



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Closing Speech – EU China Urbanisation Forum

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Great Hall of the People/Beijing
21 November 2013

It's been a great pleasure for me to attend this, the second, EU/China Urbanisation Forum.

Today hundreds of EU and Chinese experts have discussed their ideas about urbanisation and new connections have been made and new ideas created. All focussed on improving the quality of life in urban areas for the long term.

Cities are and always will be places of exchange: exchange of goods and ideas. They are places where people can live together and use resources efficiently.

Cities will be the drivers of economic growth in the 21st Century – but there is a risk that the quality of life in cities deteriorates making them unattractive, inefficient and socially divisive.

There are many similarities and many differences in urbanisation in China and Europe.

We have common concerns about oil demand, waste management and pollution. Urban congestion holds back the smooth movement of people and goods. We are still battling congestion today, especially in cities. Each year it costs us nearly 100 billion euros!

We can gain a lot by working on policy and technological solutions to these problems together.

In Europe we have good, and some bad, experiences of urban development to share. I know this not only from my experience as a European Commissioner – but from my time as the Prime Minister of my country – Estonia.

A key lesson from our experience is that successful, sustainable and beautiful cities don't happen by accident. YOU GET WHAT YOU PLAN for. If you plan for attractive, clean, efficient socially integrated cities – that is what you get.

This is easy to say – but difficult to do.

Without consistent, long term attention and effort – you will get the kind of chaotic and inefficient cities we see in some other countries.

Throughout the 28 European Union Member States we have implemented innovation-conducive policies through open, transparent and non-discriminatory trade policies creating a level playing for economic operators regardless of their nationality – China has much to gain from implementing such an approach which stimulates innovation and reduces costs.

National leaders often neglect urban issues – to ensure the success of our cities **Chinese and European leaders must provide the necessary policy direction, guidelines, rules and resources.** Only then can local Mayors deliver.

It's principally the job of city governments to guide urban development according to local needs and circumstances. But city governments can't do it alone – they need to co-operate. Co-operate with national government, with the private sector, with research institutions and importantly with their citizens.

New mobile technologies are opening new ways for cities and citizens to interact. They offer new ways for citizens to be informed about what is happening in their city, and new ways to influence behaviour on new ideas. While these rapid changes present a lot of challenges I'm convinced that this is a positive trend - citizen's views and concerns must be taken into account.

Europe has great urban expertise and equipment – China has the world's largest 'urban' market. I am convinced that this EU China co-operation on urbanisations is a win-win solution for our citizens and companies.

But we must also remember that the impact of our urbanisation efforts goes beyond European and Chinese domestic interests.

We need to ensure the sustainable development of our cities not only for our citizens and our economies but because our cities have a global impact on environment, resources and greenhouse gas emissions – with significant geo-political consequences.

Because of its rapid urbanisation and scale China has a special responsibility but also a unique opportunity – if China chooses the right path it can be a global leader in urbanisation and a model for rapidly urbanising countries throughout the world.

The success of the EU/China Urban Partnership depends on YOU.

By combining the best of our experiences Europe and China can improve the lives of hundreds of millions of our citizens – and have a positive impact on the rest of the world.

Together China and Europe can define the future of global urbanisation, one of the most important issues of the 21st Century.

On behalf of all the European participants here today I'd like to thank the Government of China, in particular the National Development and Reform Commission, for organising this event and hosting us here in this impressive venue.

In closing this Urban Forum I call on you all here to make a special effort to 'bridge the gap' between Europe and China – so that we can avoid the problems of chaotic, un-managed urbanization and build health, safe and prosperous cities and through our work together lead the way to sustainable urbanisation throughout the world.

We look forward to hosting next year's EU/China Urban Forum in Europe and to see the first results of the agreements signed here today by a number of pioneering cities, organisations and regions, and to further discuss the future of urbanisation.

Thank you.