



“The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe”

Words of Welcome at the opening of the conference

by

Nikolaus W. Schües

*Conference Chairman and
Former President of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce*

Hamburg Chamber of Commerce

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Your Excellency Prof. Xu Kuangdi,
First Mayor von Beust,
Mr. Barón Crespo,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps,
dear speakers of this conference,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In my capacity as Conference Chairman, I should also like to extend a cordial welcome to you on the occasion of the opening session of the “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” 2006.

Yesterday evening we witnessed a Grand Opening Dinner with highly interesting speakers. I am of the opinion that a main purpose of our Summit is that we understand each others positions! Now we start our summit working sessions with important topics.

The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe, or red C meets blue E, wants to build bridges of understanding and deepen business relationships. Shanghai and Hamburg are partner cities and have similarities as port cities. But China is more than Shanghai and Europe is more than Hamburg.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the last two decades, the EU-China relations have gradually developed into a mature strategic partnership. During this period, both the European Union and China have made significant progress towards and with each other in diverse economic fields.

From the entrepreneurial point of view – and we are talking business today! - this partnership should be based on free trade and open markets, on fair

transfer of technology and know-how as well as on cooperation in scientific and academic research.

This form of cooperation meets China's current strategic needs, and it is also good for the European Union that is constantly looking for new markets and partners.

We are interested in subjects touching the future development of the Yuan; how can international imbalances be reduced; not only focus on credit growth and exchange rates is important, but also fiscal policy and corporate profits.

It will be increasingly important to look at an aging population both in China and in the EU and its desire for protection by secure pension funds. Spending on education and on health is required as well as investments on roads, rail, airports, seaports. Prices on energy, water, land and other inputs into manufacturing – and not to forget in ways that would reduce rather than encourage pollution – are important factors. Wages develop upwards – we all know that – shifts away from goods to services production tends to cause imports to rise faster than exports and thus influence trade balances.

The Sino-European partnership is already a reality - an economic and political success.

Our "Hamburg Summit" is an outstanding opportunity to reflect on what has been accomplished and what still remains to be done in order to draw lessons for the future.

The focus should be on the following topics:

- China's economic growth needs a reliable and well functioning distribution network to support and balance regional development. European investors and know-how can play a decisive role in improving the logistic infrastructure in the People's Republic. We will discuss this topic in our panels.

- But there is more: environmental problems, energy supply and still existing trade barriers are further issues to which we will come back at the working panels.
- Other points to discuss are market access in China and Europe, legal security and the protection of intellectual property rights.

One thing is clear:

Europe and China as partners share a common responsibility on all these global matters and should therefore work hand in hand to propose possible scenarios and feasible solutions.

Being aware of the achievements of the first “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” two years ago, I am confident that this conference will become the platform for an open and equivalent exchange of ideas and thus be another milestone for further developing a solid partnership between Europe and China.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is now time to proceed with our busy working schedule.

I wish you a pleasant time here in Hamburg with a lot of new insights, good contacts and fruitful talks.

I have the pleasure now to give the floor to our next speaker, the First Mayor and President of the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Mr. Ole von Beust.