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UVa Miller Center, Former U.S. Amb. to China Release Report on Ways to Improve U.S.-China Relations

Washington, D.C. -- The University of Virginia's Miller Center today released a report that outlines practical ways the United States can improve and strengthen relations with China. Key recommendations include ways the U.S. can improve its negotiating position with China, such as addressing U.S. debt, approaching the relationship as equals, and taking a fresh look at the Taiwan situation.

The report, "The Way Ahead with China," is based on a Miller Center conference that brought together leaders from government, the military, business, and academia with vast China experience to examine U.S.-China relations. The conference was led by Admiral Joseph Prueher, former U.S. ambassador to China and former commander of the U.S. Pacific Command. Prueher is now a distinguished professor at the Miller Center.

"There can be no coherent, effective U.S. strategy to mitigate dangers and capitalize on opportunities that does not account for China's strengths, weaknesses, aims, and ambitions. The best way to look at this challenge is that it will be a protracted negotiation," Prueher said.

"Today, the changing and evolving U.S.-China relationship demands a practical strategy. There must be careful consideration of what both nations seek to gain from this relationship and of how the relationship itself affects the balance of nations worldwide. Both the U.S. and China can benefit from closer ties and increasing trust," said Gerald L. Baliles, director of the Miller Center.

The report outlines six recommendations:

1. **The U.S. must get its own house in order.** Excessive debts and deficits in the U.S. budget undermine our credibility and stability on the international stage.

2. **We should take a fresh look at Taiwan.** Our involvement with Taiwan is a frequent point of contention with the Chinese, particularly with respect to arms sales, and one that should be re-examined. The complex relationship is political and should be re-examined outside of a military context.

3. **The U.S. and China should conduct negotiations as equals.**

Both countries should come to the table with an attitude of collaboration, instead of an adversarial one based around counter demands and ultimatums. A solution-based attitude of respect and deference—instead of acrimony—should be adopted in these discussions.

4. **Create structured communications.** U.S. schools should work to improve language skills in Mandarin to match Chinese efforts and foster greater cultural understanding and exchange. More structured diplomatic and quasi-official dialogues should be promoted.

5. **Build habits of cooperation to promote understanding.** It is accurate for Americans to view and interpret China as uniquely “Chinese” rather than as “Communist,” as the Chinese people are pragmatically, rather than philosophically, driven.

6. **Encourage greater economic integration.** Although foreign direct investment (FDI) serves our economic interests by returning capital and operating revenues to the United States, that FDI must include a mutually updated system of trade.

Conference participants who helped develop the report include: David L. Cunningham, Jr., president of the Asia Pacific region of FedEx Express; Michael Drucker, chief operating officer for FedEx Express and president of its international division; Charles Freeman III, former assistant U.S. trade representative for China affairs who is now with the Center for Strategic and International Studies; Admiral Timothy J. Keating, former commander of the U.S. Pacific Command; David Michael Lampton, dean of faculty at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS); and James Shinn, national intelligence officer for East Asia at the CIA.

The full report is available at
<http://web1.millercenter.org/conferences/chinaroundtable-report.pdf>.

Founded in 1975, the Miller Center of Public Affairs is a leading nonpartisan public policy institution that aims to fulfill Jefferson's public service mission by serving as a national meeting place for engaged citizens, scholars, students, media representatives, and government officials to research, reflect, and report on issues of national importance to the governance of the United States, with special attention to the central role and history of the presidency.

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