

US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns delivered three key messages. First, he highlighted the more frequent high-level communication between the US and China in recent months, calling attention to the visits of numerous American officials to Beijing, including Secretary of State Tony Blinken, and senior PRC visits to Washington. “This was real progress,” he said, stating that such visits had “connected the senior levels of the Chinese and American governments so that we could have more stability in the relationship.” These exchanges led to agreements in areas like combating the fentanyl crisis and resuming military-to-military communications.

Second, alongside positive developments, Ambassador Burns emphasized the importance of acknowledging that the US-China relationship will remain very competitive and challenging across a broad range of issues. In particular, he noted sources of continuing challenges in the relationship, such as the role of Chinese firms in supporting Russia’s defense-industrial base and the risk posed by China’s excess manufacturing capacity to global markets. Burns affirmed the US commitment to maintain trade and address national security concerns under a policy of de-risking, not decoupling, and noted the PRC’s own extensive prohibitions on inbound and outbound investment, data management, and other commercial activities. “Our responsibility to the American Chamber and to American businesses is very simple: to try to create a more level playing field for American companies here in China,” Burns said.

Finally, Burns concluded by saying that while the US-China relationship is complex and competitive, both governments need to navigate challenges and engage with one another responsibly and peacefully where shared interests align for the benefit of both countries and the world. Burns said the attendance of Chinese Vice President Han Zheng “underscores the importance” China places on its economic relationship with the United States. He also stressed the importance of people-to-people connections and educational exchanges, noting that they had been adversely affected by the pandemic but are now beginning to recover.