

**Speech by Mr Uldis Zariņš  
Deputy State Secretary  
of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia**

**Fourth Forum on Cultural Cooperation between China and Central  
and Eastern European Countries<sup>1</sup>  
Skopje, 25 November 2019**

Ministers, Excellencies,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentleman,

It is my great pleasure and honour to address you here today on behalf of the Minister of Culture of the Republic of Latvia Mr Nauris Puntulis and to greet and congratulate the Minister of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia Honourable Dr Ismaili with successful organisation of the 17+1 Cultural Forum.

We hold in a high regard the growing cultural cooperation among Central and Eastern European Countries and China which is well-recognised from all sides, especially cultural professionals.

It is to our mutual satisfaction to see that cooperation between Central and Eastern European Countries and China is flourishing already for 7 years and has become an important part of our countries' lives – politically, economically and especially culturally.

Last month Latvia hosted in Rīga the 17+1 High-level Tourism Forum where the ministers and their representatives jointly agreed to create new opportunities for even better cooperation in the field of tourism. With the joint efforts of both China and Latvia, the China Cultural Center in Rīga has been officially opened. The China Cultural Center in Rīga<sup>2</sup> is the first of such Centres established by Chinese Ministry of Culture and

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<sup>1</sup> The speech should refer to your vision on the fruitful collaboration in the field of culture within the next two years. The Skopje Declaration and the Cultural Cooperation Plan for 2020-2021 will be adopted by acclamation on the Forum.

<sup>2</sup> The China Cultural Center in Rīga is organizing various activities such as performing and visual arts, lectures and seminars, film and video programs, language and cultural education projects. At the same time, the Center will also expand bilateral exchanges through cooperation with the local governmental agencies and cultural and art organizations.

Tourism in the Baltic region, and is responsible for cultural and tourism exchange between China and Latvia, as well as the other Baltic countries.

We applaud the ambition to expand the cultural cooperation within the framework of 17+1. We believe that cultural exchanges together with people-to-people exchange are at the core of sustainability and long-term relevance of cooperation between China and CEECs at the bilateral and multilateral level. Success in our cultural cooperation directly benefits our political and economic cooperation and strengthens our ties.

The 17+1 format of cooperation in the field of culture has been developing dynamically, with great respect towards all our cultures, their distinctive traditions and unique expressions in the arts, music, theatre, cinema, architecture as well as traditional culture.

It has promoted openness and eagerness for intercultural learning, cooperation and dialogue as well as facilitated successful exchanges at all professional levels and in all fields, especially libraries and cultural heritage. It has also unlocked the potential of cooperation between our film industries. The Latvian national cinema industry has developed considerably in recent years thanks to the Centenary Film Programme and the audiovisual content is undeniably one of the most attractive forms of cultural exchange.

Our future commitments are no less ambitious in the most positive way. Latvia considers that the Skopje Declaration shows a strong commitment to expand the cooperation in the field of culture in the 17+1 framework and the Two Year Cooperation Plan 2020-2021 is strong and very inspiring.

Thank you!