

EU set to stand up for human rights

Written by Chang Sue-chung 陳雪清

Tuesday, 06 April 2021 05:13

On March 22, the EU announced sanctions and travel restrictions on four Chinese officials, including the director of the Public Security Bureau, after China was accused of human rights abuses against Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

Beijing's immediate retaliation by announcing sanctions against five European Parliament members, three parliamentarians in EU countries and two EU academics did not sway the bloc, and the European Parliament even announced that it would suspend its review of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

Judging by the EU's tough attitude toward China on the issue of human rights in Xinjiang, especially at a time when US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was visiting NATO headquarters, the sanctions not only express the bloc's intent to join hands with the US in opposing China, but also that it places more importance on universal values — such as the view that genocide is unacceptable and that human rights must be protected — than on the huge commercial interests represented by its dealings with China.

The EU and China have long had an important economic and trade partnership.

Data released on Feb. 15 by Eurostat showed that trade between the EU and China last year reached 58.6 billion euros (US\$68.85 billion), surpassing the US' 31 billion euros in trade and making China the EU's largest trading partner.

Even so, liberal democracy and fundamental human rights are important issues. French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Economic Attractiveness Franck Riester said that China is an important global trading partner of the EU, but that the relationship cannot be at the expense of values, principles and democracy.

In short, since the EU issued an arms embargo on China after the Tiananmen Square Massacre, more than 30 years ago, there have been no conflicts between the EU and China over other issues. Now that China has been internationally accused of detaining large numbers of Uighurs in re-education camps and subjecting them to torture, abuse, sexual assault, forced labor and other serious human rights violations, this has caused dissatisfaction in the EU,

EU set to stand up for human rights

Written by Chang Sue-chung 張素卿

Tuesday, 06 April 2021 05:13

which has once again proposed sanctions against China.

This shows that the EU's China policy is no longer focused on interests, but is on the verge of a strategic readjustment.

Chang Sue-chung is a chair professor at Hungkuo Delin University of Technology.

Translated by Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - 2021/04/06](#)