



**“The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe”**

Words of Welcome at the official opening of the conference

by

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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,

I would like to extend a very cordial welcome to all of you on the occasion of the official opening of “The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” 2006 here at the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce.

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to greet such a highly distinguished group of international corporate, political, academic and media leaders from more than ten different countries.

Furthermore, I extend my sincere gratitude and my appreciation to our close cooperation partner, the China Federation of Industrial Economics, represented by the Honourable Prof. Xu Kuangdi and his delegation.

Dear Prof. Xu, thank you very much for coming to Hamburg and for supporting “The Hamburg Summit” in such an impressive manner!

Your contribution is a great honor for us.

And I should also like to thank the delegation from our sister city Shanghai for being with us today and for having presented to us wonderful fireworks yesterday night.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two years ago, we set up the first “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” hoping that it would become the premier economic gathering, aiming to strengthen the already prospering business relations between Europe and China.

Our hopes were no illusions - today we continue this series.

The significant achievements we accomplished in 2004 gave a decisive impulse to continue the entrepreneurial dialogue in the form of a high-ranking conference, establishing a solid platform on which the Sino-European economic partnership can continue to prosper.

This year, we were honored by the visit of His Excellency the Prime Minister of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Wen Jiabao, to yesterday’s opening dinner. The Prime Minister’s presence indicates how important the Summit is for the Chinese-European economic relation, and at the same time it underlines Hamburg’s role as the leading competence center for Sino-European trade.

Our city is widely perceived as the most important center for China-related business all over Europe, with more than 400 local Chinese firms.

An increasing number of large Chinese companies have established their headquarters in Hamburg. For them and for thousands of companies in China, our city is the preferred gateway to the European market.

Hamburg plays a central role in the shipping routes between China on the one hand and Northern, Central and Eastern Europe on the other hand, serving as the most important transit and distribution hub.

The volume of Hamburg’s container traffic with the People’s Republic of China has been increasing by almost 30 % annually in the last years, while the foreign trade between Hamburg and China grew by 50 % in comparison to the year 2001.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I do not only welcome you to the second “Hamburg Summit”, I am also very satisfied to let you know that we passed another milestone in the development of Hamburg as an important container hub in Europe:

The Hamburg Senate yesterday decided to start the plan approval procedure to dredge the river Elbe and thus will secure the port’s accessibility for the very big container vessels.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, is in the interest to all of us.

Considering the number of containers passing through the port of Hamburg, our city today is second in Europe, closely following Rotterdam.

The dredging of the river Elbe now offers the unique opportunity for Hamburg to become Europe’s premier container hub!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a stable, long lasting and productive cooperation that is beneficial for all partners: Hamburg, Germany and Europe profit enormously from China’s economic boom.

The People’s Republic can rely on our firms’ understanding of Chinese culture and business customs, as well as on our long tradition in the service, logistical and technological sectors.

Our Chamber of Commerce itself, with its more than 130.000 member companies, is one of the most influential Chambers in Europe, accounting an outstanding expertise in all China-related questions.

Because of the close contacts between Hamburg and China, it is a pleasure as well as a special responsibility for us to host this conference.

The “Hamburg Summit”, Ladies and Gentlemen, should give room for discussion about all challenges which may still hinder our bilateral cooperation.

Among these, I would like to mention the following:

- The need for improving market access of foreign companies to China as well as to Europe;
- The need to solve the environmental problems in China;
- The establishment of well-functioning and reliable logistics and banking sectors, and, last but not least,
- The protection of intellectual property rights.

These are fundamental prerequisites for a prospering trade and commercial partnership, based on the commitment to international standards and rules. During its accession to the WTO, China has made considerable efforts to integrate itself into world trade as a fair partner, and thus has progressively moved closer to Europe.

For the EU, it is necessary to accept China as an equal trading partner and to accept fair competition from Chinese companies.

Further steps in this direction still have to be done.

I am confident that feasible and long-lasting solutions can only be reached by an open dialogue on these issues.

For this purpose, the “Hamburg Summit” is the perfect platform!

I am confident that this meeting will accomplish its mission thanks to the knowledge and the spirit of cooperation of all speakers and participants.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by thanking Prof. Xu Kuangdi and the China Federation of Industrial Economics for their commitment to make the second “Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe” a success.

Without you, dear partners from the CFIE, the “Summit” would not be what it is today!

Furthermore, I should also like to thank our other partners and sponsors, especially the HSH Nordbank as our Exclusive Sponsor and Montblanc as our Platinum Sponsor, for their strong and efficient support.

Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, I have the pleasure to let you know that I am not the only one who would like to welcome you.

Let me introduce to you our Conference Chairman Mr. Nikolaus W. Schües, Vice President and former President of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, shipowner, admirer, connoisseur and business partner of China.

Mr. Schües, the floor is yours.