BUSINESS

China interested in state, official says

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China and the state of South Carolina are becoming ever stronger trade partners, said a Chinese diplomat in Greenville to speak at the National Conference on China's Global Rise at Furman University.

Minister Xie Feng, deputy chief of mission at the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said the state's exports to China have increased 522 percent from 2000 to 2008 while exports to other countries have increased 126 percent. That growth occurred as U.S. exports to China increased by 360 percent compared with 67 percent export growth to other countries.

"The trade and commercial relationship has been expanding between China and the United States, including South Carolina and Greenville," he said. "This is very encouraging. China is willing to work with the United States, with the people of South Carolina and Greenville.

"I think there are many Chinese companies willing to invest in South Carolina. There is great potential for corporations here in South Carolina and Greenville," Feng said. But "the market decides where investment will go."

Haier, a well-known Chinese company, has a plant in Camden, where refrigerators are made.

China needs to focus on clean energy technology, Feng said, and companies in the United States and China can complement each other in this pursuit.

Greenville Mayor Knox White, who hosted Feng's meeting with media, said, "I think because of our long-standing relationship with companies from other countries, South Carolina becomes a natural climate" for Chinese companies and for those who are new to the United States.

Because of Haier, "we're on their map," he said.

The U.S. and global recession has affected China as an exporting country, Feng said. But the country of 1.3 billion people knows it must do more than export.



HEIDI HEILBRUNN / Staff

Minister Xie Feng, deputy chief of mission for the Chinese Embassy, speaks in the office of Mayor Knox White on Tuesday.

"It's impossible to rely on exports alone for sustainable development," he said. "We should focus more on domestic markets. We should focus more on new energy, green energy. Thirdly, we should do more in the area of social security so people in China will have less restraint when they try to spend their money."