



Closing speech of the 17th China-EU Round Table meeting

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Speaker

Organisation: EESC

Dear Vice-chairman Zhou,

Dear Members, Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you and congratulations on a successful conclusion of this 17th meeting of the EU-China Round Table.

We have just signed a joint statement that puts in black and white our areas of agreement and clear recommendations on some very crucial topics for the future of our societies.

With today's joint statement, we send a powerful signal and a concrete messages to the political authorities on both sides: after all, if actors as diverse and varied as we are, from both Chinese and European civil society, manage to speak with one voice, then our politicians have to take note.

Allow me to highlight a few points in our joint statement which I believe are especially important.

With regard to the discussions on **big data**, we have identified a clear need to balance the enormous advantages of Big Data for society with equally well-identified risks that the so-called 4th revolution can bring.

We agree that this matter should be addressed at the global level and that big data is of such importance that it justifies the normative development of privacy regulation, as it is already emerging in international cooperation.

As to the area of the 2030 Agenda on **sustainable development** and the Paris Agreement on **climate change**, I appreciate that these engagements are key for our future and that they lead to a broader, more participative and consultative way of working together globally.

I am particularly glad that the Round Table agrees that the People's Republic of China and the EU must jointly assume global leadership in ensuring that both the SDGs and the Paris Agreement remain top priorities. Let's make sure that we do not lose momentum, given the strong interest in these agreements shown by other major and growing economies.

In addition to that, I would like to briefly refer to a particularly inspiring part of "China's Policy paper on the European Union", you adopted last December 2018, with which I fully agree, that in the perspective of social and people to people cooperation we should "*continue to conduct constructive exchanges on human rights on the basis of equality and mutual respect in the hope that these exchanges play a positive role in promoting China-EU relations and common progress on human rights*".

Again, as diverse and different as we may be, as civil society representatives acting jointly, we want to reinstate our wish to have an active and lasting influence on policy decisions, based on our knowledge and commitment to the areas we discussed. We are convinced that our efforts will help our political authorities take well-informed decisions.

But I do not wish to leave it at that. I am deeply convinced that we have a role to play in making sure these results are translated into actions taken by our political authorities, and I am glad we are committing today to monitoring this process in a democratic and comprehensive manner.

Let me quote Matteo Ricci, who is known in China as Li-Ma-tou, who said that "The whole point of writing something down is that your voice will then carry for thousands of miles, whereas in direct conversation it fades at a hundred paces".

Besides the conclusions and concrete recommendations I referred to and which are included in our Joint Statement, I also wish to note that the frank and constructive discussions we had – both during the official discussions and in the margins – have allowed us to further deepen our relations, mutual understanding and friendship.

Therefore, I would like to express my appreciation for your efforts and contributions which have helped inform our debates and given them depth and substance, and for the spirit of trust and confidence in which

we have all worked together.

Lastly, a warm personal thank you to Chairman Du, for the cordial and informative exchanges we had during our bilateral meeting earlier this morning. I understand your time as Chairman of the China ESC comes to an end later this month – allow me to thank you for your inspiring and fruitful cooperation during these last few years, it has been a great pleasure to work with you.

As President of the EESC I pay tribute to the spirit of excellent cooperation for which you were responsible during your term.

Of course we are not quite finished yet. We will all meet again tomorrow morning for the very interesting and timely tripartite seminar on the Urban Culture.

We will be happy to welcome the China ESC's delegation to Europe, in Germany, next year for the 18th meeting of the EU-China Civil Society Round Table, and I thank you all for your kind attention.