

## Press statement by Federal Chancellor Scholz following his talks with Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Beijing on 16 April 2024

CHANCELLOR SCHOLZ: Premier Li, I would like to thank you and President Xi for inviting me to Beijing. We have held productive, detailed and intensive talks today. Regular personal dialogue is especially important particularly in such turbulent times.

An important issue that we touched on in our talks was, of course, Russia's brutal war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences for the world. I emphasised once again that this war directly impacts Germany and Europe's most fundamental security interests. The UN Charter stipulates the state sovereignty and inviolable nature of borders, and it is unequivocal in its prohibition of wars of aggression the likes of which Russia has been waging against Ukraine for more than two years now - a war that is raging in Europe but which is making the whole world suffer.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, China has a special responsibility for world peace, and what China says carries weight in Russia. I have therefore asked President Xi to bring his influence to bear on Russia so that Putin calls off his insane invasion at long last, withdraws his troops and puts an end to this terrible war.

It's good that we have reached agreement on a number of important points. President Xi and I agreed that the preservation of sovereignty and territorial integrity are necessary foundations for a stable peaceful order.

We also agreed that China and Germany want to support and encourage efforts to achieve peace in Ukraine. We are prepared to continue to engage in intensive and positive consultations regarding the promotion of a high-level conference held in Switzerland as well as future high-level peace conferences in this context.

Germany and China are likewise clearly opposed to the use of and threats to use nuclear weapons. In so doing, we are reaffirming our call that we articulated together at our last meeting here in Beijing in November 2022. Today, we are, moreover, in agreement that we reject attacks on nuclear facilities such as nuclear power plants. We are also calling for an appropriate solution to problems relating to food security around the world. The production and export of grain must not be impeded, and hunger must not be used as a weapon.

Last but not least, President Xi and I agree with a view to the war that humanitarian international law must be respected in this conflict and that the civilian population must be protected. Prisoners of war on both sides should be released as soon as possible and their rights respected.

A second trouble spot that is a cause for concern for us right now is the delicate situation in the Middle East. Germany condemns Iran's unprecedented attack on Israel's territory in the strongest possible terms. With this attack, the regime in Tehran is risking a conflagration that can spread to the entire region. This must now be prevented with a prudent and well-considered policy.

Germany strongly condemns Hamas' barbaric terrorist attack on Israel on 7 October. We are calling for the immediate release of all of the hostages who have been held by their Hamas abductors for more than six months now.

The critical humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is a cause for great concern for China and Germany. The objective must now be to safeguard unhindered and reliable access for humanitarian assistance to Gaza. China and Germany are calling for this together.

We are also supporting the coordinating role played by the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance. The most recent UN Security Council Resolution 2728 must be implemented. For Germany, achieving a ceasefire and the hostages' release in the very near future are the priority here.

President Xi and I believe that the two-state solution offers the only scope for facilitating the long-term security and peace of the Israelis and Palestinians. Together, we are calling for safe commercial shipping to be guaranteed, in line with international law, especially in the Red Sea.

In addition to these global political issues, our bilateral relations were, of course, also on our minds. Germany and China are important trading partners for each other, and both sides have benefitted enormously from this.

I expressed my concern to Premier Li that unilateral economic policy decisions in China are giving rise to major structural difficulties for companies in Germany and Europe. It's important for me to stress that we don't want any decoupling from China. We want China to continue to enjoy economic success. We made this clear once again at the G7 last year. China should and will remain an important economic partner for Germany and for the whole of Europe. It goes without saying that a level playing field is the basis for this. Premier Li and I spoke at length about equal market access, the protection of intellectual property and the need for a reliable legal framework.

Decoupling is out of the question for us. I touched on this just now. We, in Germany and Europe, are working to reduce one-sided dependencies, diversify our supply chains and reduce risks for the economy - a goal that China itself has been pursuing for some time now. This means that we want to increase our resilience in critical areas by deepening our existing economic relations and promoting new ties.

We also discussed the opportunities and challenges posed by the strategy with representatives of important companies in the Chinese-German Economic Advisory Committee. We are continuing these talks.

We also touched on rules-based trade. I underscored once again that we are counting on China's commitment to a multilateral rules-based order in the World Trade Organization, the G20 and the United Nations. Our two presentations here have already made it clear just how much we have discussed.

I'm delighted that we have achieved agreements on three concrete points:

Firstly, China has agreed to allow trade in beef from Germany once again.

Secondly, this also applies to the import of apples. An important agreement has been signed.

Thirdly, our experts have been tasked with harmonising once again the conditions for trade in pork from areas not affected by African swine fever.

A further point is particularly important to me. The global responsibility of our two countries is also reflected in our cooperation in the fight against climate change. Germany is pursuing ambitious goals for protecting the climate and is undergoing an energy transition in order to be the first G20 country to be climate-neutral by 2045. At the Climate and Transformation Dialogue, which will take place in a few weeks' time, we will be able to discuss in detail our experiences with the conditions for climate protection, decarbonisation of industry and the structural change that is required.

We agreed to closer dialogue also in the field of sustainable agriculture, in the protection and preservation of biodiversity and in the effort to avoid plastic waste. The same is true of the circular economy. In concrete terms, this is about packaging in the construction sector and batteries and about how plastic waste can be avoided.

Of course there is also always an issue in connection with human rights, on which we have different views. This issue is important because it's also essential to our reputation in the world. Our due diligence act also takes into account the human rights situation around the world, and its purpose is to ensure that these rights are more rigorously respected.

Let me finish by making one thing clear: we will not be able to address these questions, these global challenges, without China. We can and should tackle them together.

I would like to offer my thanks once again for the wide-ranging talks that we were able to hold here in Beijing today and for the opportunity to discuss all of this in such detail and also in a spirit of trust. We all live on this planet together. This is why it's important that we talk to each other regularly, that we listen to each other and act together.

Thank you very much.