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EICC-2020

Brussels, 5 October 2020

Mr. Josep Borrell  
EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and  
Vice-President of the European Commission  
242, rue de la Loi  
B-1049 Brussels

Dear High Representative, Vice-President Mr. Borrell,

### **Re: China's expanding espionage activities in EU**

I am writing to you regarding reports of increasing espionage activities by the Chinese Secret Service in Brussels and the dangers it may pose to the European Union's people, media, political institutions, and governance.

In its exceptional history, European Union has proved that it is not an obligation but a credible commitment which has transformed EU into an extra-ordinary and the world's most successful and well-integrated inter-governmental organisation. History shows that EU institutions have risen to the challenges of protecting and furthering EU's founding principles along with its governing structures and defeating existential threats to its values and those of its Member States. But today the core values of democracy and human freedoms are being challenged and threatened by the Chinese espionage activities in Europe.

As is evident from numerous press reports as well as measures initiated by governments of several EU member states and certain international organisations, China today poses a strategic and intelligence challenges and long - term security threat to the EU and to several other countries around the world. European Union has largely ignored this until cover-ups by the Chinese allowed a regional outbreak of COVID-19 to turn into a global pandemic as China bought up international medical protective gear and controlled supply chains for it. Besides COVID-19 cover-ups, in the past year China has also dismantled Hong Kong's civil liberties; has oppressed ethnic minorities including Uyghurs and Tibetans; has increased its military buildup not only in its neighbouring areas but in many parts of the globe; and is engaged in fatal skirmishes to grab land.

Disturbing press reports have stated that the objective of Chinese espionage is to weaken EU's freedom, its constitutional responsibilities, democracy, create confusion in the Member States and take advantage of EU's openness. A number of countries notably the UK, USA, India and Germany have already started to deal with China in a very cautious and prudent manner. There is a general feeling that by means of a "whole-of-state effort," China is using technology and humans to steal trade secrets, bargaining strategies, manufacturing capabilities, security information to steal personal and corporate data, material development techniques and data, consumer market data, source code, software, etc. Reputed cyber experts have said that

China is the most active nation in the world with regard to cyber espionage, with formidable capabilities aimed at economic sabotage.

While China's covert influence activities have received global attention in recent years, EU seems to have ignored its implications on EU's economy, political institutions, governance, and security. During last few years, China's espionage operations in EU have expanded dramatically, increasing in the number of operations, personnel, governments. China is engaged in employing more overt influence operations to include Confucius Institutes, friendship societies, student organisations, and media campaigns and Think Tanks. The modus-operandi of Chinese espionage in Brussels is by gaining membership of influential Think Tanks, financing and sponsoring them and through technical assistance. The Think Tanks, soft targets for Chinese espionage, are those who receive EU funding and where retired EU officials are at the decision-making process, and who have access to EU internal information. The Think Tank EU-Asia Centre in Brussels may have been in the news very recently for its Director (a former EU official and a member of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service MI6) alleged to have been involved in selling sensitive state secrets to Chinese govt, but there could have been several other undisclosed conduits in Brussels engaged in spying activities for Chinese govt.

It is not a secret that Brussels, the city of EU home and NATO has become the hub of Chinese espionage activities. According to a report there could be more than 250 Chinese secret agents operating in Brussels. Many of the Chinese Secret Service agents are attached to the Chinese Missions and they can be seen in the corridors of EU institutions clad in "black suit and white shirt" during any working hour of the day. There are also allegations that most of the Chinese journalists accredited to the EU, are members of the Chinese Communist Party and are trained spies.

It is common knowledge in the EU that China is building large covert informant networks inside Europe's leading universities and it is important that EU member states strengthen their counter-intelligence capabilities. Broadly, China is building networks to monitor the ethnic Chinese community to protect Beijing's "core interests". It should be a matter of growing concern for the EU on the Chinese efforts to exploit European research and technology. Chinese intelligence is using a "societal, diplomatic and journalistic approach" to stealing EU data, research and technological advancements. It is time that EU take steps to prohibit anyone employed or sponsored by the Chinese military from receiving student or research visas to the EU countries.

The sheer size of the Chinese student population at EU universities presents a major challenge for law enforcement and intelligence agencies tasked with striking the necessary balance between protecting Europe's open academic environment and mitigating the risk to national security. We ask you to take note of the steady increase in Chinese students entering Europe each year and the challenges associated with this trend. We fear that China's intelligence service is highly active in EU to exploit the openness of European society, especially academia and the scientific community, using a variety of means. It is important that law enforcement and intelligence officials in the EU should assess the dangers and share internal concerns about European universities becoming soft targets for Chinese intelligence services that use students and staff to access emerging technologies. We also ask you to focus on the threat from China and its use of foreign students in European universities trying to get access to sensitive military and civilian research. These students are exploiting the incredibly open research and development environment that EU has.

For China's Communist Party, Chinese journalists are their eyes and ears. The first job of every Chinese state media newsroom in EU is to compile and translate a list of local media stories to send to Beijing. While Chinese government has failed to uphold its international commitments to respect freedom of expression, media independence, respect for safety and freedom of journalists, and pluralism, EU has continued to grant accreditation to Chinese journalists without going rigorously their credentials. It is high time that EU reviews its accreditation policies, and EU intelligence should sufficiently adapt measures to address China threat. Chinese Secret Service in Brussels is so active that it should not come as a surprise if some EU officials have been compromised into supplying sensitive information to China and are spying for China. It is therefore important that EU takes urgent steps to enlarge and strengthen its vigilance and its security operations.

To rise to this China challenge, EU must act now, and I hope the issues I have mentioned above will receive your utmost attention.

With best Regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Antonio Tajani', written in a cursive style.

Secretary General