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**Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China (CCHRC)  
Final Report: CCHRC Workshop Consultations (Wednesday, May 31, 2023)**

*The meeting was conducted under Chatham House Rule: "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."*

**Summary:** On May 31, 2023, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) Greater China Political and Coordination Division (OPB) and Amnesty International Canada co-hosted a one-day Workshop with the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China (CCHRC) for consultations on current priority human rights concerns related to China. The meeting was held approximately six months after the November 21 2022 annual meeting, reflecting a request by CCHRC member to increase the frequency of consultations from annual to biannual meetings and to vary the format. The CCHRC consists of 15 Canadian civil society groups involved in advocacy related to the human rights situation in China.

For the workshop, GAC convened experts and senior officials from within the Department and from other government departments to address long-standing areas of concern identified by the CCHRC, namely foreign interference, harassment and intimidation of Canadians of Chinese origin, and the need to respond to Chinese government narratives. The list of Government of Canada participants included officials from Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA), Justice Canada (JUS), Public Safety (PS), Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). This session also provided an opportunity to discuss next steps for future CCHRC engagements and present updates on issues not covered in the previous CCHRC sessions.

**Session #1: Introduction**

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) provided an overview of Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) explaining some of the nuances behind the approach and how the People's Republic of China fits into that strategy.

- GAC explained that the Strategy is descriptive in noting that, as was the case with other major geo-political players before it, China's rise has been disruptive, not least as its growing economic might has impacted supply chains and driven economic growth globally.
- The Strategy reflects that China has also chosen at times to pursue its national interests through behaviours that are disruptive to existing international law and norms. In this sense, even as China has more impact on our global interests, it is in many ways divergent in values. The IPS underscores that Canada will unapologetically defend our national interests, and challenge China in areas of profound disagreement.
- GAC explained that Canada will also engage to get things done on issues where China's interests converge with Canada's. As an example, GAC noted the successful co-hosting, with China, of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Montreal. The Strategy (IPS) is also rooted in a clear-eyed assessment of today's global China. Canada's approach to engagement must therefore be rooted in Canadian values and priorities, and pursued with a relentless focus on Canada's national interests. This means moving forward with an approach that engages China as it is today, not as we hope it will become; and doing so with the Canadian interest, rather than the interests of the Canada-China relationship, as the primary lens.

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- GAC explained that the IPS commits new resources for GAC which means that Canada will have greater capacity on China, both in Canada and abroad. This will lead to improved Canadian literacy (understanding) on China, more domestic outreach, and enhanced coherence with academia, stakeholders, and business.
- GAC also noted that the Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) recognizes that China's economy continues to offer significant opportunities for Canadian exporters. GAC stressed that it will continue to support Canadian companies who seek to enter or expand their trade and investment relationship with China. It also noted that the IPS recognizes the significant risks of doing business in and with China, including intellectual property theft; economic coercion; and the risk of diversion by China of dual-use sensitive goods and technologies for military purposes. GAC noted that Canada is encouraging trade and investment diversification from and within China. The IPS will help Canada implement policies that protect our national security and economic interests, and ensure Canadian interests remain paramount.
- GAC acknowledged that reports of Chinese state-sponsored foreign interference in Canada, including reports of harassment and intimidation of individuals living in Canada, are deeply troubling. All levels of government must take allegations of such acts seriously.
- GAC stressed that foreign interference represents a significant danger to Canada's prosperity and sovereignty, but that whole-of-government efforts to address the threat were underway. GAC encouraged CCHRC members to share any concerns or reports of foreign interference with the Government of Canada.
- It was noted that many CCHRC members have been interviewed by the media and asked to participate in roundtables on foreign interference. GAC explained that the recent decision to declare a Chinese diplomat *persona non-grata* (PNG) was not taken lightly, as it represents the most serious act that a state can take against a foreign diplomat.

**Session #2: Monitoring the Digital Information Space**

GAC delivered a presentation on the Canada-led *G7 Rapid Response Mechanism* (G7 RRM) and its role in open-source monitoring of foreign information manipulation, especially in the context of Russian disinformation on its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The presentation was followed by a discussion on transnational repression.

- CCHRC members had several questions on possible support, training or information sharing that could be offered to civil society groups by the G7 RRM, noting that Civil society groups already do much of this work for free. CCHRC participant also asked if GAC provided any public briefings on RRM findings. GAC replied that at present, the G7 RRM limits its reports and briefings to G7 Governments, and flagged that while RRM does support training, it may be too basic for civil society needs.
- Participants inquired if the GAC G7 RRM team was responsible for tracking the PRC-led disinformation and propaganda campaign that targeted Canada's 2019 and 2021 federal

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elections. GAC's RRM secretariat responded that it is one of the four members of the Government of Canada's Security and Intelligence Threat to Elections (SITE) taskforce (Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), Communications Security Establishment (CSE), Global Affairs Canada, RCMP) that monitors elections interference. GAC also noted that Elections Canada, Heritage Canada, the Department of Public Safety and the Office of the Minister of Democratic Institutions were also key to Government monitoring and countering election disinformation.

- Participants stressed the need for the Government of Canada to work more closely with diaspora groups on disinformation and propaganda in Canada, especially on Chinese language social media content. Participants noted that diaspora CSOs have been warning government for years about the threat posed by PRC malign influence, but that the Canadian government has been slow to respond.
- Participants collectively discussed the propaganda environment in Canada and around the world. Themes included China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) "912 Special Project Working Group" that is charged with non-transparently and covertly influencing perceptions of the PRC around the world, attacking "perceived enemies" and harassing and intimidating members of diaspora communities from unauthorized "overseas police stations" around the world.
- Participants stressed the need for greater China literacy among government officials and Members of Parliament who may not understand the impact of PRC propaganda and inauthentic social media activity. Participants also expressed the need for Government to work with diaspora civil society groups to create a communications strategy for diaspora, for MPs and the general public that is culturally and linguistically sensitive.
- **ACTION: GAC committed to following up  and updating the group on possible future opportunities for involvement.**
- Participants also flagged the need for a disinformation reporting mechanism by which civil society could flag items of concern to the Government of Canada.
- Participants noted the difficulty of state attribution of disinformation and cyber incidents given the PRC playbook of employing a range of tools and levers in support of its objectives, including Party bodies such as the United Front Work Department, private companies such as Huawei, state-owned enterprises, news agencies and television stations.
- Participants discussed the challenge of resisting and countering the large and well-resourced PRC propaganda effort that results in the "brainwashing" of the Chinese public and a shift in perceptions among overseas diaspora members towards a more "pro-Beijing" perspective.

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**Session #3: Foreign Influence Transparency Registry**

Public Safety Canada delivered a presentation on the Foreign Influence Transparency Registry (FITR) based on a public and stakeholder Consultation Paper “Enhancing Foreign Influence Transparency: Exploring Measures to Enhance Canada’s Approach”. The presentation was followed by a moderated discussion.

Presentation Highlights:

- Public Safety briefed the CCHRC that it is the primary point of contact for Foreign Interference; including for liaison with Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Municipal governments.
- Public consultations ended on May 9 resulting in over 800 submissions.
- Public Safety addressed the rationale for establishing the Registry. While Canada already has the Lobbying Act, the Elections Act, and Conflict of Interest guidelines in place, the involvement of foreign state actors necessitates more targeted tools.
- Tools to develop for the Registry:
  - Transparency;
  - Detection of relationships (PRC and Canadian Citizens);
  - Application (clarity on regulations, interpretation);
  - Registration;
  - Alignment with Allies
- How will the Registry Work?
  - No intent to designate individuals/entities
    - It is the actions that are registered, such as advocacy; lobbying; public communications.
    - *FITR will not be a name and shame registry.*
- The following proposed components of the Registry were also discussed:
  - Defining “foreign principals”
  - Activities to be captured
  - Relationships to be captured (e.g. paid)
  - Exemptions (e.g. Religious, legal, business)
  - Compliance
    - Enforcement mechanisms
    - Disclosure
    - Penalties for non-compliance

Discussion:

- Some participants expressed surprise and disappointment that public consultations had already closed. Participants claimed to not have been invited to submit comments and asked if there was opportunity to input before the final issuance of the public consultation report, stressing the need for full diaspora consultations. Participants also wanted more information on timelines and process for FITR rollout.
- Participants expressed concerns over enforcement, including if the associated legislation will be robust enough to prosecute. One participant drew a comparison with the United States, where enforcement of existing laws has been more robust than in Canada (for example, in April 2023, the FBI charged several people in the US for being undeclared PRC agents). Public Safety responded that FITR is being designed as a transparency tool, not an enforcement mechanism,

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further adding that Canada does not yet have the legal instruments to make arrests or prosecute those engaged in or supporting foreign interference activities.

- One participant raised concerns over the presence of, and high profile speaking roles given to, individuals widely believed to be “pro-Beijing” at a public consultation event hosted by the Minister of Public Safety. The participant expressed concern that the presence of these pro-Beijing figures sent the wrong message to the diaspora on the Government’s commitment to protect them from foreign interference/influence.
- Some participants highlighted that the concept of “foreign principal” needs a broad definition to capture asymmetric PRC state/party actors.
- Participants also expressed the need for a centralized National Counter Interference Office, that acts as a point of contact for all foreign interference matters, including engagement with relevant diaspora groups.
- Several participants questioned why public officials (including senators, MPs and ministers) and public servants were not mentioned as being within the scope of the Registry. Participants expressed that several high profile Canadian public figures have been acting as “mouthpieces” for Beijing, but do not face any serious scrutiny over their personal ties to the PRC and the CCP.
- One participant claimed that engagement with the grassroots is ignored in Canada, and requested better diaspora access to the RCMP for reporting of acts of intimidation by the CCP in Canada. The participant expressed frustration that subtle acts of intimidation are ignored, and that the RCMP only acts when it is clear a crime has already been committed. Another participant added that PRC infiltration of formerly benign organizations has turned some community groups into *de facto* CCP entities. The participant added that it is increasingly difficult for diaspora to feel fully free in Canada, as association with anti-CCP organizations can lead to lost opportunities due to other members of the community being fearful of interacting with those who may be “marked” as enemies by Beijing.
- Participants noted that Public Safety’s consultation materials were not written in plain English, but in “bureaucratese”.
- [redacted] members of the Tibetan diaspora have given up hope on getting help/protection from the Government. The participant noted that the human rights and charter rights are being denied to Tibetans in Canada due to harassment and conditionality imposed on them by Beijing on Canadian soil. The participant warned that this pervasive and insidious behaviour that limits rights of Canadians was corrosive to the fabric of democracy.
- Participants invoked Australia’s efforts to counter foreign interference, including its legislation of criminal offences for foreign interference, and asked if Canada could draw inspiration? It was noted that Australia’s laws were applicable retroactively and contained elements designed to prevent retired public servants from securing lucrative positions with PRC-affiliated organizations.

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**Session #4: Federal Policing – Strategic Engagement and Awareness**

The RCMP delivered a presentation on the mandate of the *Federal Policing – Strategic Engagement and Awareness (FP-SEA)* unit followed by discussion on crime prevention and reporting initiatives.

Presentation Highlights:

- Moving from intelligence to evidence is a big challenge.
- RCMP needs intelligence that is actionable.
- The burden of proof requires a nexus to criminality. The bar for action is high, but law enforcement can draw on a range of tools to thwart criminals.
- The RCMP shared its translations of community engagement materials.

Key Issues Raised:

- One participant noted that the RCMP products were direct translations from English or French, and were not effective communication tools. The Participant stressed the need for products to be linguistically and culturally sensitive. **For Action: The RCMP indicated it would work with GAC to produce better communication tools for diaspora.**
- In response to participant questions, the RCMP indicated that it could not comment on the status of the PRC's so-called "overseas police stations" in Canada.
- One participant noted that the RCMP does not offer mental health support services for those who report acts of foreign state intimidation and harassment.
- One participants asked for an update on any action taken following a 2017 Harassment and Intimidation Report (Amnesty International) that was updated in 2020. **For Action: RCMP was not aware of the report, but committed to looking into it and reporting to the CCHRC via GAC.**
- Participants noted the need for a single point of contact for reporting foreign interference. Participants asked what happens to complaints that fall short of criminality, but may be foreign interference.
- Participants inquired as to legal protections for those peacefully protesting, raising the example of PRC agents who attempt to disrupt peaceful protests and intimidate those exercising their right to peaceful assembly.
- Participants asked for data on the RCMP reporting hotline. **For action: RCMP to compile data on reports related to PRC foreign interference and report to CCHRC through GAC.**
- **For Action: GAC and Public Safety to Provide RCMP with indicators of foreign interference.**

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**Session #5 – Looking Ahead**

Feedback on the Workshops:

- Some participants indicated that the government presentations were not relevant or responsive to the issues of primary concern to CCHRC members. Participants noted the presentations were overly generic, and contained limited value.
- Some CCHRC members felt the presentations were too one-sided and too long leaving little time for discussion.
- Some participants noted the sessions were characterized as “workshops” but were not interactive.

GAC-CCHRC Coordination:

- CCHRC members suggested that future meetings feature a high-level update on GAC activities, updates by GAC and CCHRC members on action items, followed by discussions on emerging issues in the human rights space and thematic discussions led by CCHRC members themselves.
- CCHRC members expressed a desire for the agenda to be jointly developed by the group.
- Some members expressed disappointment over communication gaps with GAC on initiatives, positions and progress on action items from previous meetings.
- Members expressed the desire for more visibility on how points raised by the CCHRC in consultations are shared within the Government of Canada.
- CCHRC members requested that the co-chairs summary be circulated in a timely manner following meetings.
- [redacted] not all members were taking part. **For Action: GAC agreed to work [redacted] to ensure all members receive [redacted]**
- Most members expressed support for a GAC offer to host thematic intersessional meetings between biannual consultations to provide more opportunities for more bespoke interactions.
- It was agreed that the full GAC-CCHRC consultations should continue on a biannual basis.

Longer-Term Engagement and Proposals:

- CCHRC members conveyed a sense of frustration at the lack of government awareness, coherence, action and recourse when it comes to foreign interference by China on Canadian soil. **The group called for a narrative tracking and counter messaging mechanism to challenge CCP propaganda in Canada.**
- CCHRC members offered to provide the Government with expertise, and up-to-date information on China-related issues and developments within Chinese diaspora communities.
- CCHRC members asked for a mechanism to keep the Government apprised of developments and CCP malign influence activity, including that of the United Front Work Department, which they claim is becoming bolder and more sophisticated.
- There was an urgent call for the Government to provide an emergency visa stream for HRDs who are stranded in other countries waiting to come to Canada. The case of Dong Guangping was raised as an example where delays in issuance of a HRD visa may put HRDs at risk of deportation to China.

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**Summary of Action Items:**

- GAC and Amnesty to jointly draft Guidelines for effective GAC—CCHRC interaction and collaboration.
- Jointly design the agenda for the next meeting to be more action-oriented with more time allocated for latest developments from GAC and discussion relevant to the coalition's priorities.
- Collaborate with RRM Canada to determine how to solicit help from the diaspora community to track disinformation. IOL to follow-up with respect to a [redacted]  
[redacted]
- RCMP to liaise with GAC to ensure a public communication strategy is implemented in a culturally and linguistically sensitive way to better engage diaspora communities.
- RCMP to update CCHRC on the development of a hotline for reporting foreign interference/influence.
- RCMP to provide data on reports of Foreign Interference made through the existing hotline to date.
- RCMP to check on the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) intimidation and harassment report and will report back to the CCHRC via GAC.
- GAC will encourage Public Safety and RCMP to ensure direct engagement with CCHRC members on issues within those agencies' mandates.
- GAC will request that Public Safety draft "indicators of Foreign Interference" for sharing with RCMP.
- Explore the possibility of hosting intersessional events between the bi-annual GAC-CCHRC meetings with focus on thematic issues.
- [redacted]  
[redacted] share relevant information and updates between the bi-annual meetings.
- Circulate Co-Chair's summary, in a timely manner, to the CCHRC participants.
- Public Safety to provide a Foreign Interference Reporting structure that is to be shared with civil society.
- GAC to share Government of Canada update on status of PRC Overseas Police Stations with Civil Society.
- Ensure GAC has full coalition list, [redacted]