

### **Speech of H.E. Ambassador Cao Zhongming**

I'm very happy to join friends from the BCECC to celebrate the lunar Chinese New Year. I thank the BCECC for organizing this event.

As we speak China is making all-out efforts to fight the novel coronavirus outbreak, and I know the Belgian media and public have also been following the epidemic closely. I'd like to say that since its onset China has taken decisive prevention and control measures to curb its spread and to safeguard public health. Acting with transparency, openness and in a responsible manner, the Chinese government lost no time to share the genetic code of the virus and other medical information with international partners, and we have communicated timely with the World Health Organization over the latest evolution. All these measures are commended by many countries and the WHO. The Embassy of China in Belgium has also established communication channels with the federal foreign and health authorities to address the concerns of Belgium, inform the country of the latest information, as well as the prevention and control measures taken by China. The Embassy has also received sympathies and support from Belgian government officials and average Belgian people. Wallonia made donations for the affected areas and the BCECC also called for companies to extend a helping hand. The friendship the political and business community and Belgians have for China has deeply touched us. We believe that with the support of friends, and as the international community join hands together, we will succeed in defeating the coronavirus outbreak at an early date.

Last November Princess Astrid led a large-scale trade mission to China, comprising government officials, representatives from industrial associations, companies, universities and also friends from the Belgian media. There were nearly 300 companies joining the mission covering wide-ranging sectors, including agri-products, food and beverage, chemical products, bioscience, telecommunication, logistics, clean energy, machinery, financial services and lifestyle. The mission produced fruitful results, resulting in the signing of 74 agreements and MOUs.

All of the guests here today have been part of China-Belgium business cooperation. Last year despite sluggish global growth the Chinese economy performed well. According to initial figures, Chinese GDP grew by 6.1% in 2019 reaching 99 trillion RMB. Per capita exceeded 10 thousand USD. The progress is made possible through modernization of China's governance system and capabilities. In the meantime China has been improving its environment for foreign investment. By the end of 2019 actual use of foreign capital stood at 941.5 billion RMB, about 138.4 billion US dollars, ranking first among developing countries, and second in the world. There were 834 mega projects with valuation over 100 million USD. In 2020, the Chinese government will continue to steadfastly advance opening up across all sectors. We will continue to develop an open economy at a higher level. From the start of this year, the foreign investment law will be implemented. China will carry out a pre-establishment national treatment plus negative list management system. We will continue to lower tariffs, open up the financial and insurance along with other service sectors, and step up protection of intellectual property rights. The impact the novel coronavirus has on the Chinese economy is only temporary. It will not change the long-term and steady growth momentum of the Chinese economy. China will remain one of the top destinations for investment and trade. We hope Belgian companies will intensify investment and trade with China. We hope that Belgian government at all levels will continue to open its arms to Chinese investment. Let us work together to promote two-way opening up and maintain a fair business environment.

Let me conclude by wishing you prosperity, good health and happiness in the new year.