



27 November 2006

Beijing meeting to promote better protection for Scotch

Scotch Whisky industry representatives, UK Trade Secretary, Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, and senior Chinese government and industry figures meet today in Beijing to explore better protection of Scotch Whisky in China and ways in which Scotch Whisky and Chinese spirits producers can work together.

Trade Secretary, Rt Hon Alistair Darling MP, and Vice-Minister Jiang Zengwei of the Ministry of Commerce, will both address today's forum which aims to examine how consumers and spirit drinks can be protected from the consequences of unfair competition, such as counterfeit, and to cement UK-Chinese co-operation on protecting intellectual property rights.

Gavin Hewitt, SWA Chief Executive, who will open today's event, said:

"Co-operation between the industry, UK and Chinese governments has led to good progress being made towards ensuring there is strong protection for Scotch Whisky from counterfeit and unfair competition in this important, emerging market.

"As today's landmark meeting illustrates, China is determined to implement and enforce appropriate legal protection for Scotch Whisky and other spirit drinks with geographical indications. We welcome this commitment, as well as UK government support, and hope that the necessary legal protection can be implemented in the near future to the benefit of both consumers and distillers.

"Scotland and China have proud distilling traditions. Since the 1940s, the SWA has built up considerable experience of protecting Scotch Whisky internationally and we hope we will be able to share our experience and work closely with Chinese spirits producers as they look to protect their products overseas."

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Note to Editors:

Today's meeting, organised by the British Embassy in Beijing, brings together the UK and Chinese governments, the Scotch Whisky Association, the International Federation of Spirits Producers, the China Alcohol Industry Association, and a range of Scotch Whisky and Chinese distillers.

Scotch Whisky is protected under WTO rules - articles 22 and 23 of the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS) - as a recognised geographical indication of origin (GI). Discussions with the Chinese government are aimed at implementing appropriate mechanisms and sanctions to protect Scotch Whisky as a GI in China, and at the same time to protect consumers from counterfeit.

China is an important emerging market for Scotch Whisky distillers, with exports to the market valued at £46m in 2005. Scotch Whisky is the leading imported spirit drink in the Chinese market.

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