



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

Words of Welcome

by

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*- Check Against Delivery -*

Hamburg Chamber of Commerce

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**Hamburg**  
Chamber of Commerce

Thank you, Mr. Melsheimer,  
President of the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce,  
Honorable Minister Wan Gang,  
Federal Minister Schavan,  
Vice President Prof Dr. Papastamkos,  
Excellencies,  
Members of the Consular Corps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Two young people fall in love. He is German, she is Chinese. Their honeymoon takes them from Shanghai to Hamburg on a motor-bike. That is just one little example of the stories that are emerging more and more often in the course of globalization.

The other aspect is that with years of two-digit growth in foreign trade, the People's Republic of China has become one of Germany's most important trading partners. For the port of Hamburg, China holds a leading position as its most important partner in container traffic.

And another spotlight from recent weeks: the 18<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress of the People's Republic of China found its way into the headlines of our media as never before. That goes to show that China matters, that China is important – in Hamburg, in Europe, and in the rest of the world.

It's a great pleasure and honour to me to welcome you all to the fifth "Hamburg Summit" this evening. I especially wish to welcome Mr Wan Gang, Minister of Science and Technology of the People's Republic of China. I'm certain that this meeting and the many personal discussions will help to make our relations closer still.

The Hamburg Summit is the climax of the events on the subject of China in Hamburg, in Germany and in Europe. It is a joint effort of the Chamber of Commerce and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, whose representatives I also welcome most warmly.

I especially wish to thank our former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, for it's to his idea that this international meeting is largely due. The visit to the Hamburg Summit by Premier Wen Jiabao in 2006 was a great honour for our city.

Germany and China, Hamburg and China: that is a relationship that rests on numerous pillars – personal, economic, political and cultural. And that is just what makes it so stable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a Chinese proverb that "if the roots are deep, the branches thrive". The roots that join Hamburg with China are deep, reaching back into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but not only that:

The latest branch developed on 12<sup>th</sup> October, when Germany's fifth consulate-general in China opened in Shenyang under Jens-Peter Voss from Hamburg.

Personal contacts are extremely important too. In recent years the number of days spent by Chinese guests in Hamburg has risen by nearly 40 percent.

For two months we have had a German-Chinese nursery school in Hamburg; at five of Hamburg's grammar schools the students have the option of learning Chinese; and since 2002, one grammar school has had a bilingual German-Chinese stream. That is unique in Germany.

And then there are the many cultural links. The "China Time" series of events was held for the fourth time this year, and as usual its motto was "China close up". This year the Music Festival of our neighbouring Land Schleswig-Holstein chose the music of the People's Republic of China as its national theme for the first time.

With 440 Chinese companies operating from Hamburg, the Free and Hanseatic City is the main centre for Chinese enterprises on the European Continent. If they form the basis of our relationship, its heart is the sister city arrangement that has linked us with Shanghai since 1986.

But the lifeline of our relations is the port. 33 percent of all containers handled in the port of Hamburg come from China or have China as their destination. At present there are over 20 regular services linking Hamburg with Chinese ports.

Although container handling for imports and exports decreased slightly in the first half of the year – from 1.4 to 1.3 million TEUs – the decline in trade with Asia in the first three quarters of 2012 was due primarily to a difficult economic environment in Europe and a slowing of foreign trade in China.

So you might say the port of Hamburg is a kind of seismograph for economic development in China and in Europe.

But the latest figures also show that China is on its way up again. And I'm confident that we shall be able to say that of Europe too. Europe has enormous economic power, and we shall be able to master this crisis.

When I visited the People's Republic of China almost exactly a year ago there were two things that impressed me most: the growth of your economy and the growth of your cities. I also had the opportunity of meeting Vice-Premier Zhang Dejiang, who has now been appointed Party Chief of Chongqing. He took part in the Hamburg Summit four years ago.

Vice-Premier Zhang Dejiang illuminated the impressive figures for economic development, but he also spoke of the concern his country felt about the crisis in the EU. We know that stable development in the EU is important for the People's Republic of China too. That will be one of the topics of this conference.

And concerning the incredible growth of China's cities that impressed me so much when I visited them: how to achieve this growth and at the same time conserve resources is also one of the topics of this conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Contacts have to be cultivated. That can't be done in abstract terms. You have to go and talk to each other. Hamburg will be pleased to act as a partner – as a service centre, and as a location for green technologies, especially wind power and hydrogen technology.

The Hamburg Summit will prove once again that our Free and Hanseatic City is a centre of excellence for German-Chinese relations. I wish you and us interesting and fruitful discussions.