EU-CHINA
THINK TANK ENGAGEMENT
ON GREEN GOVERNANCE
中欧绿色治理智库合作

POLICY PAPER

From Statement to Action:
Effectively Implementing EU - China Climate Cooperation

Immediate Operational Priorities

I. **Advance respective 2035 NDCs through cooperation** through a coordinated mechanism for shared modelling, policy coordination, and progress review ahead of the next Global Stocktake in 2028.

II. **Adopt a joint vision for the clean energy transition** as a driver of growth, implementing shared climate pledges into a strategic pathway for long-term economic prosperity and energy security.

III. **Establish a clean tech trade dialogue** to strengthen supply chain resilience, align standards, and ensure fair, affordable mutual access to low-carbon technologies.

IV. **Co-develop clean energy and coal phase-out strategies** with developing countries, moving from project bidding to proactive pipeline design linked to Article 6 and Loss and Damage finance.

V. **Build a shared Climate Data and AI Platform** by combining the EU's open datasets with China's AI and computing capacity to support global climate change research.

Authors:

Belinda SCHÄPE, China Policy Analyst, Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA)

Yang OU, Assistant Professor, Peking University

Date: September 2025

Funded by the European Union

Hanns Seidel Stiftung
汉斯·赛德尔基金会

In the context of rising geopolitical tensions, fragile multilateral institutions, and a global backlash against green policies, the EU-China joint commitment on climate change gains new importance. The recent joint statement on climate change provides hope that both sides can overcome bilateral challenges to work together on accelerating the global green transition and tackling climate change, both domestically and through their investment and trade abroad.

This brief outlines how the EU and China can turn this renewed political will into practical, near-term implementation, bilaterally and multilaterally, restoring global climate momentum and advancing the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Graphic by the authors

Part I - Priorities for bilateral cooperation

With the withdrawal of the US from the climate agenda, China and the EU have a special responsibility in upholding the Paris Agreement. Through their domestic climate action, the EU and China must showcase their determination and joint leadership to tackle climate change to the rest of the world. There are three areas of particular importance for the bilateral cooperation: coordination on the implementation of strong NDCs, a joint vision for the economic benefits of the clean transition, and high-level engagement on managing clean tech trade tensions.

Funded by the European Union

I. Delivering on Ambition: Domestic climate agendas

The EU and China have both communicated 2035 climate targets as part of their long-term strategies. The EU has proposed a reduction of 66.25% to 72.5% below 1990 levels by 2035[1], while China has announced that it will reduce economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by 7% to 10% below its emissions peak by 2035, striving to do better[2]. These targets reflect and contribute to the international community's broader momentum to close the near-term emissions gap and support long-term climate stabilisation efforts, but will require further strengthening to align with the Paris Agreement goals[3]. Their successful implementation will be vital for sustaining international momentum ahead of the 2028 Global Stocktake.

To translate the 2035 NDC commitments into measurable progress towards the Paris Agreement goals and insulate them from political setbacks, the EU and China could enhance cooperation through a structured platform to support the implementation of their respective 2035 NDCs. This platform would enable:

- Progress reviews aligned with the 2030 milestone, creating an opportunity to assess and, if necessary, strengthen the 2035 NDCs based on actual emissions trends and technological advances.
- Continued technical exchanges on modelling emissions pathways, ensuring both sides' projections are consistent with the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal and can be regularly updated with the latest science and technology trends.
- Policy and legislative cooperation, sharing experiences on climate governance frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to strengthen climate legislation on both sides.
- Sectoral decarbonisation planning, with joint workstreams on high-emitting sectors such as power, steel, cement, and transport, including methane abatement in coal mining and agriculture.

II. Pioneering the green transition as an economic opportunity

Both the EU and China have committed to the global goals of tripling renewables and doubling energy efficiency by 2030, and phasing down coal power. Achieving these targets is not only a matter of fulfilling international obligations but also a strategic opportunity to demonstrate

[1] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2025/09/18/paris-agreement-eu-submits-statement-of-intent-to-the-unfccc-on-the-post-2030-ndc/
[2] https://english.www.gov.cn/news/202509/25/content_WS68d47dcac6d00ca5f9a066a5.html
[3] https://unfccc.org/emissions-gap-reports/

Funded by the European Union
Hanns Seidel Stiftung 汉斯·赛德尔基金会

that climate leadership delivers tangible economic and energy security benefits. A joint commitment to pioneering this path reinforces the powerful narrative that climate action is an engine for growth, job creation, and technological leadership.

Clean energy sectors have already become key growth drivers for both China and the EU, accounting for nearly one-third of the EU's GDP growth[4] in 2023, while contributing 10% to China's GDP and 25% to its GDP growth[5] in 2024. If China and major economies around the world follow transition pathways in line with the Paris Agreement, its clean energy sectors could double in value by 2035, contributing USD 4 trillion[6] to the economy. This would further increase growth opportunities around the rest of the world, including the EU, as most of the value from clean energy technologies is downstream[7], such as in installations.

To implement these shared international pledges and reap the economic benefits of the green transition, cooperation should focus on:

- Accelerating renewables deployment through transparent deployment targets in line with the global goal to triple renewables by 2030, supported by deeper cooperation on solar, wind, grid integration, and storage.
- Scaling up energy efficiency by sharing best practices and technologies for building retrofits, heat pump deployment, and demand-side management, thereby reducing energy demand and enhancing competitiveness.
- Managing a coordinated coal phase-down through knowledge exchange on just transition strategies, renewable energy integration, and power market reforms, while avoiding stranded assets as best as possible.

III. Turning Clean Tech Tensions into Shared Opportunity

Rising trade tensions pose a significant risk to the affordability and pace of the global energy transition. While China's clean tech manufacturing boom has driven down costs and scaled global supply, it has also created dependencies and challenges for core industries in other countries. While competition drives innovation, unmanaged friction risks fracturing supply chains, increasing costs for consumers, and slowing down decarbonisation efforts in both regions and beyond. It is in the shared economic and climate interest of both sides to ensure that trade frictions do not disrupt growth and that clean technologies can flow freely.

[4] https://www.iea.org/commentaries/clean-energy-is-boosting-economic-growth
[5] https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-clean-energy-contributed-a-record-10-of-chinas-gdp-in-2024/
[6] https://energyandcleanair.org/publication/china-clean-energy-industry-can-double-in-value-by-2035/
[7] https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-chinas-clean-energy-exports-in-2024-alone-will-cut-overseas-co2-by-1/

Funded by the European Union
Hanns Seidel Stiftung 汉斯·赛德尔基金会

Therefore, both sides could benefit from a high-level dialogue on clean tech trade to ensure resilient and diversified supply chains, while accelerating the energy transition around the world. This dialogue could contain:

- High-level political engagement at the level of the relevant EVP and Vice Premier to discuss mutually beneficial solutions to evolving trade tensions around clean technologies on a regular basis.
- Reciprocal investment frameworks that incentivise Chinese manufacturing investment in EU-based facilities, securing local jobs and economic benefits through investment and tech transfer, while guaranteeing market access for Chinese firms and mitigating supply chain disruptions.
- Coordination on standards and carbon accounting to prevent market fragmentation, ensuring low-carbon technologies move freely and fairly. Standards on clean technologies and carbon trading mechanisms, including the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, while sometimes seen as trade hurdles, can in fact play a positive role by driving higher transparency and accelerating low-carbon upgrades in both regions.

Part II – Global Relevance of China-EU Climate Collaboration

Strategic climate collaboration between China and the EU has the potential to reshape global trajectories—not just through domestic ambition but by enabling broader international progress. Through joint efforts to scale clean energy and build shared data systems, they can help ensure that other countries have the tools, financing, and confidence needed to align their own NDCs with the Paris goals. Two areas are especially critical: scaling clean energy deployment globally and strengthening the global climate knowledge infrastructure.

IV. Scaling Clean Energy to Accelerate Global Deployment

Delivering on NDCs requires massive investment in clean energy infrastructure. Many countries, especially in the Global South, face persistent barriers: high capital costs, fragmented standards, and a lack of access to proven technologies. The combined strengths of China's industrial capacity and Europe's regulatory experience can do more than drive decarbonisation at home—by leveraging their complementary strengths, China and the EU can help close this gap and accelerate the implementation of NDCs globally.

Funded by the European Union

Hanns Seidel Stiftung
汉斯·赛德尔基金会

To support NDC-aligned clean energy transitions worldwide, both sides could:

- Green finance alignment should move beyond bidding on existing projects toward co-developing NDC-aligned clean energy and coal phase-out strategies with host countries—especially where Chinese or EU assets are involved. Coordination with mechanisms like the Loss and Damage Fund and Paris Agreement Article 6 can enhance credibility and unlock broader financing.

- Clean Technology diffusion should be supported through joint standard-setting, open technical guidance, and capacity support to help more countries access, adapt, and deploy clean energy technologies—accelerating global NDC implementation, especially in lower-capacity contexts.

- Supply chain cooperation should include joint mapping of critical clean tech value chains, coordinated planning to reduce bottlenecks, and targeted investment in third-country manufacturing—ensuring diversified, affordable access to technologies essential for NDC delivery.

V. Strengthening the Global Knowledge Commons for AI-Era Climate Action

The credibility of NDCs increasingly depends on countries' ability to quantify emissions, track progress, and assess mitigation potential using robust, science-based tools. Yet many governments—especially in lower-income regions—lack access to reliable data, interoperable models, or the technical capacity to navigate emerging AI-driven approaches to climate research. At the same time, advances in AI present both opportunities and new challenges: while they can enhance scenario modelling, climate monitoring, and policy evaluation, they also risk deepening global asymmetries in technical capacity and governance.

To support inclusive, science-based NDC implementation in the AI era, China and the EU could:

- Establish a joint Climate Data and AI Platform, combining the EU's open-access datasets—such as Copernicus Earth Observation —with China's advanced computing capacity and machine learning infrastructure to create scalable and accessible analytical tools for global climate research.

- Support AI-powered climate research cooperation by linking European-based institutions (e.g., ECMWF, IIASA) with Chinese research centres (e.g. Peking University), fostering collaborative modelling of mitigation pathways and sectoral transitions aligned with NDC targets.

Funded by
the European Union

- Build capacity through South-facing training programmes, pairing EU-led modelling expertise with China's growing experience in climate-tech deployment and AI applications—helping developing countries generate their own NDC pathways and track implementation using frontier tools.

Cite as: Schaepe, B., Ou, Y., 2025, From Statement to Action: Effectively Implementing EU–China Climate Cooperation, EU-China Think Tank Engagement on Green Governance Project

https://china.hss.de/en/

https://china.hss.de/zh/

This project is funded by the European Union.

About the project:

China and the European Union have already demonstrated their commitment to taking leading roles on tackling climate change and environmental protection. The EU Green Deal and Chinese Ecological Civilization concept both hold similar objectives towards green transition as an interconnected effort to create a more sustainable and resilient society.

This project seeks to further implement a multi-stakeholder initiative to strengthen long-term think tank engagement on Green Global Governance between China and the European Union.

Structured exchanges on green governance policy issues and collaboration between leading think tanks and academic institutions with policy- and decision-makers on both sides aim to institutionalize track 2 and 1.5 dialogue mechanisms to accompany respective EU-China high level and sectoral dialogues. The Action's aim is to increase awareness and knowledge about the EU's and China's policy developments on green governance at technical and political levels, enhancing mutual understanding, whilst building trust, exploring common ground, creating networks of partnerships and influencing policy processes.

Activities include

- online roundtables, networking and research sharing
- delegation visits and policy workshops, including track 1.5 and track 2.0 dialogues
- European-Chinese thematic definition glossary
- policy papers and studies

The project is implemented by

- Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) and
- Think Tank of the Ministry of Natural Resources including the Consulting and Research Center (CRC), the Research Center of Territorial & Spatial Planning and Research Centre (RCTSP) and the Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Center (LCRC)

and has a duration of two years until October 2026.

Contact information:
Hanns Seidel Foundation Beijing Office
Tel: +86 10 653261-80
E-Mail: beijing@hss-china.com
Web: https://china.hss.de/en/

Funded by the European Union