

Speech of Bernard Dewit

The speaker usually has two complaints from audiences.

One that he talks so loud that they cannot fall asleep and the second complain that he talks so long they cannot stay awake!

Be reassured: I shall not talk too loud nor too long! But I remember the Chinese proverb saying that “a word spoken can never be taken back”.

Excellency,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

Let me first thank all of you to have come to join us to celebrate the Year of the Rat.

According to the legend, the Jade Emperor invited all the animals of his kingdom to participate to a race. The first 12 to cross the finish line would be selected to become the zodiac calendar animals. At the end of the race, despite giving all his energy to run, the rat realized that the ox was ahead of him. Therefore, he tricked the ox into helping him to go through the river. When they both arrived, the rat jumped before the ox could cross the finish line, becoming the first of all zodiac animals.

People born in the year of the Rat are social, intelligent, honest, ambitious and shrewd. Look at some of the celebrities born in the Year of the Rat: William Shakespeare, the painter Claude Monnet, the writer Léon Tolstoy, the musician Louis Armstrong or our King Philippe.

Those born during the year of the Metal Rat are supposed to be able to turn unlucky events into fortune. We shall need them in the present time!

The Coronavirus is the illustration that our world is more and more interconnected and interdependent. As Chinese Ambassador to the EU, Mr. Zhang Min, said in a recent interview “panic could be a more fearful adversary than the virus”.

Very strong measures have been taken in China and have been strongly approved by the World Health Organization. Western governments, including Belgium, are also taking strong measures and research centers all over the world are working actively to find a remedy to the spreading infection.

With our Chamber, we are resisting: we resist to the stupid and horrible messages of hate conveyed by some social media, we resist to the mistrust of others, we resist to acts of racism. More than ever we want to remain a bridge between Europe and China, between Belgium and China.

Mr. Ambassador, we shall always be at your side and fight isolationist policies.

This being said, we hope that will remain the positive spirit of the very successful economic mission that brought more than 600 business people from Belgium to China last November under the leadership of our Crown Princess Astrid and that very soon “business as usual” will come back.

We shall then have another kind of fever: the fever of further setting up and developing new businesses, the fever of improving the existing businesses, the fever of further deepening our

knowledge of your beautiful country, Mr. Ambassador, the fever of making new friends through the borders!

I would like to thank you very much for your presence as well as our sponsors who made our reception tonight possible and who made possible for us to host our reception in a prestigious environment: EU Reporter, Moutai, Arpadis, CCPIT, Cosco, Cathay Pacific Airlines, GCM Consulting, Group S, Huawei, Landmark Global, Volvo, VR Maasmechelen Tourists Outlet.

I would also like to thank the Belgian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as the regional promotion agencies (FIT, AWEX and HUB Brussels).

Many thanks also to all our volunteers helping us tonight as well as the staff of our Chamber and the members of our board whose experience and advice are precious to us.

Thanks to them we can play our role and bring a little stone in the economic and trade relations between Belgium and China.

As Confucius said: "our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall". We are now rising back.

Bernard Dewit

Chairman BCECC