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Chinese envoy says Huntsman will help further U.S.-China relations

Iran » Ambassador says solution on nuclear power should come through negotiation.

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The Chinese ambassador to the United States said former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. has done a good job in his short time as U.S. ambassador to China, and he is confident his work will help the relationship between the two nations.

"He's had a very busy month," Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong said of Huntsman's brief tenure. "I think he's been a good ambassador, trying to help people in China understand whatever is being done" by the United States.

The ambassador said Huntsman is a "good friend of mine and I really appreciate his interest and dedication and commitment to U.S.-China relations."

"With him being ambassador to China, I know we'll be able to make more progress in our relations," he said.

Zhou visited Utah three years ago and the Huntsman family hosted the ambassador at the Governor's Mansion and took him to a concert. The two diplomats kept up the relationship since and Zhou hosted a reception and luncheon in Huntsman's honor before he left for China in mid-August.

Zhou said U.S.-China relations got a new start when President Barack Obama took office in January and so far they are headed in a good direction. He said Huntsman is continuing that course and helping prepare for Obama's visit to China next month.

During his speech at the University of Utah's Hinckley Institute of Politics on Monday, Zhou said China feels strongly that Iran should not be allowed to develop nuclear weapons, but should be allowed to pursue a peaceful nuclear energy program.

"We are opposed to the possession on the part of Iran of nuclear weapons; on the other hand, I think we support their peaceful use of nuclear energy," he said.

News that Iran has built a large facility for uranium enrichment has prompted the world's six leading powers, including China, to demand Iran prove the site is intended for peaceful purposes. Potential new sanctions against Iran are being considered.

Cooperation from China, which is Iran's largest trading partner, is seen as key in exerting pressure on Iran, but China has opposed sanctions in the past.

"Sanctions should not be regarded as the only means effective for reaching the solution of the issue," Zhou said. "We hold the view that, fundamentally speaking, this issue needs to be resolved through diplomatic negotiations if you want the settlement to be lasting."

Iran has agreed to let U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors visit the enrichment site later this month.

Zhou said China has made great strides on its human-rights record, changing the nation's constitution to guarantee freedom of religion, speech and assembly. While he worked for the U.S. Commerce Department, Huntsman participated in protests over China's human-rights record, specifically its violent crackdown on protesters at Tiananmen Square, but Zhou said that was not seen as an issue with the new ambassador.

Zhou also said the nation is committed to taking steps to address the threat of climate change by reducing its carbon emissions, increasing its renewable energy production and spreading its forested acreage.

He also defended the Chinese censorship of information on the Internet.

"I think that is their responsibility to make sure people will be able to get useful information from the Internet. There are things that are not useful, that are even disruptive. It's true of every country to manage the Internet so people use it in a constructive way that will help the country make progress," he said. "I don't think anything would be good without any

kind of control."

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