



**China Centre Tübingen Opening Ceremony, 21.04.2016**

**Welcoming Speech: Embassy Counsellor Prof. Dong Qi**

Esteemed Rector, Prof. Engler,  
Esteemed Prof. Schmidt-Glintzer,  
Esteemed Prof. Schlecht,  
Esteemed Prof. Tu Weiming  
Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is my great pleasure to attend the ceremonial opening of the China Centre at the University of Tübingen. I would like to congratulate the staff of Tübingen University, the Karl-Schlecht Foundation, and Erich-Paulun-Institute, who have put great effort into the establishment of CCT and to the promotion of Chinese Studies in Germany. The PRC ambassador, Shi Mingde, wishes me to convey his best wishes and congratulations. Mr. Shi is an old friend of Tübingen University and a big enthusiast of the city of Tübingen. He clearly remembers Mr. Qiao Guanhua's PhD certificate being handed over to his son. Mr. Shi would love to have come in person, but sadly was prevented from doing so by other obligations.

Tübingen is a city of science and research. When taking a walk through the old town, there is rarely a house or place that is not connected to a famous scholar's name, such as Hegel, Hölderlin and Schelling, Mörike and Uhland, Kepler and Schickard... there are countless that can be named. It is therefore not surprising that one of the oldest universities of Europe came into being right here in Tübingen.

Besides its great reputation as one of the eleven "Excellence Universities" and as one of the internationally best-ranked German Universities, Tübingen University is also famous for being a stronghold for Chinese Studies. The Chairs for Chinese Studies cover a wide range of topics, from history and language to the present Economic Ethics in China. In 2014, Professor Mittag – representing German Sinologists – took part in an exchange with China's President Xi Jinping and outlined many interesting ideas. Moreover, the newly established teaching degree programme will make a big contribution to meeting the growing demand for Chinese teachers. Partnerships with top Chinese universities, such as Peking University, Fudan, and Tongji offer a sound basis for interdisciplinary, practice-oriented research.

With the founding of CCT, a new chapter of China research commences. In my eyes, this is happening at exactly the right time since China and Germany are connected by a partnership closer and more trusting than ever before.

The frequent visits of leaders and the mutual trust at the top levels of politics have created a solid basis for the development of bilateral ties. China's President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang have both already visited Germany. Federal President Gauck visited China last March and Mrs. Merkel will travel to China in June for the ninth time.

In the economy, a story of success is being continued. The bilateral trade volume of 2015 amounted to 160 billion USD – this is 650 times higher than in 1972 when the People's Republic of China and the Federal Republic of Germany established diplomatic relations. Today, there are over 8,000 German enterprises operating in China, connected to investments of 40 billion USD. Likewise, over 2,000 enterprises from China are present here and the trend is rising.

Since the turn of the millennium, our cooperation in the area of education has boomed and can be regarded as another supporting pillar of our bilateral relations. There are 550 established university partnerships between the two countries. Up to 40,000 Chinese students and scientists have spent the past year of 2015 in Germany and over 7,500 German students have made China the destination for their studies abroad. In the field of language teaching, we have achieved outstanding results: over 300 schools in Germany are offering Chinese as a foreign language and thus it is estimated that there are about 30,000 students learning Chinese. 25 German Universities offer programmes in Chinese Studies, having established 50 professorships. Furthermore, 16 Confucius Institutes are operating as mediators of Chinese language and culture throughout Germany. Many German cultural and language teaching organisations, such as the Goethe Institute, have achieved a great reputation in China so that over 110,000 students of German can be counted in China.

Last March, Xi Jinping and Joachim Gauck opened the Sino-German Year for Youth and Student Exchange. Under the motto "Exchange, Friendship, Future," we are implementing numerous measures to promote mutual understanding amongst young people and to ensure sustainable and friendly relationships between our countries.

Dear colleagues,

The close relations between China and Germany have posed new tasks to the academic discipline of Sinology. China research should devote itself to modern China, devote itself to conveying a diverse, up-to-date, objective image of China and contribute to the reduction of prejudices and misunderstandings. China research should also be conducted in an application-oriented way, in order to help the key German actors understand China and

acquire the skills for adequate handling of China. China research should concern itself with the following central questions:

- How did China manage to become the world's second largest economy within only thirty years?
- In what way can the world's most populous nation's ideas and experiences be of use to other developing countries?
- China's system is different from that of the West. How is it possible to evaluate this system in an unprejudiced way?
- What opportunities does China's peaceful rise create for the world?

CCT has been established with the participation of a foundation, the university and extramural institutions. The centre addresses contemporary China and connects research to practical application. Both in the structure and in the selection of topics I see a very promising and sustainable model. The Chinese Embassy is willing to support this where we are able to do so. That could, for example, take place through the deployment of Chinese language teachers, providing teaching materials or the award of scholarships to name just a few options.

Dear ladies and gentlemen!

The Chinese Government has just published the 13<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan. According to this, China strives to achieve development which is characterised by innovation, coordination, "greenness," openness and sharing. This guiding idea offers many touch points for our bilateral cooperation. On the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> Sino-German intergovernmental consultations which are scheduled for June, top politicians from both countries will come together and exchange views on the future focus of their cooperation. We have good reason to believe that many think-tanks – including CCT – will play an active role in this process with their academically well-grounded and at the same time practical research work.

The trajectory of future relations between China and Germany is not only determined by economy and politics but also by scientists and young people.

I wish the China Centre Tübingen a good start and lots of success!  
Thank you very much!