

Promote China-EU Cooperation to Shape a Better Future

Speech by H.E. Song Zhe, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the
People's Republic of China to the European Union
December 9, 2009

Dear Secretary-General Merritt,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be here again with the Friends of Europe. I just returned from the 12th China-EU summit which was held in Nanjing a week ago. I hope I could bring you the vitality and energy of the summit, and also our vision and confidence in the future of China-EU relations.

This summit sends out an important message, that is, in face of the profound changes in the international economic, financial and political systems, which were triggered off by the global financial crisis, and in face of the mounting global challenges, the emerging traditional and non-traditional security threats, China and the EU find their common interests broadening, rather than narrowing. As comprehensive and strategic partners, China and the EU will be committed to the strategic positioning of our relationship, with political trust as its basis. We will push forward practical cooperation, with high-tech collaboration in the lead and green economy as the focus. We will join hands to meet global challenges with a responsible attitude. We will work together to promote world peace and sustainable development.

It is my deep conviction that at this moment, our relationship comes to a historical juncture that links the past and the future. It is not only because that the "Lisbon Treaty" entered into force just one day after the Nanjing summit, but also because that the development of China, the evolution of the EU and the changing international situation, make our relationship ever more prominent, carrying a strong mission and mandate. Let me explain with three points.

Point Number one: the strategic cooperation between China and the EU will have a strong bearing on the future global pattern and international order.

Charles Grant, director of the Center for European Reform wrote an article last year with an eye-catching title: "Can China and the EU shape a new world order?" For this question, the 12th China-EU summit gave a "yes-and-no" answer.

Why yes? Because China and the EU are two important players on the world stage, and among all players, our concepts of global pattern and order are the most similar. Both of us support multilateralism. Both resist violence and pursue peace. China advocates the settlement of disputes through negotiations, while the EU is strong with "persuasive diplomacy". Whether the outmoded zero-sum game and balance of power will be abandoned in the post-crisis era? Whether a multilateral world of peace and development will be built? It is very much hinged on the quality of China-EU relations, as our strategic cooperation will play an important and positive role in addressing climate change, financial crisis and many other issues that confront mankind.

But why the answer is also "No"? Because today's world is undisputedly moving towards multi-polarity. And equally undisputable is that, the world in the future calls for multilateral cooperation. Recently, Emmerich's film "2012" swept the globe. We might be swept away by its fascinating special effects, but I bet no one among us would like to see this fiction come true that 2012 will really become the end of the world. Nevertheless, the film does give us some reflection that, when the entire mankind is challenged by such a colossal threat, no one country, even as powerful as the United States, will be able to cope with it alone. Only by joint efforts from all nations of the world can we survive a time of difficulties. Likewise, China is of the view that in the real world, international affairs should be handled with joint efforts of all countries, not to be decided by one or two countries. This is why we do not endorse the notion of "G2".

In this sense, the future global pattern and international order shall be shaped by the international community, including China and Europe.

Point Number two: the pragmatic cooperation between China and the EU will have a strong bearing on the future of our peoples' life.

In a speech early this year, I described the life of Pierre, an exemplary young man living in Brussels. I tried to use his experience to illustrate the depth and breadth of our cooperation. Recently, one of my colleagues finished his service here and returned to Beijing. A few days ago, we met in Beijing and he told me, "OK, I'm now back home, but Europe is still everywhere in my life". On his way back, he took a flight of Airbus A330 of the Hainan Airline. He bought a new car, a Shanghai Volkswagen Lavida, a model specifically designed for the Chinese market, and its emission standard is Euro 4. Every week, he goes shopping at a Carrefour supermarket. To please his wife on her birthday, he bought a Swarovski crystal bracelet. To refurbish his apartment, he found the most popular interior design being the European style. He told me: "Ambassador, I feel like your Pierre, China's Pierre." Isn't it true that our cooperation has changed the life of our peoples and becomes an inseparable part of their life.

This year, despite of the impact of the international financial crisis on the world economy and international trade, the momentum of China-EU cooperation remains strong. The EU remains China's largest trading partner in the seventh consecutive year. The EU investment in China remains rising, not falling as someone would expect. The EU becomes China's third-largest source of foreign investment. This year also witnessed quite a few first time events in our cooperation, including the first China-EU Forum on Literature and Translation, the first China-EU Forum on Cultural Industry, the first expert consultation for China-EU trade statistics cooperation, the first China-EU Seminar on Education Policy, and the first China-EU consumer products and food safety cooperation mechanism.

When China and the EU established diplomatic relations 34 years ago, no one could imagine how deeply our cooperation would shape the life of our people as it is today. It was also hardly imaginable when we established the comprehensive and strategic partnership six years ago. I believe, with the deepening of globalization, the lives of our peoples will become even more inter-dependent in the coming years.

Point Number three: the cultural exchange and cooperation between China and the EU will have a strong bearing on the future of our friendship.

China-EU relations, in the final analysis, are the relations between the two peoples. Belgian novelist Amelie Nothomb, in her masterpiece "The Sabotage of Love", described the lack of mutual understanding between the Chinese and European people from the perspective of a 7-year-old girl. This little girl lived three years in Beijing in early 70s of last century with her father in the Sanlitun embassy district, but she did not have opportunity to make friends with Chinese children at the time. The only Chinese she knew was the chef in the embassy. And the only way that chef expressed his affection was to push the kids to "eat more".

Through reform and opening up, China embraced the world, and the world got in touch with China. Once there were few Westerners that knew China well, so that 20 years ago, Mark Rowswell, or in his Chinese nickname Dashan, a Canadian student who spoke some Beijing dialect, easily became a TV star in China. Today, more and more people from the West speak Chinese. Here in Brussels, I've met many people who speak fluent Chinese. I also met many young people who would greet me with a not very properly pronounced "nihao". I see this as an example of unprecedented enthusiasm between our peoples to know each other better and become better friends.

This year, the Europalia-China Arts Festival and the Frankfurt International Book Fair have been successfully held. The Nanjing summit announced that the year 2011 will be the Year of Youth between China and the EU. Our cultural cooperation has made such solid progress, and will continue strengthening communication, understanding and mutual trust between our peoples across all generations, making our two-thousand-year old friendship even more solid and prosperous.

Dear friends!

As Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao stated at the 12th China-EU Summit, in the final analysis, to effectively respond to global issues and to achieve world peace and sustainable development, it depends on economic growth and social progress. China and the EU must cooperate to combat the international financial crisis and sail through the difficult time together, and more importantly, we must stand high and look far, work together to shape the future and advocate a just and reasonable new international political and economic order. When China and the EU march on hand in hand, the pace of human progress will be more solid and strong. Here lies the strategic significance of China-EU relations.

The next 10 years is a crucial period of time when China-EU relationship will solidify in the post-crisis era. Both China and the EU will forge ahead along its own path of development, and there will be differences and disagreements. But nothing should deter us from respecting and supporting each other's choice of development path, rejecting discrimination, confrontation and containment, and advocating equality, dialogue and cooperation. We shall uphold the spirit of openness and inclusiveness. We shall appreciate each other's values and build up harmony. We shall look ahead to the future and take a strategic and long-term perspective. We shall advance pragmatic cooperation and promote mutual understanding and integration. We shall work together to resolve deep-seated structural problems in international relations and promote world harmony and sustainable development. As long as we proceed as such, China-EU relationship will surely take its rightful place in the future, contribute to the common development of China and the EU, and bring a better future to China, to Europe and to the whole world.

Thank you.