

[Home](#) • [Briefing Room](#) • [Speeches & Remarks](#)

---

The White House

Office of the Vice President

---

For Immediate Release

May 09, 2011

**Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden to the Opening Session of the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue**

**Department of the Interior Washington, D.C.**

9:50 A.M. EDT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Good morning. Thank you. Thank you, all. It's an honor to welcome back to Washington for the third meeting of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue between the United States and China, two good friends.

Let me acknowledge the co-chairs at the outset here. Vice Premier Wang and State Counselor Dai, welcome back. I got an opportunity to spend some time with you -- not as much as my colleagues have -- but your trip with President Hu was a great visit, and we got a chance to spend some time together.

The United States co-chairs are our A-Team, our superstars: Secretary Clinton and Secretary Geithner, two of the best America has to offer, so we expect great things to happen. We expect great things to happen with the four of you.

Ladies and gentlemen, we each have a number of important tasks in the days ahead and all designed to continue to guide our relationship to an even better place than it's already moved.

I also would like to recognize, by the way, Secretary Gary Locke, the President's choice to be our next ambassador to China. Gary has served with distinction in the Cabinet, as well as before that serving as the governor of the state of Washington. And I know that once the Senate confirms Gary, and I expect that to be quickly, he'll do an outstanding job in Beijing. (Applause.) There he is.

And I'm not going to mention the Trade Representative sitting next to you because I told him if he was able to deliver a deal on -- with Korea, I would nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize. (Laughter.) He did and I have to. (Laughter.)

Any rate, I've made my -- I hate to acknowledge this, gentlemen, but I made my first trip to China as a young man, meeting with Deng Xiaoping in 1979, in April of '79. I was privileged to be with what I guess I'm now part of, a group of very senior senators at that time. I think we were the first delegation to meet after normalization -- with senators like Jacob Javits of New York, and Frank Church, and a number of other very prominent members.

And on that trip when we met with then Vice Premier Deng and witnessed the changes that were being initiated, beginning to spark China's remarkable -- absolutely remarkable transformation, even back then it was clear that there was -- that great things were happening. And there was also a debate -- there was a debate here in the United States and quite frankly throughout most of the West as whether a rising China was in the interest of the United States and the wider world. As a young member of a Foreign Relations Committee, I wrote and I said and I believed then what I believe now: That a rising China is a positive, positive development, not only for China but for America and the world writ large.

When President Obama and I took office in January of 2009 we understood -- we understood absolutely clearly that our relationship with China would be a key priority. The President and I were determined -- determined to set the relationship on a stable course that could be sustained for decades. Our two countries, now the world's two largest economies, were bound by ever-growing ties of commerce and investment. We, the United States, we always talk about what we import; we, the United States, exported \$110 billion in American goods and services to China last year.

But we're bound my much more than commerce. Over the last three decades, our people have become increasingly linked through education, through work and through travel. Last year, 130,000 Chinese were studying in the United States. They're really good. We're going to try to keep some of them. I'm only joking. I'm only joking. (Laughter.) But they are. (Laughter.)

We cannot claim the same number of Americans in China, but our 100,000 Strong Initiative will dramatically increase the number of young Americans living and studying in China. As a matter of fact, my niece who -- excuse me, as we say in the Senate, a point a personal privilege -- who graduated from Harvard not too long ago, works for Secretary Geithner, she did exactly what we hope another 100,000 will do: She studied Chinese and went and lived in China and is now devoted to making sure the relationship gets better and better and better.

And we're linked by our shared global responsibilities. We both serve as permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. We're both Pacific powers. And for many of the world's pressing challenges, it's a simple fact, that when the United States and China are not at the table, the solution to the problem is less possible than when we are at the table. It's no exaggeration to say that our relationship and how we manage it will help shape the 21st century.

Our commitment starts at the top. Our Presidents have met face-to-face nine times in two and a half years. Nine times. President Hu, as I mentioned, was just here in January for what all would acknowledge was a very successful state visit. I'll go back to China this summer at the invitation of Vice President Xi, and I'm looking forward to hosting the Vice President for a reciprocal visit later this year.

Even these frequent visits and summits, though, as you all know, are not enough on their own to sustain and build a relationship across our entire government, across all agencies. That's why we're here. It's not merely, merely our mil-to-mil or economic issues. We want to build a relationship across the entire spectrum of our governments. That's why we've asked all of you to come together for these dialogues.

When President Obama launched the first strategic and economic dialogue in 2009, he issued a challenge to all of us to work together to address some of the defining problems of our time. Some would say that's somewhat presumptuous for China and the United States to decide we're going to work on the defining problems, but as I said earlier, how we cooperate will define in significant part how we deal with the challenges that the world face in the beginning of the 21st century.

This is at the heart of our effort to build a cooperative partnership. We seek to cooperate to advance our mutual

interests in not only promoting economic growth that is strong, sustainable and balanced, but trade that is free and is fair. We seek cooperation to advance our mutual interests in the prosperous future that will come from an energy supply that's clean and secure and addresses climate change.

And we seek to cooperate to advance our mutual interests in a range of pressing global and regional security challenges. This includes continuing our work to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and specifically to curb proliferation of those weapons and technology from both Iran and North Korea.

Where do we stand two years after the President issued his challenge that we cooperate more? Through this dialogue and the dedicated efforts of our governments and our people, I believe history will show we've made progress.

But there's much more to do, and that's why we're here. Along with our partners in the G20, we've worked to sustain global economic recovery. We've recognized that the United States-China relations generate global economic benefit, not just to both our countries, but global benefit.

Last year our trade with China supported over 500,000 jobs here in the United States, and we made tangible progress during President Hu's visit, especially in the areas of innovation, intellectual property, and exports, all of which we're following up on.

Over the next two days, we need to build on this momentum and to make sure our commitments are aggressively implemented so we can continue to move.

You may have noticed that there is a debate in this nation how best to secure America's long-term fiscal future. We know that overcoming our economic challenges begin at home. We in the United States have to restore financial stability and we need to make the investments necessary, as well, to win the future. We need to maintain our commitment to what we believe, the President believes, is the pillars of our economic future: education, innovation, and infrastructure.

I know that you're adjusting to your economy in the world situation as well. I know that in China you're working to rebalance your economy and make growth more sustainable, with greater reliance on domestic demand. None of this is easy. But success in re-orienting growth will be not only good for China, in our humble opinion, but it will be good for the United States and for the rest of the world.

The United States and China are the world's largest producers and consumers of energy and we share the common challenges that flow from that. And this creates not only a problem, but great opportunity -- great opportunity for common efforts to find clean energy solutions. Secretary Chu likes to say -- and I love this expression -- "Science is not a zero-sum game." Science is not a zero-sum game. That amply is illustrated by the remarkable cooperation we've begun to forge in this area. Let me just mention one example.

Our joint Clean Energy Research Center is funding new approaches to energy efficiency, clean coal -- which we both need to deal with -- and clean vehicles. We need to build on and expand our efforts in this area, and I know you'll be doing -- having much discussion these next two days on that area, and it seems to me an area where there's potential for great progress.

On global security challenges, we've also made progress. President Hu joined us at the Nuclear Security Summit -- in January, we signed the memorandum of understanding to build a center for excellence to promote nuclear security in China. We have cooperated in stemming nuclear proliferation from both Iran and North Korea, including preventing sensitive technologies from being exported to both those countries.

The strategic dialogue is important to both our countries. Just look at the agenda that you have for the next two days. It's a fulsome agenda. To list just a few of the topics on the agenda for the next two days -- and it illustrates the sheer breadth of our relationship: Climate change; clean energy; mil-to-mil operations -- our military relationships; regional issues such as Sudan and Afghanistan.

Our goal -- our goal, in part, is to enhance the communication and understanding that we believe, and I believe you believe, will build trust and confidence. We have to be honest with each other. We are not going to agree on everything; we will clearly find areas where there will still be disagreement. But as we work to advance our respective national interest, we have to move on what we seek in common, find the common ground, and I would argue much of our mutual national interest will find common ground. But only by discussing a diverse range of topics, including sensitive ones, can we help mitigate the risk of misperception and miscalculation.

My father used to say the only disagreement worse than one that is intended is one that is unintended. That's why it's so critically important we talk to one another honestly. We should be realistic; we won't always be able to work together. In some areas we have vigorous disagreement. In some we'll have vigorous competition. In still others we'll have vigorous collaboration.

But I believe on balance we have much more to agree on than to disagree on, and so does the President believe that. A healthy competition, in our view, is good for both of us. Competition is not bad. Competition that's healthy is good.

This is the reason why I've held the view for so many years and continue to hold the view that a rising China is a positive development. As you might expect, it's my -- I have overwhelming confidence in the capabilities of the American people. And those capabilities are enhanced when there's genuine competition from equally capable people. I welcome this healthy and fair competition because I believe we'll see it will spur us both to innovate and both will benefit from it.

As I've said earlier, it's important to be straightforward with one another. There is one area where we have vigorous disagreement. And I know and I understand that disagreement, when we voice it, is upsetting or rankles -- I don't know how that translates into Chinese -- but how it concerns some of our friends in China. We have vigorous disagreement in the area of human rights.

We've noted our concerns about the recent crackdown in China, including attacks, arrests and the disappearance of journalists, lawyers, bloggers and artists. And again, no relationship that's real can be built on a false foundation. Where we disagree, it's important to state it. We'll continue to express our views in these issues, as we did in the Human Rights Dialogue in Beijing two weeks ago.

Now, look, as I said, I recognize that some in China see our advocacy as -- human rights as an intrusion and Lord only knows what else. But President Obama and I believe strongly, as does the Secretary, that protecting fundamental rights and freedoms such as those enshrined in China's international commitments, as well as in China's own constitution, is the best way to promote long-term stability and prosperity of any society.

The transformation of China's economy and society since my first trip as a young man in 1979 has truly been breathtaking. I doubt whether it's occurred at any other period in world history -- it's been so significant and so rapid. The immense talent of the Chinese people, the incredible hard work and perseverance of the Chinese people and their leaders have literally lifted tens of millions of people out of poverty and built an economy that now helps fuel the world's prosperity. It's remarkable.

During this same period, the relationship between the United States and China has also seen a remarkable transformation -- again, through the talent, hard work and respected political leaders who have governed our countries over the last three decades.

The bonds between our country -- our countries come about through -- have come about through intense engagement from the moment of normalization -- events like this one. We've already done much to make our relationship positive, cooperative, and comprehensive. And I'm absolutely confident that we can do more for ourselves and for generations of Americans and Chinese as well.

And as I said, presumptuous of me to say this, if that occurs and continues to occur, it will benefit the whole world. So now it's time to get to work.

Again, welcome, gentlemen; welcome to your delegations. And I thank you all for the honor of being able to address you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

10:07 A.M. EDT

[WWW.WHITESHOUSe.GOV](http://WWW.WHITESHOUSe.GOV)

[En español](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Copyright Information](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Contact](#)  
[USA.gov](#) | [Subscribe to RSS Feeds](#) | [Apply for a Job](#)