



## KyotoPlus-Dinner

**„China: Europe’s partner in climate and energy policy?“**

**Minutes of the Dinner with John Ashton**

**17 January 2005**

On 22 October 2004 Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol, which thus became effective on 16 February 2005. The European Union, China and the United States will have to take important decisions for climate protection within the next months. In this context, the Heinrich Böll Foundation and the Wuppertal Institute’s Berlin office hosted the first „KyotoPlus-Dinner“ on January 17th 2005 at the restaurant „Habel Weinkultur“ in the centre of Berlin. The topic of discussion was: „China: Europe’s partner in climate and energy policy?“ The attendees, 20 representatives from business, civil society, science and politics, discussed under the Chatham house rule that permits to quote everything that has been said, but without disclosing the speaker or his/her institution.

John Ashton, former staff member of the British Ministry of Foreign Affairs and current Chief Executive of the lobby organisation „Third Generation Environmentalism“ (E3G), opened the evening. He criticised the communication of the European Union with China. While Japan, Canada and the United States established strong diplomatic positions to China, the member states of the European Union remained focused on business deals with China. However, due to the accelerated and immense economic development of China and its increasing energy demand, the establishment of an effective dialogue on climate and energy policies will become a strategic question for Europe.



John Ashton outlined a new approach to involve China in such a dialogue. He elaborated this idea with the example of Russia’s successful ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. Ashton pointed out that it is important to deal with climate issues outside of „green branding“ (i.e. outside the environmental context) and in the context of investment and growth. With reference to China he concluded that the country’s interests lie primarily in growth and political stability and only secondary in climate protection. Above all, China would be interested in reliable and cheap energy due to its energy deficit and the increasing coal and oil prices on the world market. Additionally, the interest to

prevent climate damages could be an important motivation for China to get involved in climate protection.

Based on this analysis Ashton concluded, that it was most promising for the European-Chinese dialogue to combine energy and climate change issues. The greatest challenge of the European Union was to integrate climate and energy policies in all areas and sectors, such as finance, foreign affairs and security policy.

John Ashton finished his statement with the thesis, that any attempt to directly integrate the United States in the climate regime would not be promising at this point, whereas visible and serious talks with China would also strengthen the American interest in a dialogue.



In his “first response” to John Ashton’s presentation, Prof. Dr. Sandschneider agreed that China’s perceived main problem was not climate change, but stability, overheated economic growth and political reforms. The European perspective on China was in many respects too optimistic, because the solidarity within China could become a crucial issue. He agreed with John Ashton that there was neither a strategy for a European – Chinese dialogue nor a strategy to

integrate the United States.

The following issues were explored in various interventions:

- Which technologies, instruments and mechanisms the European Union has to offer and what means of pressure it could apply;
- Chinese efforts and successes as regards the mitigation of climate change;
- Interdependencies and importance of security and climate issues in the EU-Chinese-American relations;
- Changing assessments of foreign policy - from a focus on power to a focus on outcomes as regards sustainable development;
- Windows of opportunity in climate and energy issues through Great Britain’s EU presidency;
- Competition between member states of the European Union, the necessity of coordination within the European Union and of the development of a common strategy;
- Necessity of more transparency and a climate relevant structuring of the financial and investment framework;
- Opportunities to transfer European know-how to China;

- The assessment of antagonism as strategy in climate negotiations.

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