



# FU YING

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China

## Take China as Your Partner

Mme. Amina Benkhadra

Mr. Thierry de Montbrial,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's an honor and pleasure for me speak at this occasion.

I want to thank Thierry who came all the way to China in summer, to convince me with a sincere invitation.

Arriving today, I found there can't be a better choice of venue for the World Policy Conference than this mesmerizing city of Marrakech.

Earlier in the year, when China's second quarter GDP figure came out, the media started calling China the No.2 economy in the world, namely E2.

Though quarterly GDP normally is not a sufficient basis for economic analysis, it did not stop many from talking about a rising China and its significance to the world. The expectation is also high.

Then, what's the view of the Chinese people? The *Global Times*, a popular newspaper in China, had a survey and found that 78% of those who responded insisted that China was still a developing country.

More interestingly, when asked about E2, many Chinese thought it was a plot to big up China.

If you were a Chinese and you follow the views and comments about China, especially in the developed world, you would likely be totally confused. Comments and expectations swing from one extreme end to the other, back and forth.

One day China is expected to save the world, the next China is said to have caused all the troubles.

Some countries can't stop overspending, and then the Chinese people are blamed for having the "bad habit" of saving.

One day China is a rising power, and the next day China becomes a paper dragon on the verge of breaking apart.



I was in Rome shopping and was told that the Chinese tourists had pushed up the prices of luxury goods. Indeed, in today's world, whatever China buys, the price goes up and whatever China sells, the price comes down.

On the airplane coming here, I was reading a news story about many newspapers carrying articles about how menacing China is, many of them American newspapers.

To quote from the *New York Times*, China has become the scapegoat for all problems on earth.

Yes, China must have been a very convenient scapegoat. Because, in spite of the sacred principle of freedom of speech, there is little interest among the media in those countries in informing their public the views from in China. The discussions among the Chinese public seldom find their way to the western public.

So, many politicians in the west may develop just about any view about China without the need to be judged by a well-informed public, even less the judgment of the Chinese public.

Well, this may not be the kind of dinner speech you would expect with good food and nice wine. But I made changes to my nicer speech on the plane, because I want to share with you my concern of the current atmosphere between China and the west almost reminiscent of the Cold War.

I feel probably the deficit in understanding is the key issue at this moment. So I would like to talk about two points that I think are essential to understanding China.

First and most importantly, one should always keep in mind the people dimension.

China is not just a symbol, or a GDP figure. It is a country that provides for 1.3 billion people, with 140 million students in schools and universities, over 20 million new job seekers every year including 6 million college graduates. The disabled community is as big as over 80 million people. It is quickly urbanizing and yet half the population is still rural.

Maybe in other countries where per capita income is 10 times or more than in China, such concerns as medical care and education are no longer in the sight of human right activists, but in China, to provide for many of the basic needs are still major human right concern.

Measures to counter the climate change also have a human dimension. People living in poor regions need to secure their right to proper indoor-heating. Grandmas in urban communities are debating about a fairer way to pay electricity bills. The migrant laborers demand better pay and better working conditions. Workers laid-off when factories close due to poor energy efficiency need to be re-employed. For China, all these rank high on the government's agenda to address human right concerns.

Many in the west tend to underestimate the human rights achievement in China, probably because they have forgotten the human rights they were fighting for in the days of David Copperfield.

In a developing country like China, nothing is more important and more relevant than to improve the living and working conditions of its 1.3 billion people. We are still lagging behind the people's needs. To understand China, one should not lose sight of such reality.

The second point about understanding China is the need to put China's reform in the right perspective. When having interview with *Die Zeit* in Berlin, I was asked why "Economically China is a completely different country, but politically it is still the same?" This view came up in many of the recent statements in the west. I will not be surprised if it is shared in this room as well.

But may I invite you to take a step back and reflect: what is the purpose of the political system in your own society and that of the governments, and the political parties?



In my years in Australia and UK, I observed how the government and political parties tried hard to respond to people.

The criteria for a good political system are more or less the same: Is it providing stability in the society? Is it making people's lives better? Is it capable of solving the social problems that come along with growth?

That has also been the driving force for our comprehensive reform over three decades.

I still remember the political debate in Chinese newspapers three decades ago and the reform steps that followed, including delegating power to lower levels and developing a sound system of the rule of law. Of the 233 laws now in effect in China, over 200 were made or amended in the last 3 decades. The reform list can be long and we have come a long way. But if people are merely looking for a shadow Westminster or Capitol Hill in China, they are naturally disappointed.

China, with a rich political and cultural heritage over the millennia, should be trusted to advance its own political infrastructure based on its social realities, through consistent reforms, and at the same time, drawing from the successful experiences around the world, not the least from the west. We are very well aware that our development is by no means perfect. We do feel the pinch of urgency for furthering all around reform.

China now is a very lively society. There are 400 million internet users, the largest in the world, including 200 million bloggers. At least 4 million new blog posts or comments appear every single day, many of them making criticisms and suggestions for reform, in addition to the 900 newspapers and 2,000 magazines which often focus on policy issues. China's reform is not short of healthy debates. There is every reason to believe that our country will continue to progress into an even better society.

Having said all that, China's reform is incremental and it has to take place on the basis of constant consensus building and political stability.

I have personal experience of the fiasco of the Cultural Revolution and a clear memory of the chaos of a dozen student teams competing for power just in my school. I taught my young brother to read as there was to school for him to go to. Life was very difficult back then. The political anarchy brought the economy to the verge of bankruptcy.

Having learned the lesson the hard way, we firmly believe that only by maintaining stability and developing the rule of law can our people have a chance to translate their dreams into reality and can our country stand in dignity.

Let me use a metaphor with numbers. Be it a hundred, a million or a billion, stability is the "1" that leads them all. Development is like the zeros that follow. Without the "1", the rest will all be reduced to zero.

Now, let me move a bit closer to the subject of this conference.

Then, what does a fast growing China mean to the world? Is the power gravity moving from the west to the east? Is China going to replace the current superpower?

Honestly, if you ask an ordinary Chinese the superpower question, he'd likely to get very puzzled. Many would think you are joking.

But there is no denial that the world is changing. The question is: in what direction?

We in China do not see it changing along the old path of power shifts. The changes, from our point of view, are not in a simple relationship of one center replacing another. Instead, the world is in a process of diffusion. Almost everything, technology, capital, information, consumption, in every aspect of human life, you see this diffusion.

Chinese children are playing much the same computer games as their contemporaries in Europe.



When accompanying EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Lady Ashton to a poor village in China's Guizhou province, I was very touched by the pupils who were reading a beautiful prose. Modern education brought them on a par with students in Shanghai and Beijing.

When touring Kenya, I was amazed at the sharp views of a bus driver who was obviously well-informed of world affairs by local newspapers.

Now that we are in a world village, what should be the lubricants for progress?

In the Chinese value heritage, the top word is REN. It is a very simple Chinese character meaning two persons. It is believed in China that good relationship between two persons, with your boss, the minister, a friend or your spouse, forms the basic building block of a good society. In a good relationship, respect and tolerance are indispensable. It's probably true in the international community.

In the 21 century the consensus is growing about the world not to be torn apart again by ideological, racial or any other differences. War is no longer accepted, be it cold, hot or warm.

Should we succeed in building a partnership based on mutual respect and tolerance in meeting common challenges, we may be able to turn the 21 century into one to be remembered as a century of cooperation and partnership, which will be the first in the human history.

China is committed to such a partnership.

I congratulate this conference for contributing to global partnership. I look forward to hearing and learning from the opinions of the other participants.

With that note, I wish the conference a fruitful success.

Thank you et Merci beaucoup.