

**Speech Delivered at the Fourth Ministerial Forum on Cultural Cooperation
between PR China and Central and Eastern European Countries**
Luo Shugang, Minister of Culture and Tourism of China

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Honorable Hysni Ismali, Minister of Culture of North Macedonia,
Dear Ministers, Ladies and gentlemen, Good morning.

It is my great pleasure to join all of you in the beautiful city of Skopje for the opening of the Fourth Forum on Cultural Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries. On behalf of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China, I would like to extend my warm greetings to all our European colleagues, and our special thanks to our host, the Ministry of Culture of North Macedonia, for their hospitality and excellent organization of this Forum.

China and CEEC are time-tested friends and new partners with future-oriented cooperation. As Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said at the 4th China-CEEC Summit in Dubrovnik this April, Thanks to the joint efforts of all parties involved, China-CEEC cooperation, as an important component of overall China-Europe relations, has steadily moved forward and evolved into an open and inclusive platform for cross-regional cooperation of mutual benefit. It has played a positive role in boosting the economic growth of participating countries, improving their people's wellbeing and advancing China-Europe relations as a whole.

The key to sound relations between countries lies in the amity between their peoples based on mutual understanding. People-to-people connectivity is essential for the sustainability and greater success of our cultural cooperation. Since our first ministerial meeting in 2013, we have made inspiring progresses in China-CEEC cultural collaboration, which brought our cultural circles closer and our peoples better informed of each other.

First, I am proud to mention our working platforms. Under the banner of China-CEEC cultural minister's forum, there are now three Unions and two Centers. Such platforms helped Chinese and CEEC cultural institutions connect and work together to pool our resources and deliver joint programs.

Second, we have hosted several successful expertise forums. The six expertise forums we initiated and presented on a regular basis cover the areas of art cooperation, intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, literacy, creative economy, heritage and library. These forums, instrumental in promoting knowledge exchange and cooperation in their respective area, were highly popular and we were proud that various countries would like to host them.

Third, our cooperation has taken various forms. Though visits of CEEC art festival directors, painters and music composers to China for field trip and knowledge swapping, as well as 17+1 summer and winter camps of dance, music and jazz, which we organized together, we harvested the excellence of creativity and created bonds between Chinese and CEEC youth communities and artists.

Fourth, we have enriched each other's important occasions and flagship events. China has celebrated anniversaries of diplomatic ties, cultural years and cultural festivals with many of the 17 countries by presenting cultural exchange activities at all dimensions. Moreover, Chinese and CEEC international art festivals, including Sibiu International Theatre Festival of Romania and Shanghai International Arts Festival of China have encouraged more presence from 17+1 countries, and brought the best of Chinese and CEEC culture to each other's audiences.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Art and culture are great heritage for both China and CEEC. There is great potential in our cooperation, as we have our respective strengths, either in creativity or market, that can complement and inspire each other through cultural exchange. China is always ready to join efforts with CEEC to pursue solid cooperation featuring openness, inclusiveness, universal benefits, balance, and win-win results. To inject new vitality into 17+1 cultural ties, we will conduct open dialogues and inspire new ideas to create innovative models, platforms and channels for comprehensive, cross-disciplinary and multi-level cooperation between the two sides. Hereby, I would like to propose as follows:

First, our cooperation should be more innovative. Since the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism was established in 2018, we have been exploring the correlation of culture and tourism, and reached out to our global partners for cross learning and collaboration. For 17+1 cultural cooperation, we can also try to be

more open, to think and act in a Culture Plus way by connecting culture with other areas including tourism, trade, sports and health, to offer more enjoyable cultural experience to our public.

Second, we should keep investing in our existing platforms. Expertise platforms, in particular, are instrumental for our direct connections and joint programs. According to our plan, in 2020, China will participate in the organization of 4 17+1 expert forum, namely one for ICH safeguarding in China, one for literature in Romania, one for creative economy and cultural industry in Slovenia and one for library directors of the 17+1 Library Union in North Macedonia. We will also host the 6th 17+1 dance summer camp in China. Apart from this, we would like to reaffirm the roles of 17+1 Cultural Cooperation Coordination Centre-Skopje and the web platform we opened this time as hubs to pool information and wisdom for creative programs which will lift 17+1 cultural cooperation up to new levels.

Third, we should be more inclusive. Our governments and public sectors continue to present cultural exchange programs which inspire and encourage community participation. Local administrations, art schools, the press, private groups and individual artists should all be motivated to pool their resources and bring our joint cultural programs to larger markets. In this way, our cultural exchange will see more press coverage as a vibrant picture that comprises TV, film, IPR licensing, publishing and cultural trade.

Fourth, our cooperation should be more open and extensive. 17+1 is an open framework, which is not only open to the two-way exchange between China and CEEC, but to the connections with other EU member states and countries beyond. It would be a win-win, if 17+1 cultural cooperation strategies can be aligned with BRI, as all CEEC are Belt and Road countries. We therefore welcome all CEEC to join our Silk Road International Unions of theaters, museums, libraries, art museums and arts festivals, and participate in our BRI arts festivals and expos for mutual benefits, cooperation and cross learning.

As an ancient Chinese poem says, no seas of cloud or water are wide enough to keep apart the minds that think alike. It means nothing can separate people who share the same vision. My friends, I am looking forward to our joint efforts in the future to build stronger partnerships and deliver concrete results in 17+1 cultural cooperation. We are also ready to carry out intercultural dialogue with other

countries under the 17+1 banner, and welcome more friends to support 17+1 cooperation.

I wish the Fourth Forum on Cultural Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries a complete success. Thank you.