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**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Co-chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

Hearing on “China’s Environmental Challenges and U.S. Responses”

Tuesday, September 10, 2021, 10 a.m.

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this timely hearing on China’s environmental challenges.

For more than 15 years this Commission has monitored the Chinese government’s policies on the environment because of the nexus between respect for human rights and the rule of law and a society’s ability to address environmental problems.

The people of China continue to struggle not only with air and water pollution, and other hazards, but also with obstacles to the ability to advocate for change or seek remedies through their government.

This hearing comes five weeks before nations of the world gather in Glasgow at the UN climate change conference.

China and the United States are the top two emitters of greenhouse gasses. Solving the climate crisis will require both cooperation and a robust and genuine effort within each country to change its regulatory regime and consumption behavior.

President Biden's top climate envoy, former Secretary John Kerry, has been engaged with his Chinese counterparts on bilateral cooperation. But we in America also need to do our job. We must pass robust domestic legislation to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, transform our economy, and ensure that future generations have a right to a habitable planet. There is no trade-off between the environment and the economy. We can create millions of good, high-wage green jobs that ensure economic prosperity and reduce our carbon impact.

I understand that some experts give the Chinese government positive marks for addressing climate change at a macro level. I look forward to hearing the assessment of our witnesses. Further, I would like to understand the extent to which Chinese officials' decisions are guided by their sense of the country's self-interest, in terms of the economic and social consequences of a warming climate.

This is important to know as the U.S. government figures out the modalities of cooperation with China.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has explicitly linked cooperation on climate with other issues. He essentially threatened to halt cooperation if the U.S. did not back off criticism of their conduct.

Is this a tactic to get us to stop caring about whether the Chinese government is committing genocide against Uyghurs, erasing democracy in Hong Kong, or jailing human rights lawyers? How do we respond?

Environmental progress in any country depends on actions at both the national and the local level. A focus on the Chinese government's climate commitments should not deter us from looking at what is happening on the ground.

This Commission has reported on the Chinese government's increasingly tight grip on NGOs and civil society, which has affected the environmental sector. Lack of transparency and uneven enforcement are obstacles. Environmental researchers and advocates have been suppressed and detained, including ethnic minorities.

Those jailed include former Xinjiang University President Tashpolat Teyip who has investigating pollution from coal mining, and Tibetan Anya Sengdra who campaigned against illegal mining and poaching in Qinghai.

We are also interested in threats to the ecology of Tibet. The Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which I was proud to sponsor, sets out U.S. policy on the environment and water resources on the Tibetan Plateau, and directs the Secretary of State to support collaborative research, encourage input from Tibetan nomads, and promote a regional framework on water security.

I hope to hear about practical steps we can take toward these goals.

Lastly, there is the solar industry's role in Xinjiang. We need to deploy more solar technology, but we cannot abet the forced labor that the U.S. government has determined is used to produce solar components. Can the U.S. government encourage diversity in solar sourcing to reduce reliance on tainted polysilicon from Xinjiang? Does the coal burned to produce this material undermine climate goals?

Thank you, and I look forward to the testimony.