

**Statement of
Senator Dianne Feinstein
February 7, 2002**

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the panel of witnesses for joining us for this inaugural session of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. And I would also like to thank the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for all their hard work over the past few months in organizing both this hearing and the Commission itself.

This Commission has been created with a mandate both to monitor China's compliance with human rights agreements and its development of rule of law, and to encourage programs and activities that will assist in that development.

I say this as one who believes it is neither possible nor desirable to isolate or contain China, and that empty rhetoric will not be sufficient to improve China's human rights record. Rather, the national interests of the United States are best served by the evolution of a China that is peaceful, stable, and a leader in Asia with whom we can work to solve serious problems whether they be retarding aggression by North Korea or solving the Kashmiri crisis now polarizing India and Pakistan.

A first glance at the complexities of the U.S.-China relationship reveals many points of apparent conflict: our contrasting forms of government, our dissimilar cultures and historical background, and our varying perspectives. Yet in spite of these differences, we share an agenda of common goals.

China has existed for 5,000 years, and over its history has experienced some of the most brutal tyrannies earth has witnessed, as well as revolutionary change. And, for 5,000 years the Chinese people have not enjoyed democracy or rule of law in the way that, for 225 years, has allowed the United States to experience unprecedented freedom and "government of the people, by the people, for the people".

Since the United States and China normalized relations almost three decades ago, China has undergone extensive change, ushering in an era of massive social reform and economic advancement. Economic growth and dynamism, privatization of state-owned enterprises, communication and exchange of ideas with the west, and the positive impact of the Hong Kong model have brought increased living standards and quality of life to many in China.

And although it is clear China still has a long way to go where human rights and the rule of law are concerned, few objective observers would argue that there have not been significant benefits and advances that have come from interaction with the west during this time. The post-Deng China of Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji is simply not the China of Mao or the Gang of Four.

Some western analysts look at China's policy in Tibet, or its treatment of the Muslim Uygur people or the crack-down on the Falun Gong and argue that China's behavior in these cases reveals the true nature of the Chinese government. Others point to the success of the Hong Kong model, and China's booming south, where however imperfectly, greater personal freedoms, village and local elections, respect for private property, and a budding infrastructure of commercial law point toward a future where political pluralism, human rights, and rule of law can be imagined.

The next few years will witness if China's leadership will demonstrate that they understand that the right course for their nation includes an increased respect for human rights and rule of law. Following this path

will continue to improve relations with the west and help make China a more responsible and fully integrated member of the of the international community.

The establishment of this Commission represents, in this context, an important new opportunity to extend U.S.-China dialogue on human rights, and I strongly believe that the Commission must, where possible, find ways in which the U.S. and China can work together to attain commonly desired goals in areas such as the rule of law.

In order to do so, we will need to work closely with non-governmental organizations, such as those represented here today on the panel. Your experiences and insights provided to us through reports, updates and testimony will enable us to carry out our responsibilities. I look forward to hearing your views: what the key issues are and how we as a commission might best address those issues.

I intend to work energetically as a member of the Commission to ensure China's compliance with its human rights covenants and its progress on rule of law, and I will also urge as an equally important part of the Commission's work the encouragement of those programs and activities of both the U.S. Government and private organizations that will improve bilateral relations and increase the interchange of people and ideas between the United States and China.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to serve on the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.