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Dear High Representative and Vice-President Borrell,

Censorship of the joint Op-Ed marking the 45th anniversary of EU–China relations on May 6 in the China Daily

With this letter we would like to express our concerns about the way in which the EEAS is engaging with its Chinese counterparts and dealing with diplomatic pressure from Chinese official authorities.

During our last exchange of views in the AFET Committee on April 30, you firmly reassured the Members of the Parliament that the EU would never bow to pressure coming from Chinese channels to censor our publications.

Regrettably, we must however conclude that one week later the EEAS did exactly do that by watering down a joint Op-Ed marking the 45th anniversary of EU–China relations. After pressure from Chinese authorities, the Op-Ed was published on the 6th of May in the China Daily without the reference to the origins of the coronavirus. You will agree with us, that it is most unfortunate that this happened just few days following the World Press Freedom Day on the 3rd of May.

The EEAS press release on May 8 attempts to justify the decision to proceed with the censored publication on the ground of the necessity to reach out to the wider Chinese public by passing key messages on a number of priority areas.

We certainly recognise the strategical importance of engaging with China and its people. However, by bowing to Chinese pressure we send out the message that the EEAS is not willing to defend our European values such as press freedom and the freedom of speech.

Instead of taking an overtly apologetic approach towards the Chinese Communist Party, we urge you to ask for full transparency from China and convey the message that the European Union will always stand up for universal freedoms.

We urge you to support the calls for an independent investigation into the origins of the Corona virus and we encourage you to stress to the Chinese authorities to fully cooperate with

this investigation. Furthermore, the situation of the Chinese Corona whistleblowers who disappeared should be clarified. Lastly, we reiterate our demand for an official condemnation of the Chinese crackdown in Hong Kong against the pro-democracy movement.

We look forward to hearing from you soon about the consequent actions to be taken by the European External Action Service.

Yours sincerely,



Hilde Vautmans MEP

Foreign Affairs Coordinator of Renew Europe Group

Standing Rapporteur of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee for China

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