

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

**Republic of Serbia**

Skopje, 24-26 November

Dear hosts, colleague Husni Ismaili, colleague Luo Shugang, distinguished colleague ministers, it gives me a special pleasure to welcome you here, in the town of crossroads, in the very core of the Balkan Peninsula. The Republic of North Macedonia has opened its doors and gathered us here at the 4<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum thus giving impetus to the enhancement of cooperation in culture between the Central and Eastern European Countries and the People's Republic of China.

The Republic of Serbia has been participating with its full capacity in all of the activities planned to improve the relations between the 17 1 Group of Countries. Fostering cultural relations and getting acquainted with the practices of the regionally close nations making up this alliance and also with the distant, in terms of space, but highly attractive culture of China is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Culture and Media of Serbia.

The strong ties that Serbia has with the Republic of North Macedonia, our neighbor and our host, have been reaffirmed several times. I would on this occasion single out the joint project of North Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria which resulted in the exhibition „100 years of Trebeniste“, thus marking one century of the discovery of this important location. It was a big step forward in the direction of a coordinated work focusing on the preservation of the rich archeological, cultural and historical heritage of the Balkans. Further, we did not lag behind in the area of modern creativity. The “Evocative Networks” exhibition was staged in October of this year in the Gallery of the North Macedonia Cultural Center in New York as part of the annual program of North Macedonia Cultural Center in this city. Our two countries have an intensive cultural cooperation in numerous fields. Our similarities and our diversities unite and flare up the creative energy and take us, I am confident, to new future even more diverse projects, both at the level of institutions and through linking of artists.

Over the past two years, our cooperation with the People's Republic of China has been significantly upgraded having developed at the same time a strong confidence in the process of mutual learning and exchange of experiences in the areas of art, digitalization and media. Special attention was dedicated to the improvement of good relations among institutions. In September, the National Museum of Belgrade signed the Agreement with the Forbidden City Museum in Beijing, while in June was signed the Memorandum of Understanding between the National Museum of Belgrade and the Shandong Museum. A delegation of the Ministry has been in recent days in Beijing. It was a good opportunity for getting acquainted with the work of the biggest Chinese media companies and to get directly informed about the challenges present in this field and with the means for their overcoming.

It is worth mentioning that the establishment of the Cultural Center of the PR of China in Belgrade is of particular importance for the fostering of the ties between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Serbia. This Center will be the biggest in Europe. It will raise the level of cooperation between the institutions of culture of Serbia and China and open up new channels for the contacts of artists and creators of our two countries. We are expecting to strengthen with the PR of China cultural relations in the fields of protection of cultural heritage, modern creativity and digitalization. The Cultural Center in our Capital will highly contribute to the development of this type of relations.

The People's Republic of China leaves special imprint on the alliance of the Central and Eastern European Countries. The inspiration offered to European countries by the magnificent Chinese civilization is opening up the avenues for a strong cooperation in the field of art and culture. On the other hand, the practices of European countries add their own flavor to this alliance.

The People's Republic of China is a country with an increasing influence in the world and is an unavoidable member of any union wishing to progress. China is a guarantor of success and a factor of prosperity in all spheres of the society. Fully confident of China's experience as a state cherishing its ancient artistic heritage and developing modern creativity, we will be enhancing with its support, and jointly with it, the forces in the area of culture.

The Ministry of Culture and Media of Serbia and I personally are supporting the improvement of contacts among the states members of the Forum and are encouraging development of the planned activities announced by the Forum that

we are going to focus on in the time ahead of us. The Ministry has been investing great efforts in one of the joint objectives to which the Forum held in Belgrade was dedicated: Preservation and Promotion of Cultural Heritage. Serbia has a rich cultural heritage that it is trying to preserve and leave to next generations to take care of it, bearing in mind that awareness of the tradition, origin and customs is a key segment of both national and personal identity. By keeping one's own and by respecting someone else's heritage can we exist and ramify with pride the millennium old tree of world culture.

Currently, we have big and real ambitions that will improve and enhance our cooperation. We are going to adopt these days the Declaration on Cultural Cooperation, and also the Plan of 2020-2021 Cooperation, which envisages continuation of the activities in the domains of cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, cooperation in the field of music, and holding of the Forum of Libraries Union. Keeping abreast of time we must adopt new trends and accept the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Development of information systems obliges us to respond to the requirements of modern society and it is for this reason that I welcome and appreciate the idea to get involved jointly in the establishment of a web platform to serve for cooperation in the area of culture.

The forthcoming decades will bring new requirements, but also greater potentials for implementing diverse projects based on the exchange of experiences. I am confident that we will be able to make them come true. I hope for, and am looking forward to increasingly intensive cooperation which is already standing, we can already say, on the firmly established foundations of understanding, good quality exchange, strong efforts and openness to positive joint solutions, linking of cultural and artistic resources. Ahead of us is a period of growth, creative communication and development of culture and art, the areas whose boundaries are fading away.

I am expressing gratitude to our hosts for the good organization of this Forum, hoping that Belgrade will be equally good host in 2021 when the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Meeting of Central and Eastern European Countries is scheduled to take place. Allow me to wish to all of us a successful work in this year, and in all the years in which we will not cease to jointly build stronger and stronger links among cultures.

Thank you!