

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

**Czech Republic**

Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic, Mrs. Petra Smolíková

Your Excellencies,

Esteemed partners from China, Central, Eastern and South Eastern European Countries

Esteemed colleagues,

Dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to be able to take part in the 4th Forum on Cultural Cooperation between our countries and China. I would like to open by thanking our Macedonian colleagues for inviting us to the capital of the North Macedonia, to Skopje.

China and the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European Countries are united in a traditional friendship and we can all see the enormous potential inherent in our mutual cooperation. Our first meeting in Beijing in 2013, followed by Sofia in 2015, in 2017 in the city of Hangzhou and now in Skopje confirm that our cooperation is dynamic, creative and productive.

Cultural exchange is an important driving force for bilateral relations. China and the Central, Eastern and South Eastern European Countries currently have a large number of associated provinces and regions, associated cities. More and more people from our countries are learning Chinese and the number of Confucius Institutes is growing, along with the number of tourists. Increasing numbers of mutual contacts go hand in hand with a deepening of mutual understanding and friendship.

The Forum on Cultural Cooperation between China and the Central and Eastern European Countries is a broadly conceived programme of cultural cooperation and acts as an important programme for dialogue between stakeholders. We can already see that this format has undoubtedly contributed to further improving of our mutual cooperation. Our meetings at these fora and the preparation and implementation of two-year cooperation plans is moving our cooperation significantly forward. Since

2013 we have worked extremely hard. Through our common efforts we have linked large numbers of cultural institutes in our countries to Chinese partners, direct contacts have been established not only between organisations but also between individual specialists, artists and ensembles. We appreciate the initiatives adopted by the Chinese side in organising a number of specialist fora, meetings and workshops. We can already conclude that the regular meetings during the annual Summer Dance School held in China and other countries are some of the most successful projects attended by young dancers from our countries and China, together with leading choreographers, who share their experiences and enter into not only professional, but also personal friendships. The same can be said of other professionally-oriented meetings focusing on cultural and creative industries, the protection of cultural heritage, the care of non-material cultural heritage and literature. Neither should we omit the professionally oriented visits by individual specialists in music, festival activities, museums and theatres. All these opportunities, which have opened up over recent years, are the right path to mutual understanding of people and cultures. This is why we are looking forward to additional activities, which are part of the two-year cooperation programme for 2020 and 2021, which will bring our specialists in libraries and cultural heritage protection, cultural and creative industries and film industry to Macedonia.

Our experts have already met several times in the past years at the forums dedicated to the above mentioned spheres. After several years of this type of cooperation we can say that it has brought a lot of new contacts between experts from all the countries and a lot of information specific for each country in its approach to the theme.

We fully support these regular expert meetings from the spheres already mentioned and we look forward to our future cooperation.

Thank you for attention.