

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 9, 2004

Contact:

Anne Johnson, Director of Communications, (202) 523-3240, ext. 27

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) today on Capitol Hill held its first China Human Rights Forum titled Talking with China about Human Rights: Assessing the Future of Bilateral Human Rights Dialogues. The United States and China are currently negotiating a resumption of their bilateral human rights dialogue. The European Union, Canada, and Australia are all reviewing the effectiveness of their bilateral human rights dialogues. The Forum was convened at this opportune time in order to assess bilateral dialogues with China from an international perspective and to discuss their efficacy, as well as ways to improve and more thoroughly coordinate the various bilateral and multilateral dialogues in the future.

“Forum participants offered recommendations about the future of bilateral human rights dialogues and ways, if any, that they can be improved. Participants discussed problems and shared new approaches and best practices from around the globe,” said USCIRF Chair Preeti D. Bansal.

The Commission's China Human Rights Forum was created to bring together U.S. government officials, international and academic experts, NGO representatives, and human rights activists for off-the-record discussions on human rights and U.S.-China relations. In past years the Commission has held China Religion Roundtables on Xinjiang and on U.S. policy to promote religious freedom in China. Forums seek to ensure that religious freedom goals are well integrated into the programs of government agencies and regional and international institutions to which both the United States and China belong.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

- Preeta D. Bansal ,
- Felice D. Gaer ,