

**Statement of the Honorable Sander Levin
Chairman, Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on The Impact of the 2008 Olympic Games on Human Rights
and
the Rule of Law in China**

February 27, 2008

The Commission convenes this hearing to examine the likely impact of the 2008 Summer Olympics on human rights and the rule of law in China. In its Olympic bid documents and in its preparations for the 2008 Summer Games, China made commitments pertaining to human rights and the rule of law. Our witnesses today will help us to evaluate these commitments and to assess the openness with which China has allowed the rest of the world to monitor its progress in fulfilling them.

In the days before the International Olympic Committee voted to select Beijing as the site of the 2008 Olympics, there was consideration of human rights and related issues, as had been the case in previous deliberations about appropriate sites for the Olympics. China made a point of raising the link between human rights and the 2008 Games. On July 12, 2001, the state-run China Daily reported that Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic bid committee, said, "*We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promotes our economy, but also enhances all social conditions, including education, health and human rights.*" These words could not have been clearer. Human rights and the 2008 Olympics were linked before Beijing was awarded the Games, and China itself linked them.

Just yesterday, China's Foreign Minister announced that China is ready to resume the human rights dialogue with the United States that it broke off in 2004. This announcement underlines the relevance of this hearing, which was announced several weeks ago, and means that there is considerable and appropriate ground to cover today.

On press freedom, Beijing's bid documents stated, "(t)here will be no restrictions on journalists in reporting on the Olympic Games." At the same time, they also stated, "(t)here will be no restriction concerning the use of media material produced in China and intended principally for broadcast outside."

On openness in general, Beijing's Action Plan for the Olympics states, "in the preparation for the Games, we will be open in every aspect to the rest of the country and the whole world." On government transparency more specifically, Beijing's Action Plan for the Olympics states, "Government work will be open to public supervision and information concerning major Olympic construction projects shall be made public regularly."

This last point deserves extra attention because it underscores the importance of China's new Regulation on the Public Disclosure of Government Information, which takes effect on May 1 of this year. This new Regulation promises people in China the legal means to obtain access to government records related to construction, labor affairs, health and safety, the environment, and much more before the Games begin and also after. The Commission looks forward to reporting on the implementation of this important new Regulation in the weeks and months ahead.

Much of the world's attention also has focused on China's environment. Beijing's bid documents stated, "By 2008, the environmental quality in Beijing will be comparable to that of major cities in developed

countries, with clean and fresh air, a beautiful environment, and healthy ecology. Meteorological observations in the area of Beijing in the past 10 years have indicated that July and August are good time to hold the Olympic Games."

I must note that China's security preparations for the Olympics also raise concerns. Congress banned the transfer of crime control equipment to China after the Tiananmen killings of 1989. Nonetheless, recent press reports describe the export from the U.S. to China of equipment identified as commercial, but with crime control applications. This merits attention because after the Olympics, high-technology surveillance products will be left in the hands of China's public security and state security organs, who may use them to monitor political activists, religious practitioners, and members of certain ethnic minority groups.

The Commission asked Under Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Security Mario Mancuso to testify today, but he is in India on official business and unfortunately could not join us. However he has offered to respond to questions in writing. A list is being prepared, and I invite members to add to it.

China does not want to be labeled as a gross violator of human rights. And yet it makes its determination to eliminate dissent painfully clear to the world. Thousands of prisoners of conscience languish in jail cells across China. Just in the last few weeks, China has detained individuals who have mentioned the Olympics when speaking out for human rights. Officials have cast their public-mindedness as a subversion of state power. These same authorities assert that raising concern over human rights in the context of the 2008 Games violates the Olympic spirit. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Fairness on the field of play, fair judgments and the opportunity to witness human potential unleashed to the fullest extent are the very essence of the Olympic spirit. They are also the essence of freedom and fundamental human rights.

In seeking the 2008 Olympics, China made specific commitments. Seven years have passed, and the Games begin in less than six months. This hearing is a necessary part of determining whether China is fulfilling its commitments. China is an increasingly important part of the international community, and it is vital that there be continuing assessment of its commitments, whether as a member of the WTO or as the awarded host of the Olympics. Other nations, including ours, have both the responsibility and a legitimate interest in ensuring compliance with those commitments.