together and I didn't think it was going to work because I think in China everything should be face to face. And it was amazing to see how well it worked. And in instead of actually to make in the big effort of getting on a plane and going across and being promised meeting is that you don't get this actually works much better. I am much happier about this. And I thought it was going to be in the first place. It's we can actually organise something to present them to explain exactly about our business what we want to work. Corporations were looking for what people we want to come in with the business with us. So we can actually put like a keynote presentation together and show everything rather than just sort of meeting them and trying to sort of discuss it over dinner is actually much more fulfilling.

Martin Bell --- Scotch Whisky Association

This year so far has been very difficult. Up until at the end of September this year, we were down in 27% in value of our total exports. And as an industry that exports 93% of everything we produce, then that is a very challenging year. This is very different crisis from last time from our perspective. But there are positive signs, and I think that's where China comes in. In particular, we're seeing growth emerging in Asia and actually shipments to China. At the end of September, we're actually up 11% I see from our point of view, but it's an illustration of how quickly and China's has emerged on the other side. A total Chinese experience production is 10 billion bottles. The total Scottish production is just over 1 billion bottles. In China we sale 15 million bottles. Yet China is our 16th largest market by value and 20th by volume. So from our perspective, China is very good market.

Wilson Barrie --- China Britain Business Council

Back up other stories, such as Stuart Hamilton as well and virtual trade missions and things like that. There's lots of positive news at the moment. There's a 59 million pounds demand from China right now. I would like to share some strong report that we have commissioned by Cambridge economics and actually shows as well a growing appeal for Scottish products in China. As well as all of these trading ties translating into the livelihoods here in Scotland, the economic ties of China supporting 10,000 jobs here and about five thousand those jobs are actually trading supporting all the conversations they were having tonight with regards to tourism and education, employment to support. These Chinese tourists and Chinese students coming over. Employment has risen over 55% there as report has come outwith. I believe it is possibly 40 million pounds worth of contracts has been signed for Scottish companies during China International Import Expo.

6: High school and university Chinese Language teaching

Simon Macaulay – SCEN

There is last period has been a very challenging one for schools and for pupils in school. We have been working very closely with teachers, particularly through the Chinese teaching club, which is an integral part of the organisation of the charity. I want to mention what is that does growth, and teaching mandarin through e-learning. Mr. Simon Macaulay introduced one project has been developed through the Confucius institute for Scotland schools in the university of Strathclyde and another project which is SCEN set up a couple of years ago, working with student volunteers from University of Edinburgh.

Max Browning – University of Edinburgh

We have Chinese lessons been lucky enough to team up with Fudan University in Shanghai. That's doing online language courses which are very intensive 20 hours a week very interactive learning about 6 people in each lesson. The biggest issue obviously is that students have been unable to go for their years abroad in China. So that's been quite a challenge.

Nathan Woolley --- University of Glasgow

I will just point out that as far as we go there, reporting the economist which pointed out that throughout the western world, despite all the effort and investment in Chinese language programs, the number of people that in Chinese have been talking since 2017 numbers don't remain. On the other people who are learning Chinese in high school is not translating into increased numbers in universities.

7: Final remarks

Dean Lockhart MSP

Thank you very much, everyone. That's been a very comprehensive a roundabout this evening. And I think for me enormously beneficial in terms of just policy and put in terms of understanding where things are going. And also, I think for the Consul general to understand everything is happening. I think he can report by to his team and hopefully give assistance on the virtual trades, sessions on E-commerce and otherwise to the not only this forum, but another forums when we follow up, people are fully informed about what's happening across the board.

Consul general Ma Qiang

Thank you. I want to express my appreciation for everybody to sharing your information and your work with China and with Chinese businesses, with Chinese academic circles. I am very encouraging to hear about the development you are making. My team and myself are ready to provide any assistance if you need in the future to further develop our bilateral relations in any field. I just want to wish all of you a merry Christmas and happy new year in advance.

Date of Next Meeting: To be confirmed.