



“The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe”

Closing Remarks

by

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12 September 2008



Check against delivery!

President Simon,
dear Prof. Phelps,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The third „Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe“ has come to an end.

I first of all like to thank all speakers for their inspiring contributions referring to the China – Europe Agenda.

Dear speakers, thank you very much for sharing your insights with us!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we started to plan this conference right after the end of the last “Hamburg Summit” in 2006, our aim for the third “Hamburg Summit” was to strengthen the European and international attendance.

We wanted the “Summit” to live up to its name: “China meets Europe”!

Looking back to the last three days, we can definitely say that we reached our aim: Approximately 350 decision makers from more than 15 countries have gathered in our Chamber of Commerce to discuss a variety of current political and economic issues.

But the path to this success has not always been an easy one:

Almost exactly one year ago, as you all might remember, the German-Chinese relations were abruptly deranged.

The political resentments turned into an ice age which lasted almost half a year.

I can now confess to you that this period gave us many sleepless nights.

A lot of worrying questions came to our minds:

- Will it be possible to organize a next “Hamburg Summit”?
- In 2006, the “Hamburg Summit” was a gathering among friends.
Who will be the Chinese guest of honor for the next “Summit”?
- Will anybody from China come to Hamburg at all?

At that time, there was no evidence when and how the next high-ranking meeting between China and Germany would happen.

But even in these difficult times, we at the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce always believed in the strength of dialogue.

Our Hamburg Chamber of Commerce has always stood up for the idea that any kind of dialogue is better than isolation.

And, luckily enough, we were right!

Now, standing here after three days of a successful conference, I am happy and proud that the third “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” was the occasion for the first visit of a Chinese government member in Germany after the political turbulences.

Thus, our “Summit” was an important milestone on the way to an improvement of the Sino – European relations.

And, in this regard, the third “Hamburg Summit” is of even greater importance for the political and economic ties between China and Europe.

I can assure you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that – after all those sleepless nights - this is more than we ever hoped for!

Ladies and Gentlemen.

What did we learn from this year’s conference talks?

Let me point out the major results for you:

First:

China is on its way to take over global responsibility, and the European Union should welcome and support this development.

Because only a strong China can assure a strong world economy and lead to a peaceful and stable world nation.

No one can deny China’s growing influence.

Especially in times of political and economic difficulties it is important that the European Union should view the People’s Republic as a strategic partner and give impulses in order to forge a beneficial relationship of equals.

And we should jointly do our utmost to promote multilateral cooperation leading to a fair, just, and rule-based international system.

In this respect, new WTO talks should be started as soon as possible.

Second:

The dramatic challenges of climate change and environmental pollution in China can only be dealt with in form of a joint Sino – European initiative.

Challenges such as climate change and environmental problems can surely not be solved during two days, but the way to solve them can be paved.

We have discussed China's way to combat the challenges and European ways to support these approaches.

Fortunately, the awareness in China has risen and the manner how we discuss these challenges has changed.

Blaming each other does not bring any progress.

On the contrary: A fair dialogue on an eye-to-eye level is necessary to find solutions suitable for all of us.

Also in the field of environmental protection, China has transformed into a strong and equal player.

Third:

For the time being, there is regrettably no purely European way of doing business with China and of jointly representing our interests vis-à-vis the central government in Beijing.

National interests still are predominant.

This certainly has to change.

The European Union should not only appoint such a European way for its inner coordination but also for its exterior perception.

How can we be seen and treated as a Union if we do not behave as one?

Fourth:

China is definitely a must for most European companies.

For some firms facing growing competition from China, it is a question of survival to arrange partnerships with Chinese firms.

The People's Republic is constantly opening up its markets for foreign businesses, and companies in Europe, the US and from all other parts of the world can benefit from that.

The process of opening up, which is a direct result of China's accession to the WTO, holds new opportunities in store.

They should not be missed!

Fifth:

The European Union should support the Chinese government in its endeavors to reform the economy and establish a stable society.

All speakers and panelists of “The Hamburg Summit” unanimously pointed out that there still is an enormous need for reforms in the People’s Republic:

The banking system is far from corresponding to international standards, a stable social security system has to be established as soon as possible, the social gap between the rich provinces in the South-Eastern part of the country and the Western provinces still tends to grow, the environmental problems and infrastructural inefficiencies have to be abolished, legal security should be ensured and finally the demand for a more open society must no longer be neglected.

So, indeed, there are still “challenges ahead”, as Mr Rocard has pointed out.

But as long as we keep on fostering the dialogue, I am confident that we will always find ways to solve upcoming problems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The European Union has a lot of experiences to share with China, for example in establishing a sustainable social welfare system and in creating a civil society.

It is exactly the aim of “The Hamburg Summit” to offer a forum for China and Europe in order to exchange ideas and experiences for the benefit of both sides in the spirit of our joint power of partnership.

“China and Europe: The Importance of Being Partners”, this I was the title of Lord Heseltine’s speech at our dinner event at the Atlantic Hotel.

And, in my opinion, this exactly represents the spirit of our conference!

In this sense, having the importance of being partners in mind, I should like to sincerely thank our co-host, the China Federation of Industrial Economics under the lead of Madame Xie Qihua.

Without your support, we could have never entered the stage together!

Most cordial thanks also go to all our partners and sponsors, especially to our Exclusive Sponsor, the HSH Nordbank.

Without you, we would not have been able to organize this conference!

Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear speakers,
dear delegates,

Thank you very much for participating in the third “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe”
and for making it a success.

I wish you all a safe journey home – or as the Chinese would say:

Yi lu ping an!

But for now, I like to invite you for lunch and for further networking talks downstairs.