

**Speech Delivered at the Fourth Ministerial Forum on Cultural Cooperation
between PR China and Central and Eastern European Countries**

Republic of Slovenia

Minister of Culture, mag. Zoran Poznič

Dear Minister of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia

dear fellow Ministers of Culture of Central and Eastern European countries and other members of delegations,

first of all, I would like to thank everyone involved in organizing and hosting this heartwarming meeting and for your hospitality and also to all the participants for the interesting and useful debate so far! I am sure there will be many more in the coming days.

For decades, there have been links between Europe and Asia, thematized by the Road and Lane Initiative - but until the last century, these two parts of the world have nevertheless evolved in their own pace and in their own internal logic. That is why we can speak of our cultures as a spiritual upgrade of our national specialties.

Culture has never had such a global reach. In a world full of unrest, culture represents the so-called soft diplomacy, since cultural cooperation is an unobtrusive way of connecting different countries and nations. Culture can thus be counted on anytime and anywhere.

This is why it is so important, that we establish global collaborations, especially on the basis of culture and arts, since they contain a wealth of diversity and intercultural dialogue, which is the starting point for achieving lasting peace between nations and countries. It allows us to get to know one another and also learn from one another. This, in turn, enables us to develop our people in the long term.

As culturalists and humanists we all know that the only constant of this common world is -change. With a parable similar in style to classical Chinese thinkers, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus put it: "You never step twice in the same river."

Having this mind, I welcome the Skopje Declaration, which is a tool for achieving and enhancing the cultural cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Central and Eastern European Countries. The Declaration also represents the openness of different cultures to understand the functions of other cultures, which is a base of tolerance and intercultural respect. This prevents the development of various forms of intercultural conflict, such as hate speech.

However, we need to be aware that this kind of cooperation between us means building a bridge of healthy intercultural collaboration, where we recognize one another's identity and culture. But entirely something else is the disappearance of barriers between individuals and nations, between modes of communication - not just languages - and between lifestyles, between people and our identities.

It is a great pleasure for us to foster contacts between our cultures through such forums, as I firmly believe that we are strengthening them.

True wealth lies in diversity. The accumulation of always the same is not wealth but monotony.