

Ambassador Qu's Greeting to the First China-Belgium Innovation Dialogue on the 30th of March

Esteemed Vice-minister Huang Wei, esteemed State Secretary for Science and Technology Zuhail Demir, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

We are very pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this, the First China-Belgium Innovation Dialogue today, which will bear witness to the historic breakthroughs that have been made as a result of cooperation in scientific and technological innovation between China and Belgium!

Belgium signed a scientific and technical cooperation agreement with China as early as 1979, making it one of the first western countries to do so. Belgium was also one of the first countries to be involved in the transfer of technology to China. 30 years ago, Belgians brought the first large international high tech companies, such as Janssen and Beyer, to China, and these are model examples of successful cooperation between foreign businesses and China.

Currently, relations between China and Belgium have never been better. The attitudes in Belgium towards technical cooperation with China are particularly open and pragmatic compared to other major Western countries. In 2014, on the occasion of the state visit of President Xi Jinping to Belgium, a "Joint statement regarding deepening and widening of the friendly cooperative partnership" was issued, which established the grounds for raising the relationship between our two countries to one of a comprehensive friendly partnership, in order to encourage cooperation in science and technology and personnel in a three-pronged advance, in order to expand cross-border investment, encourage cooperation between small and medium size businesses and to enhance cooperation in terms of scientific and technological innovation, biotechnology, modern agriculture and maritime and polar cooperation, encouraging alliances between the companies, educational and research institutions of both countries, while expanding the numbers of exchange students and facilitating the movement of personnel.

In 2015, on the occasion of the state visit of King Philippe of Belgium to China, when he met the King of Belgium, President Xi Jinping stated that China was in the process of implementing a drive to expand and develop innovation, and there were a number of areas where the interests of both our nations coincided, for instance concerning cooperation in the fields of high-end manufacturing, biotechnology, environmental science and technology and sustainable development. In the same year, when Premier Li Keqiang visited the EU, in the course of taking part in 17 meetings with leaders of the European Union, he also found time to visit Belgium. Prime Minister Michel of Belgium stated on the occasion of meeting Li Keqiang that Belgium hoped to become a window for Chinese companies to invest in Europe; he also hoped that it would be possible to expand the number of direct flights between our two countries in order to facilitate the movement of personnel; cooperation in terms of medicine and healthcare, food processing, small and medium sized businesses, science and technology and E-commerce would be enhanced.

In 2016, on the occasion of the visit by Prime Minister Michel of Belgium to China, when President Xi Jinping met with Prime Minister Michel, he specifically emphasized the fact that, by relying on the strengths of both nations, it would be possible to actively develop technology, and new forms of high-added value cooperation were needed, focusing on enhanced, shared innovation, research and

development in the fields of modern manufacturing, new energy sources, the environment and modern services. When Premier Li Keqiang held talks with Prime Minister Michel, he stated that Belgium had always been at the forefront of European nations in terms of the expansion of practical long-term cooperation with China. The Chinese government was willing to explore new possibilities in terms of better reciprocal arrangements, strategic developments and long-term cooperation with Belgium, and would be enhancing cooperation in terms of scientific and technical innovation, modern manufacturing and other such fields and the training of personnel in such fields, while also expanding cooperation in terms of security, thus raising cooperation between us to a whole new level.

In 2016, China's economy gradually stabilised after a period of rapid growth. China's total output reached 74.4 trillion Yuan, with growth of 6.7%, placing it in pole position globally speaking; its contribution to the growth in the global economy was 30%. Economic reforms continue to be extended, with breakthroughs in all the main fields and key sectors of the economy, particular in terms of the reform of supply side structures. Further measures have been implemented to ensure greater openness to foreign investment; construction on the "One Belt One Road" project is proceeding rapidly, while a number of major projects significant in terms of cooperation over international productivity have also been established.

In view of recent changes to the international environment and local development needs, China is continuing to improve and extend its openness to overseas markets, in order to accelerate the creation of a new open style market, thus ensuring that greater openness is achieved on a deeper level. The President of China, Xi Jinping, has indicated that, against the backdrop of economic globalisation, there has been an acceleration in the exchange of innovative resources on a global scale, with greater connectivity between science and technology and the economies of all nations. This means it's no longer possible for any single country to rely on its own capabilities alone to solve issues of innovation. Deeper international exchange and cooperation is required, in order to make full use of global innovation resources, and this will ensure that grass-roots innovation occurs at a much higher standard; this joining of hands with the international scientific and technological community will then ensure that the burden of the global challenges faced will be shared.

In terms of environmental technology, new materials, agricultural science and technology, microelectronics, biotechnology, the chemicals industry and new energy sources etc., Belgium is in possession of some of the most advanced technology on the planet, and it also has some of the best scientific research resources, while its capacity for innovation far outreaches its market demand, while in China the opposite applies, and as a result of this, cooperation in terms of scientific and technical innovation between China and Belgium can be described as a win-win situation, with great potential!

I would therefore like to wish the First China-Belgium Innovation Dialogue the greatest success!