



**The Third Biennial of the China-Europe Forum**  
**Closing speech of the Plenary Session**  
**in Hong Kong Polytechnic University on 14 July 2010**  
*by Gerhard Stahl, CoR Secretary-General*

First, I would like to thank you, in the name of the European participants, for the warm welcome, the excellent organisation and a unique opportunity in the Hong Kong Polytechnic University for an intellectually very stimulating debate.

We have all been able to see how Professor Angelina Yuen-Tsang as Vice-President of the University and Mr Pierre Calame for the Foundation have stimulated the debate. During moments of standstill, Mr Calame went to the various working groups asking for their conclusions. But we know that ultimately the richness of the debate is due to the quality and commitment of all the Chinese and European participants of the EU-China Forum.

Thirty-five years after the establishment of the formal EU-China relations through regular official meetings and summits, the EU-China Forum has shown that there is still a big need to get to know each other better and that the social society has its place in this debate. This comes as no surprise considering the rapidly occurring changes in China, but also in Europe. China started as a development country and we all know how much it has changed.

Europe started as the Economic Community with six member states and is now the European Union with twenty-seven member states and a common currency for most of its members, as well as the biggest internal market in the world.

Hong Kong was the right place to hold the plenary discussion. Twelve years after the handover to mainland China, Hong Kong, with its history and specific rights, is a unique place to discuss EU-China questions. China with two systems in one country and the EU with several member states in one Union have a lot to exchange. As Dr Ho was saying yesterday there is only one regret, that this dialogue of the social society between China and Europe did not start earlier.

You will not expect me to summarise the richness of the debate; Mr Calame already gave a detailed appreciation. I have therefore the modest ambition of sharing some of my impressions during these last few interesting days. I was impressed by the consensus that success in answering major challenges cannot be achieved by national governments alone. We live in a multi-polar world, where networks of economic and social actors take on more and more importance.

As Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions, I was pleased that the Chinese partners underlined the international role of cities and regions. I could see this very well in the workshop in Chengdu on the concept of a world garden city and in the questions raised by the journalists who attended. I was also very impressed by the extremely outward-looking approach of the Chinese partners,

beginning with the experts and ending with the student volunteers who showed a multitude of international skills and language capacities. We could also see this in the speech of Mr Ye Xiaowen, Party Secretary and Vice President, with his reference to the common history of China and Europe. I hope that our Chinese friends have the same feeling about the openness of the European participants.

I would like to refer to three contributions in particular during the discussions.

As a starting point, the comment of Mr Michel Rocard, which in his unique way tried to provoke a serious debate about the future by stating that the crisis has shown that the software of the financial and economic system is broken.

I would also like to refer to a comment made by Mr Pat Cox who underlined that the starting point of Europe as a developed economy is different from China with all its potential and needs for development. Therefore, it is logical that the aspiration of the EU is to have a 2-3% growth rate, whereas China needs one of between 8-9% for a quick development.

But I was most impressed by the presentation by Professor Cheng Siwei who explained in yesterday afternoon's discussion the policy answers which are needed to address the economic, financial, environmental and social crisis. He underlined that we have to find the right balance and compromise between conflicting interests and he did this by addressing the following topics: the balance between savings and consumption, between domestic and foreign demand, between financial innovation and financial supervision, between fictitious and real economies, between economic growth and environmental protection, between development in cities and regions and the global market. This thinking and approach is precisely the EU's way to make policy and to achieve progress; the EU is framed to find compromises.

But to find these balances and compromises we have to build trust both inside society and outside with international partners. This need for trust has already been underlined by several speakers today. The workshops have contributed to building trust by addressing in an open way the options and the consequences of concrete policy actions and proposals.

Conflictual issues like democracy, freedom of expression, the role of the press, the place of women, poverty and exclusion, the protection of property rights, access to the market, and the tension between rural areas and the cities have been openly addressed. The debate has also helped to better understand one's own situation. To give you only one example, the discussion about democracy allowed some Europeans to discover that this is not only a Chinese discussion, but also very much an open European question. The EU with its successive Treaty changes and with its difficulty to accept finally majority voting in the EU for most of the policy areas is in constant search of the appropriate democratic balance for governing 500 million citizens.

We have heard today an extremely ambitious list of actions which need a follow-up. Very practical questions like an exchange of views amongst experts, but also more ambitious projects like exchanges of civil servants or even the change of international trade rules are addressed.

I was pleased that Professor Angelina Yuen-Tsang already indicated this morning that the Chinese partners see the need for continuity and follow-up. I can confirm that European cities and regions will also continue to support the adventure of the EU-China Forum.

Let me close with a picture which one Chinese speaker used in one of the workshops. We have discovered one vision for one world which allows a lot of different individual dreams. The Chinese and European historical experience has told us that dreams will only become reality through hard work. Therefore we have to continue working hard for a follow-up to the China-Europe Forum ideas.