

SECOND CHINA-EUROPA FORUM

**Opening of Plenary Sessions
on October, the 6th, 2007**

**Speech of Mr Jacques Delors
Former President of the European Commission**

-- Integral version --

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me begin by welcoming our friends from the People's Republic of China. I'd also like to commend all the participants of the forum for leading a rich and frank dialogue that addressed a wide range of issues, even those that are contentious.

Two statements come to mind as I open this conference. When China's Prim Minister Mr. Wen Jiabao spoke at Harvard University in 2003 about his conception of the world, he referred to "harmony without sameness". This is quite comparable to the motto that a large majority of Europeans have adopted to define Europe: United in diversity. But what is this globally scrutinized continent called Europe, beyond its economic, commercial, financial and monetary features which I will not speak about today? Europe is at times disconcerting, but in no way an imperialist force. It is not obsessed with power to the extent its critics imply. It is for this reason that Europe is often referred to as a "soft power", a term used by certain American intellectuals with a certain amount of derision towards Europe. Those who built the European dream, its founding fathers, have always sought to better understand the events of yesterday and today. They looked to their past, as did the Chinese. The founding fathers also looked to the dialogue they shared with other peoples and to these peoples' own history. One quotation perfectly sums up this little-known European historical perspective. It was pronounced by Henri Brugmans, who participated at the Hague Congress in 1948 and later become one of the College of Europe's first directors. He said, and I hope this won't be too difficult to translate into Chinese: "Europe is the land of men in a constant struggle with themselves. A land where a certainty must be continuously re-discovered before it becomes truth". Europe is, in some regards, a continent of doubt, and therefore of dialogue and openness to others. This is an asset for today's generation, who has been told that God is dead, that ideology is drawing its last breath, and that man is the master of his own destiny. Such is the foundation of Europe, even though its outward actions may imply the contrary.

Europeans are facing change and globalization with an interest in better understanding the world and avoiding self-satisfaction. They are passionately seeking –and sometimes debating, as we have been told – ways to find balance individuals in society, and a reasonable compromise between tradition and innovation. National experiences enrich this process, which is carried out

via institutions that stabilize and oblige the parties involved to find a solution. This is done in full respect of the law and the rules of the game called Europe. Common principles of law are important, but not the only component. The state of mind of European citizens is essential. Of course we are not on the road towards perfection, but we seek it constantly. When considering the construction of Europe, it is important to remember what Robert Schuman said during its early stages, when six ministers met regularly. Because their meetings went on endlessly (proving that 6 members were enough to cause long meetings, let alone 27), he said: “You are not here to debate endlessly, but to find a solution”. That is the purpose and role of Europe, and the essence of its greatness. This is what Europe seeks through dialogue and openness with China at this second forum. Behind the traits that I mentioned briefly is the principle of learning to live together, in awareness but with perseverance. Learning to live with others is the basis of a good education, as mentioned often by UNESCO, and also a prerequisite for peace and fair and equitable sharing. Fair and equitable sharing involves much more than financial wealth. This is why this weekend’s workshops address all of humankind’s activities, along with a reflection on ourselves and society.

Europeans are not naïve however, despite the somewhat angelic –but quite accurate – vision I have presented of Europe beneath its commercial, economic and geopolitical problems. Europeans are not naïve going into today’s dialogue. They know that man perpetually resuscitates the figure of his alienation, including a certain amount of humility and caution. They know better than to hastily announce a brighter tomorrow. They know that power struggles are a reality and that the strong tend to abuse their privileges. This is why Europeans have adopted rules to live together within their borders, where the smallest countries, the smallest Member States, can have their voices heard. Europeans know, as unfortunately we have seen today, that hate ideologies are alive and well. These are the worst enemy of the desire to live together.

Adopting a certain conception of humankind, we can therefore look to the plurality of our traditions to drive down philosophies that prone death and violence. To do so however, we must look beyond diplomacy, beyond power struggles and endless, complicated economic negotiations. We must truly want to live together.

The organization of this conference will allow us to see what it may mean to combine our energy, determination and awareness in order to better understand one another, to learn to live together, and act together – without sameness and with our diversity – in a world that is looking for meaning and a peaceful, prosperous coexistence.

I wish to thank all those who have contributed their honesty, skills and conviction to workshops which I’m sure will provide invaluable sources of improvement. I look forward to the 3rd China-Europa Forum!