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## "Engaging China in the 21st Century"

Max S. Baucus

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Remarks of Senator Max Baucus  
"Engaging China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"

Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for that warm welcome.

Before I begin, let me say a special thanks to Professors Ni Shixiong (**NEE SHEEZHONG**) and Shen Dingli. Your work in international affairs and Sino-U.S. relations is exemplary, and I feel fortunate for the opportunity to add my remarks today. Thanks also to Tom Scanlon for your organizational work and long-standing commitment to the cause of international development.

Ladies and gentlemen, both here and in America our young people represent the future. As I look into the faces of these students here today, I see the unmistakable signs of hope. Hope for prosperity, hope for progress. You are China's future leaders and innovators. You are tomorrow's pioneers and peacemakers. As this country's future diplomats, business leaders and public servants, you are the bridge between more than a billion Chinese people and their American counterparts.

My own journey to the realm of public service began as a student, about 35 years ago. Unsure of my life's calling, I did what many young Americans did at the time — I set out to travel, to see what Europe, Africa and Asia had to offer. I discovered a wide and varied world out there, one whose diversity was matched only by its immense opportunity. It seemed to me a world where anything was possible.

Yet I realized that the world was not perfect. I discovered that it was not a perfect world. It had barriers and roadblocks, some personal, some cultural. I discovered that in order to overcome these walls, dialogue is necessary— obstructions to understanding can be surmounted in no other way.

In short, I believe that communication and relationships are the cornerstones for mutual understanding, and it is in this spirit that I offer my thoughts today. As we reflect on the Sino-American relationship of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we must begin by articulating China's and America's goals. Our objectives are mutual, and they are simple:

- We want peace;
- We want prosperity and fair trade; and
- We want a decent world to live in.

To achieve these goals, it is obvious that we must work together. In the areas of non-proliferation, trade, human rights and the environment, the U.S. must work with China toward our common objectives.

Many have criticized China for its positions in these matters, criticism which has in many cases been justified. When China fails to live up to its international commitments we should not look the other way. Engagement does not mean appeasement. By remaining open to dialogue on

these issues, we are not sacrificing our ideals for the sake of expediency.

Yet we must also not fail to recognize China's importance to the United States and the rest of the world. Our relationship with China will be essential to expanding the rule of law, keeping our air clean, and, most important, maintaining security. Nowhere is that more true in Asia, as recent events in the Taiwan Strait, South Asia and the Korean Peninsula show.

Our historic policy, based on our commitments to acknowledge China's view of sovereignty under our three Joint Communiques, remains sound today. And the events of the past few years show that. China made its point about how seriously it views independence in the crisis of 1996; and former Secretary Perry made our point about Chinese threats of military force.

Today the situation has calmed. Taiwan and China are beginning to talk once again. And we can, with caution and foresight from all three sides, expect if not reconciliation, at least stability in the Taiwan Strait.

For us, the division of the Korean Peninsula, and the continuing threat posed by the 1.2 million-man North Korean Army just above the demilitarized zone, is equally sensitive. In fact, this is the only issue that ever brought the US and China to war.

And to maintain the peace, the U.S. needs a cooperative working relationship with China; on this issue we have it. It offers the North Koreans advice that only a one-time ally can give. It provides food aid. And it does what it can to move the four-party talks ahead, even if that is limited to figuring out seating and handshake arrangements that the two Koreas will accept.

Now let us look to the spread of nuclear weapons in South Asia. This has created an immense danger for the world of a breakdown in the Non-Proliferation Treaty; an immediate danger of war between India and Pakistan; and a new strategic question for China, as the Indian government has indicated that its decision to test nuclear weapons was due to fears about China.

China's potential as a positive mediator in South Asia cannot be overstated. It is incumbent on all nations to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, and we must hold China to its signed commitments on this issue. Just as China worked constructively to avert further spread of the recent Asian currency crisis, so too must it be expected to work towards preventing the further proliferation of nuclear arms in Asia.

Thus, China's role in Asia is significant, not only with regard to security, but also in issues of economics and trade. China's decision to avoid devaluing its currency helped stabilize Asia in the wake of the recent economic crisis. If recovery occurs in the region this year, it will be in no small part due to the efforts of China. As we seek to gain further transparency in Asian financial markets, we must also seek to clarify the status of U.S.-China trade, an issue which has again surfaced because of the debate over Most Favored Nation trading status.

President Clinton has just put forth his annual request for renewal of M F N status for China. Not surprisingly, this request has been greeted with calls to use MFN as a tool. As a weapon, to

convince China into making dramatic reforms. It is not. It is the foundation of commercial relations and should be left alone.

I have long promoted the process of giving China unconditional MFN trading status upon its accession to the World Trade Organization. The extension of permanent MFN status to China would benefit both of our countries. It would reduce uncertainty in our trade relations; increase the chances of China moving to a more open economy; and ensure that the U.S. is able to benefit fully from the economic liberalization measures that China must adopt in order to be accepted as a WTO member.

Let me now turn to our third goal: a decent world to live in.

It is a sad fact that those who would speak out against the government are still in danger of being imprisoned or subject to house arrest. Just as China will be expected to abide by the standards of nuclear non-proliferation and the WTO, it also should be expected to live up to the international standards of human rights, beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Although I welcome the recent release of political prisoners Wang Dan and Wei Jingsheng, I am disheartened that they are subject to a de facto exile, unable to return to their homeland because of their political activities. Upwards of 2,000 political prisoners remain in China, imprisoned for the simple expression of their beliefs.

Americans hold freedom of expression as one of their most cherished rights. It is a prerogative that is all too often denied the Chinese people, but one that I view as essential to China's political and economic viability. Where ideas are suppressed, creativity and innovation are lost. It is true that China's economic success in the last 20 years is impressive. But how far can innovation and growth proceed in the absence of true freedom to carry out discourse and exchange ideas? China and the rest of the world stand to lose if its people aren't allowed maximum ability to express, innovate and progress.

Finally, the United States and China share serious environmental concerns. As economies develop throughout the world, they use more fossil fuels. With increased usage comes significant pollution. Nowhere is that more true than in China. In the coming years, China will likely burn more fossil fuels, dispose of more chemical and industrial waste and emit more carbon dioxide than any country in the world. As economic growth in China accelerates, demand for electricity and the coal used to generate it will also increase.

Although the debate over global warming continues, we cannot deny that 9 of the last 11 years have been the warmest of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. If the emissions from China's burgeoning power plants are not subject to controls, our efforts to prevent global warming will be undermined. China is part of the problem, and should be part of the solution.

Again, if we are to minimize the impact of these outputs, the United States and China must engage in a cooperative relationship. There is no other way to reap the benefits we have worked so hard to acquire: in security, trade, human rights and the environment, there is much to gain. There

is also much to lose.

Although I agree with the Chinese proverb that says, "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness," I also think that the words of that great American Henry Ford are apropos here: "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." For over 25 years the United States and China have come together. For our benefit and that of the rest of the world, let us continue to work together for success.

### **Conclusion**

It goes without saying that the United States and China have serious differences. But we should not focus only on the differences America has with China. To be honest, the United States has not covered itself with glory recently. We have not passed our IMF replenishment. We have not passed our UN dues. We have not passed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. And some have seen the recent satellite launch controversy as an opportunity to make points in domestic politics.

This is not the way a great power behaves. Just as China does, we have serious responsibilities in our foreign affairs -- whether in peace and security, in economics and trade, human rights or environmental protection. And we diminish our institution at home, and our country abroad, if we do not take these responsibilities seriously.

We have time to fix our deficiencies. But it is not unlimited time, and as we see in South Asia; in Hong Kong; in Korea; events will not wait for us. So as the presidents of our two countries meet for this summit, let us reflect a little more deeply on ourselves, on our responsibilities, and on what we can do for our national and, by extension, global interest.

Thank you very much. I am willing to take questions now.