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R E M A R K S

by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton at the end of the 4th EU-China Strategic Dialogue

"Can I just begin by saying to you, State Councillor Yang, that it's been a great privilege to have hosted you here today. You and I are old friends. We've worked together before and it's been a great opportunity today to be able to talk about some of the issues.

The EU and China have been Strategic Partners for the last 10 years and I believe the relationship has grown and developed.

We started of course from a largely trade-driven agenda, but that has now matured as we engaged in a wide spectrum of different areas. The EU-China 2020 Strategic Agenda of Cooperation agreed at last year's Summit in November testifies to that.

The Strategic Dialogue that we had today is an essential part of implementing our joint, forward-looking strategy, to talk about bilateral relations from that strategic viewpoint and to address the most relevant of today's global and regional issues.

We have discussed some very important events and I want to say that at the top of the list in a very important and historic way is the first visit ever of a Chinese President to the European Union here in Brussels. We are absolutely delighted that President Xi has confirmed he will be coming soon.

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So we have been discussing today how to best use that opportunity to further advance this partnership, not only in our bilateral relations, but our cooperation on international and global issues, along with starting to implement the 2020 Strategic Agenda for Cooperation without delay.

We have also welcomed the launch of the negotiations for the investment agreement which started last week in Beijing, and I think we both hope that they will progress swiftly.

I want to say too, if I may, that I have especially in our discussion about many of the global issues paid tribute to the support that China has given to my role in the E3+3 negotiations with Iran. It is an extremely good example of not only support but the critical and vital importance of the engagement of China.

We are committed, State Councillor Yang, to strengthening our relationship with China and in this context I am looking forward to both visiting you, and to the busy agenda that we will have in 2014.

Thank you so much for your important visit today."
