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**GLOBAL CHANGES AND THEIR MULTIPLE EFFECTS: EUROPEAN UNION AND CHINA AS ACTORS AND OBJECTS OF CHANGE**

**Speech by Dr. Danilo Türk, Former President of the Republic of Slovenia  
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Distinguished professors,

Dear students,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great privilege to have the opportunity to speak at the prestigious Renmin University.

I was asked to speak on global changes - those that affect Europe and China and make them both objects and actors of change. This is a theme much discussed at present and one that requires ambition for change. And we meet in a place which is highly appropriate for ambitious thinking.

We gather in Beijing, the capital of China and at a university where new ideas of global importance are being generated. And we are discussing the global changes that create the environment in which we shall live today and tomorrow. In other words, we are both generators and objects of global change.

My country, Slovenia is part of the European Union, the Union which, in turn, represents an important part of the global change. When we look back to the time of a generation ago and think about changes that have happened in the intervening period we can clearly see China and European Union as the two areas of the world where the change was very dramatic, indeed.

Growth and development in China in the past quarter of century has been unprecedented. The world is profoundly impressed - not only by the economic and technological development - but also by the social transformation of China. This transformation has helped hundreds of millions of people to lift themselves from poverty. The rate of urbanization is breathtaking and it continues. The improvement of human condition of these proportions stands above comparison with any of the preceding examples of progress - in any part of the world.

At about the same time, during the past two and a half decades, the European Union expanded geographically as well in terms of its own economic integration. The economic and political success of enlargement of the European Union - which has more than doubled its membership since the beginning of the great changes of our era - has created a new situation in Europe. The great expansion was reflected in remarkable growth throughout this era and in many new opportunities for further development. The area of Central and Eastern Europe has been an important beneficiary this progress. At the same time, the original members of the European Union benefited from enlargement as well - both in economic terms and in terms of security.

While it is true that the recent global financial and economic crisis brought new challenges for the European Union and has slowed down the rapid growth in China it also produced good reasons to reflect on our past experience - on our strengths and weaknesses and, above all, on our mutual interdependence. It is through reflection on our interdependence that we shall be able to plan our future development in a meaningful way and with success. Europe and China are both generators and objects of change and have to understand their shared destiny well.

Therefore, allow me first, a very brief reflection on differences and similarities in the long history of China and Europe and a few thoughts on the lessons learned from history.

Both Europe and China are sometimes described with the adverb “old”. With its five thousand years of continuous existence the Chinese civilization is the oldest in the world. It has also consolidated within a single political and economic system a long time ago, much before the more recent term “state sovereignty” came into being.

Let me stop here for a while. What does sovereignty mean today? For China it certainly means the fundamental organizational principle of statehood and the entire system of international relations. A state of 1,3 billion citizens and the second largest economy in the world is giving the notion of state sovereignty an extremely important basis and relevance for the entire world.

Europe, on the other hand had a different line of its long history. Although the largest part of the European space lived within a single political system in antiquity - the height of the Roman Empire coincided with the time of flourishing of China under Han Dynasty - most of European history has been characterized by struggle that had been constantly changing the political landscape. In Europe, the emergence of sovereign states is a more recent historical phenomenon, prevalent since the peace of Westphalia of 1648. In my opinion, sovereignty is still fundamental. The contemporary forms of international organization and integration in Europe are intense but have not withered away its Westphalian foundations. At present we see some dramatic aspects of this reality - the possibility of Greece exist from the Eurozone and the discussion on the British conditions for remaining an EU member state.

All the historically inherited features must be borne in mind in all the discussions about the framework of cooperation between Europe and China today and in the future. State sovereignty remains at the centre. And differences in “constitution” of European Union and China will continue to be an important factor.

The interaction of Europe and China has known periods of great fascination and hope as well as mutual advantage. However, following the industrial revolution in Europe there were periods inequality, use of force and exploitation. Bitter memories from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries should serve as a reminder that violence, inequality and discrimination must never again characterize the relations between our civilizations.

Moreover, we must be able to see, in our history, the examples of our interdependence and joint effort. Last year Europe commemorated the centennial anniversary of the beginning of World War I, a cataclysmic and tragic event that has given rise to many subsequent tragedies of the twentieth century. In fact, many moral deviations - such as the cynical disrespect for human life, totalitarianism, the culture of death and others - have their roots in the World War I and its immediate consequences.

Last year we have recalled many painful experiences of that terrible war, some of them long neglected or forgotten. The fate of one hundred forty thousand Chinese laborers who were sent from China to France and England to help in the war effort - many of whom died during the war because of overwork and poor health conditions - has been, until recently, unrecognized and also unknown. Last year’s centennial anniversary brought to the European public the needed recognition and respect for their sacrifice.

This year we are commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the ending of the World War II, the most atrocious war in human history. In Europe we have commemorated the anniversary of the historic victory over Fascism and Nazism a month ago. In China, the anniversary of victory in World War II will be commemorated in September. And in October we shall all recommit ourselves to the noble purposes and objectives of the United Nations, our common global home and our only hope for a peaceful future of the world.

We should be fully aware that victory in World War II gave rise to the United Nations, a truly universal organization, based on sovereign equality of its member states and committed to maintenance of peace, to fostering economic and social development and realization of human rights.

These are important achievements for which the world has paid a heavy price in blood and treasure. They have to be respected, they have to be protected and nurtured so that specific new objectives are put on our global agenda, as the situation of our present world requires.

European Union and China have very important roles to play in this context. Our mutual cooperation can be a major pivot of global stability, prosperity and peace. This is why we need to keep in mind the importance of what we do at the global level and in particular within the United Nations.

There are **four fundamental tasks** at the global level where the countries of European Union and China have to join forces to ensure the basic conditions for the progress of the World and, at the same time, the basis for our long term cooperation.

**First,** we must find effective ways to pursue the sustainable development goals to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly later this year with the aim to serve as the general framework for policy making for development in the period between 2015 and 2030. The sustainable development goals and the specific development targets defined within their framework represent the main signposts of the global development today. They require further elaboration of policies to reduce and, to the largest extent possible, eradicate absolute poverty.

China and European Union have done much in this area already. Success of China in lifting hundreds of millions of its own people from poverty is historically unprecedented. The existing variety of development projects conducted by China in developing countries represents a major contribution to global development. China itself is no longer a typical developing country. The world is looking at China as one of the pillars of the global system with all the responsibilities that accompany that status.

European Union, on the other hand is the largest donor in development assistance in the world and its member states have a long tradition in that domain.

While the future years will be characterized by parallel development of development projects led by China and those led by the EU, it is not too early to develop synergies and cooperation. The new Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank will provide a very welcome opportunity in this respect.

**Second,** we must define effective measures to mitigate the effects of climate change and to reduce green house gas emissions with the aim to curb global warming. In the past years important lessons have been learned. The scientific evidence of the existence and consequences of global warming is almost

universally accepted. National policies aiming at reduction of green house gas emissions are becoming more sophisticated. The agreements reached at the international level regarding the desired targets of reduction of green house gas emissions, in particular the one reached by China and the US on 12 November last year are encouraging.

However, the most important part of the work is still ahead of us. European Union and all of its members are strongly committed to the task and will make every effort to ensure success of the Paris climate conference in December this year. The conference should create a common legal framework that will provide the necessary predictability of policy making, legislation and business orientation. This will require clear, fair and sufficiently ambitious targets for all countries - based on our common but differentiated responsibilities for the global climate situation. EU has already committed itself to a binding, economy-wide domestic greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of at least 40% by the year 2030.

In Europe, there is a general expectation that the Paris Conference will achieve an agreement which proved illusive six years ago in Copenhagen. And while the agreement may not follow the blueprint of Copenhagen it is expected to provide a sufficiently solid framework for all subsequent policy making and legislation. The role of China will be critically important in the preparation of the agreement.

**Third**, effective maintenance of international peace and security demands a stronger role for the United Nations. The UN Security Council is of key importance. China is one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. In matters of international peace and security there is no substitute for cooperation among the members of the Security Council, in particular its

permanent members. The UN Security Council, with its unique and formidable legal powers, remains at the centre of the global security architecture. Today, at a time of accumulation of crisis situations a renewed effort of the Security Council is called for. There is an urgent need for the members of the UN Security Council, including in particular its permanent members, to develop a global security understanding, “an informal, global security compact” that will guide the search for solutions to the variety of challenges to international peace and security.

It should be borne in mind that an understanding among the key players on the global scene regarding the approach to be taken to the main crisis situations of our time and their commitment to search for solutions within the framework of international law was due, but could not materialize in the immediate aftermath of the cold war, a generation ago. By now, the accumulated experience and wisdom could make such an understanding possible. However, success depends largely on the permanent members of the UN Security Council, including China.

European Union can help in a variety of ways. Two EU member states are among the permanent members of the Security Council. European Union and its member states are committed to multilateralism and to the rule based international cooperation. They are able to strengthen their role in mediating in situations of dispute or armed conflict. We need in depth consultations between EU and China on security issues with an aim to resolve the crisis issues many of which are located in the neighborhood of European Union and in the vicinity of China. Here we have a vast and untapped potential for diplomatic cooperation. In the coming years we need to use our political imagination and our diplomatic means better than before. That does not mean that we should engage in unrealistic speculation but it does mean that both EU and China have a need to innovate.



**The fourth fundamental task** requires innovation and is different in nature from the first three. While the first three are an expression of the experience gained so far, the fourth requires exploration of new opportunities. I consider the Chinese initiative for the New Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Maritime Silk Road (also termed as “One Belt One Road Initiative” - OBOR) a much needed example.

The complexity and depth of changes in the world require new and bold initiatives, proportionate to the needs of our time. The One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) represents a powerful expression of this need and a meaningful response to it. The initiative aims at connecting, more fully and comprehensively, the vibrant economic space of East Asia with the developed European economic space and to offer new opportunities to the countries in the vast spaces of Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

The realization of this initiative is expected to put in place a secure and efficient network of land, sea and air passages, lifting their connectivity to a higher level. It would also enhance trade and investment facilitation and contribute to economic improvement in a variety of ways that are usually connected with infrastructural development and with strengthening of investment cooperation.

The scope and ambition of this initiative deserves all respect and carefully designed cooperation. It is also understood that in order for the project to be fully embraced it will be necessary to ensure:

1. Adequate political support,
2. A high level of policy coordination and
3. An adequate involvement of all the relevant regional and global institutions

4. An effort to include the business sector fully, including a range of small and medium size companies.

In our interconnected world there is always need for participation of numerous actors - ranging from sovereign states and international institutions to the media and international public opinion.

With these realities in mind it is natural to expect questions and even doubt. Some commentators have questions on how to ensure coherence of the project in the face of the great dimension of the space in which it is expected to operate.

Some others emphasize the diversity of political situations in the areas concerned, some of which are characterized by endemic instability and armed conflict.

Others still are interested in the question of economic sustainability over the long run given the very likely need for a prolonged period of intense financial investment.

It is natural that questions such as these are raised in the discussion at the early stage of the project. However, the early stage of any project is also the time for a vision. Therefore it is natural that the visionary projects of the past are often quoted as a source of inspiration.

Therefore we have to look to other examples as well and some of them may be found in Europe. Sixty five years ago the French foreign minister Robert Schuman laid out a vision of closer cooperation in West Europe. This vision, known as “Schuman Declaration” envisaged cooperation and integration of

Europe based on common management of coal and steel, two strategic commodities for the post war reconstruction of Europe.

This seemingly technical approach has produced far reaching economic and political results, an economic union and an ever closer integration of European states. Countries that fought wars for centuries and who experimented with a variety of ideas of political integration of Europe were now engaged in a genuinely integrating project. They found out that economic cooperation and joint management of a major project is the most effective way to broader integration. And Europe worked with what it had and what it needed - coal and steel.

Obviously, one must not carry the comparison between the beginnings of European economic integration and One Belt, One Road Initiative too far. There are very real differences involved. But the basic vision of using economic tools for far reaching transformative objectives remains the same. The most important common feature of the two initiatives is in the fact that both of them proceeded from the realization of the needs of the time. They also represented an innovative response to the real needs, even if at the beginning the needs in question are not fully articulated. And finally, they provide an opportunity for further innovation in the synergies between state based, publicly financed activities on the one hand and the engagement of private capital on the other.

Careful investment in those forms of economic cooperation for which the time has come pays dividends - not only in the economic sense but also in the sense of political improvement and greater security and political stability. Today, the time is ripe for a mega project in the space of Eurasia and Africa. One Belt, One Road comes at the right time and has the potential of a transformative mission of global proportions.

This understanding is gaining support in Europe and I am convinced that the forthcoming summit between China and the European Union (29-30 June) will provide a further impetus to it. The Union and its member states are increasingly aware of the great potential for development in our future cooperation. And further encouragement will help the European Union, currently preoccupied more with internal problems than with global opportunities.

The realization of new opportunities is strengthened in the whole of Europe, not only in the European Union but also in those countries of Central and Eastern Europe that are not members of the European Union. There is a need to include these countries in the process of designing and implementation of the big projects for the future. China has responded to this objective need of cooperation by initiating the format of cooperation 16 + 1, the format that involves, in addition to China, both - members and non-members of the EU. This format is welcome, not least because Europe, artificially divided in the recent history, needs additional development efforts in its central and eastern parts so as to avoid new artificial divisions. Innovative forms of cooperation in this part of Europe will be an important contribution to stability of the continent as a whole and should be welcomed by all.

The words “connections” and “connectivity” are central in all these innovative forms of cooperation. They relate not only to infrastructure such as roads and railways of telecommunications and information technologies. They require, with equal urgency, involvement of small and medium sized enterprises, people to people contacts, expansion of cultural exchange and growth of tourism. While progress in all this areas is already significant there is still a large measure of untapped potential.

There are many occasions that allow further elaboration on the concept of connectivity. Let me refer outcome of the recent Chongqing conference on advancing Asia Europe connectivity through innovation shows us the essential elements of connectivity as the key strategy for the future.

The main elements are:

1. Enhancing the Asia - Europe infrastructure connectivity: This is a wide area ranging from such basic projects as development of sea ports, rail roads and highways to electricity, telecommunications and environmental infrastructure.
2. Developing open trade and investment regime and promoting financial markets and innovative investment and financing mechanisms.
3. Upgrading Asia-Europe cooperation in the industry chain, value chain and innovation chain. Networked partnerships for high quality performance have to be developed and should be based on already existing experience.  
And
4. Deepening the Asia - Europe people to people contacts, including cultural exchange and tourism. It is clear that future cooperation and integration of the vast economic spaces of Eurasia will require a much stronger “human base” from the one that exists today.

All this will require improvement in policy exchanges and coordination, a much more intensive cooperation motivated by the need for problem solving and an ever growing involvement of business communities, including small and medium size enterprises.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We find ourselves at the threshold of a new era. The potential for the future positive change is enormous. But so are also the tasks ahead of us. It is necessary that we accept the need for change, the need to change the world and to change ourselves.

In Europe we like to quote the phrase in Latin: *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*: Times change and we change with times. Well, our era validates this old wisdom. The question is whether we are able to improve ourselves to the full potential of our era.

The opportunities exist. We must seize them and contribute our best.

I thank you for your attention.