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China-CEEC Think Tanks Book Series

China-CEEC People to People Exchange:
Past, Present and the Future

Editors-in-chief
Huang Ping, Liu Zuokui

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The Key Role of the 16+1 Think Tanks Network in Enhancing the Mutual Understanding of China-CEEC Cooperation*

Cai Fang**

Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and the Assistant Foreign Minister Liu Haixing, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to all!

Today, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Secretariat for Cooperation between China and CEEC jointly host the China-CEEC Thinks Tanks Symposium and the Closing Ceremony of China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year here at CASS. On behalf of CASS and the 16+1 Think Tanks Network, I would like to extend my sincerest and warmest welcome to all the guests coming from China and CEECs.

When Chinese Premier Li Keqiang attended the 3rd Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs in Serbia in December, 2014, he affirmed that China supports the establishment of the China-CEEC Think Tanks Exchange and Cooperation Center. One year later, at the 4th Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs, the participants jointly formulated and issued the Suzhou Guidelines for Cooperation between China and CEECs which clearly stated that all parties welcome the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in leading the efforts to establish the China-CEEC Think Tanks Exchange and Cooperation Network (shorted as "16+1 Think Tanks Network"). As an international coordinating mechanism and high-level exchange platform for think tanks from China and CEECs, 16+1 Think Tanks Network has always been committed to integrating not only all the related research institutes and centers from CASS, but also other think tanks from China and CEECs, and fully implementing the building of new types of think tanks, so as to coordinate and promote the "16+1 Cooperation", the

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* Cai Fang's Welcome Address at the China-CEEC Think Tanks Symposium and the Closing Ceremony of China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year.

** Vice President of CASS & Executive Vice-President of 16+1 Think Tanks Network.

China-EU Comprehensive Strategic Partnership as well as the "Belt and Road" Initiative. During the past year, by taking advantage of the talents and the comprehensiveness of disciplines of CASS as well as the strong networks with think tanks and academic institutions inside and outside China, 16+1 Think Tanks Network has made remarkable achievements in terms of promoting the mechanism of the China-CEEC think tanks exchange and cooperation, strengthening the communication and exchanges between high-level think tanks from China and CEECs, and more importantly, providing intellectual support to the "16+1 Cooperation".

In November this year, the 5th Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs was held in Riga, Latvia. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and leaders of CEECs attended the Meeting together. During the Meeting, all parties agreed that the China-CEEC cooperation has been increasingly fruitful ever since it was launched in 2012. For instance, the *Mid-Term Agenda for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* has been warmly-received and actively responded by the CEECs. Moreover, the *Suzhou Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* has been well-implemented in all aspects. Based on the above-mentioned facts, all member countries of the "16+1 Cooperation" jointly formulated and issued the *Riga Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* (shorted as the *Riga Guidelines*). The launch of the *Riga Guidelines* not only marks the maturity and harvest of the China-CEEC cooperation, but also displays the strong vitality and promising prospects of the China-CEEC cooperation to the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

The key to sound relations between states lies in the affinity of their people, which largely stems from mutual understanding. While the political and economic cooperation between China and CEECs are steadily progressing, people-to-people exchange has played a constructive role in promoting China-CEEC cooperation. In recent 5 years, the "16+1 Cooperation" framework has grown incrementally from small to big, from the elementary to the profound. Moreover, it becomes increasingly important for the enhancement of the China-CEEC cooperation in all fields, especially to the advance of the China-CEEC people-to-people exchanges and

cooperation. Historically, the people-to-people exchanges have been a significant channel for the interaction and mutual learning between the Chinese civilization and the rest of the world, a key driving force for the development of international relations, and a fundamental base of the healthy development of state-to-state relations. The people-to-people exchanges, as one of the pillars of the "16+1 Cooperation" mechanism, not only carry the long-standing and well-established friendship between Chinese people and people from CEECs, but also effectively push forward the practical cooperation among countries.

In view of this, at the 4th Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs held in November 2015, leaders of China and CEECs jointly made a big decision to designate the year 2016 as the "China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year". In February 2016, the China-CEEC people-to-people exchange program was formally launched in Bejing. The program is co-hosted by 17 member countries including China and 16 CEECs, which is not only a great pioneering undertaking in the history of friendly exchanges between China and Europe, but also a beneficial exploration on the practice of people-to-people exchanges all round the world.

With regard to the China-CEEC cooperation, the year 2016 is definitely an extraordinary year. For instance, Chinese President Xi Jinping made successive visits to three Central and Eastern European countries, which is unprecedented in the history of exchange between China and CEECs. Driven by this, the 2016 China-CEEC people-to-people exchange activities have yielded a series of positive results. According to the statistics, this year there have been more than 40 large-scale bilateral or multilateral people-to-people exchanges organized by China and CEECs covering over 10 fields such as culture, tourism, media, education, science and technology, think tanks, etc. From the Happy Spring Festival events in CEECs held early this year to a variety of exchange programs concerning arts, humanity and think tanks carried out later, this year's events of people-to-people exchanges are fruitful and full of highlights. What's worth mentioning is that the China-CEEC Think Tanks Symposium, as an important part of the implementation of the 2015 *Suzhou Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* and the planning for the 2016 *Riga Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries,* has undoubtedly and successively boosted the China-CEEC people-to-people exchanges in

terms of think tanks cooperation.

Meanwhile, as the sponsor of this symposium and the base of the 16+1 Think Tanks Network, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is looking forward to further establishing and strengthening the pragmatic cooperation with CEE think tanks and academic institutions. To this end, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and 16+1 Think Tanks Network are actively projecting the joint building of research institutes or platforms with willing CEE think tanks and academic institutions to serve newly-typed think tanks and, more importantly, to provide better intellectual support to the "16+1 Cooperation" from the perspective of think tanks. Here, we sincerely hope and welcome the participation and involvement of more CEE think tanks and academic institutions, so as to advance the development of the "16+1" cooperative mechanism together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

The present international situation is complicated and constantly changing. The prospect of world economic recovery is not so promising. Globally, all kinds of unstable factors are increasing. All these have brought unprecedented challenges to the development of all countries. Meanwhile, we should also acknowledge that, under the new situation, countries share more and more interests and demands. In the future, China and CEECs, by continuously working together to promote the "16+1 Cooperation" in greater scope, wider area and higher level, will not only serve more Chinese and CEE citizens, but also make a greater contribution to world peace and development. Here, I sincerely hope that our newly-typed think tank could join hands with think tanks of all countries. Together, let's seize the historic opportunity of the flourishing China-CEEC cooperation to jointly conduct research in all fields, spread the spirit of mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation, learn from each other, innovate constantly and devote ourselves to the prosperity of world economy and civilization.

To end my speech, on behalf of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the comrades and friends in charge of organizing this event. Again, I wish this conference successful!

Thank you all!

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China-CEEC Cooperation and People to People Exchanges*

Liu Haixing**

Distinguished Deputy Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and the Vice President of CASS Cai Fang, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to all!

To begin with, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China and the Secretariat for Cooperation between China and CEEC, I would like to extend my sincere welcome to all the attendants from China and abroad, and my warm congratulations on the upcoming China-CEEC Think Tanks Symposium as well as my heartfelt thanks to everyone's continuous care and support for the "16+1 Cooperation". With the Closing Ceremony, the China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year has drawn to a successful end.

Both China and CEECs boast long-standing and splendid culture and history, which lay a solid foundation for the expansion of people-to-people exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations. The ever-increased cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and CEECs also have much more significance in promoting the popularity of the "16+1 Cooperation" among peoples of 17 countries. Because of this, during the 4th Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs held in Suzhou in November, 2015, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang designated the year 2016 as the "China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year", which received positive response and extensive support from leaders of 16 CEECs. Over the past year, we have been upholding the principles of openness, inclusiveness and sharing, and pooling the wisdom and strength of people. Through scientific planning and elaborate organization by all parties, the events on the People-to-People

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* Liu Haixing's Keynote Speech at the China-CEEC Think Tanks Symposium and the Closing Ceremony of China-CEEC People-to-People Exchange Year.

** Assistant Foreign Minister of China & Secretary-General of the Secretariat for Cooperation between China and CEEC.

Exchange Year have achieved a complete success. More importantly, the cultural and people-to-people cooperation between China and CEECs has developed into an all-round, multilevel and wide-ranging cooperative pattern. There were approximately 40 rich and colorful events full of highlights throughout the year, covering more than 10 fields. These events have continuously boosted the people-to-people exchanges at various levels, benefited an increasing number of people from China and CEECs, and brought new momentum for the stable development of China-CEEC relations. Apart from that, the initiative of jointly hosting the people-to-people exchange events by 17 countries also had a profound impact on the history of the Sino-European people-to-people exchanges.

To begin with, the existing platform has been given full play and the mechanism construction has been further improved. Last year, the high level dialogues in the field of culture, education, health and technological innovation, etc. within the "16+1" mechanism were held successfully and fruitfully. Moreover, the exchange visits between media and art groups were realized. In addition, the mechanisms of the "16+1" virtual technology transfer center and the China-CEEC Dance Culture Union, etc. were launched in succession while the bilateral culture and people-to-people events such as the "Happy Spring Festival" and the "Exhibition of Treasures of Ancient China" echoed the theme year.

Secondly, both China and CEECs have made continuous efforts to explore new fields and create new highlights in the China-CEEC cooperation. The First Meeting of Mayors of the Capitals of the CEECs and China, the First Forum of Cultural Industry of China and CEECs, the First Forum of the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage of China and CEECs, etc. were held successfully. Meanwhile, the guest country of this year's Beijing International Book Fair was, for the first time, shouldered by the 16 CEECs as a whole. Remarkably, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with three-generations of sinologists 16 CEECs during the Fifth Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs held in Riga, which marked a highlight of the Meeting, injected fresh momentum into the development of language and culture of China and CEECs, and evoked wild enthusiasm from all sectors of society in 17 countries.

Thirdly, the "16+1" cultural and people-to-people exchanges are in accord with the

international cooperative framework. By taking advantage of international platforms like the World Tourism Development Conference, the influence of the "16+1" cultural and people-to-people cooperation with distinguishing features of 17 countries has been further expanded. What's more, by integrating the youth exchanges and dialogues on education policies into the framework of the China-EU cultural and people-to-people exchanges, the China-EU dialogue mechanism of cultural and people-to-people exchanges has been optimized, making an increasing number of new contributions to the joint construction of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership of peace, growth, reform and civilization.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

As a Chinese saying goes, distance can not separate true friends who feel so close even when they are thousands of miles apart. China and CEECs are far-away neighbors situating in the two ends of Eurasia. Over decades we have been treating each other equally with mutual respect and the bilateral relations between China and CEECs have stood the test of the ever-changing international and domestic situations. Our friendship, so to speak, is genuine and ever-lasting. China is currently fighting for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation while 16 CEECs are passing through a significant period of domestic reform and development. Under such circumstance, the "16+1 Cooperation" emerged at the right moment, offering new platform for the strengthening of traditional friendships and the expansion and deepening of practical cooperation. As an innovative mechanism of the China-Europe friendly cooperation, the platform has become increasingly mature and developed, yielding fruitful results of pragmatic cooperation in various fields, and injecting new vigor and vitality to the traditional ties of friendship between China and CEECs.

At the present, the "16+1 Cooperation" is standing at the new historical starting point in face of new development opportunities. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the Central and Eastern European region twice within this year, during which he proposed to build sustainable and pragmatic cooperation between China and CEECs, integrate the "Belt and Road" Initiative into the European economic circle, and synergize the "16+1 Cooperation" with both China-Europe relations and the bilateral rations between China and CEECs. His initiatives have shed lights on the future prospects of the China-CEEC

cooperation. Last month, the 5th Meeting of Heads of Government of China and CEECs was successfully held in Riga, Latvia. The participants jointly formulated and issued the *Riga Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* and the *Riga Declaration* aimed at promoting the cooperation on the infrastructure equipment and production capacity. Leaders of 17 countries were witnesses to the signing of representative cooperative agreements between China and 16 CEECs. Regarding the future development of the "16+1 Cooperation", Premier Li Keqiang put forth a five-point proposal, which was to scale up two-way trade, accelerate efforts for greater inter-connectivity, promote cooperation in production capacity, explore innovative modalities of financial cooperation and tap potential for cultural and people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. His proposals highly accorded with the needs for cooperation of both parties and thus were well-received and widely-supported by the leaders of 16 CEECs. I strongly believe that the "16+1 Cooperation" will make continuous progress so long as all parties uphold the principles of openness, inclusiveness to meet the interests of all, build more consensuses and explore new areas of cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Cultural and people-to-people exchanges are a fundamental part of the "16+1 Cooperation" which is an inexhaustible driving force for the in-depth development of the "16+1 Cooperation". It is supplementary and supportive to the cooperation on production capacity and trade, and plays an irreplaceable role in forging strategic partnerships of openness, inclusiveness, mutually-beneficial and win-win cooperation. The China-CEEC relations can only be more long-standing and dynamic through the continuous enhancement of the cultural and people-to-people exchanges. And in that way, the trust and understanding among people from China and CEECs will be enhanced effectively, laying solid social foundation for the comprehensive, balanced and pragmatic cooperation between China and CEECs. Under the new circumstance, the China-CEEC cultural and people-to-people exchanges have huge space for development with bright prospects. China is willing to work with the Central and Eastern European countries to further deepen and expand the cultural and people-to-people exchanges and cooperation by enriching the connotation,

diversifying the subject and exerting far-reaching influence. Here, I put forth four suggestions:

Firstly, we should adopt a long-term and far-sighting perspective to strengthen the exchanges and mutual learning between China and 16 CEECs. "It is only natural for things to be different". The world is in its nature rich and colorful with diverse culture and civilizations. The civilizations of both China and CEECs have survived many vicissitudes and are of profound historical and cultural significance to the progress of human civilization. The cultural and people-to-people exchanges quietly bring people of 17 countries closer together by enhancing the mutual understanding of each other's national and social conditions and fostering more consensuses. Standing at a new historical starting point, 17 countries should take a strategic and long-term perspective, seize the opportunity to learn from each other and share the successful experience of development, so as to realize the equal, mutually-beneficial and win-win cooperation. In addition, 17 countries should respect and appreciate each other with broad vision, foster partnerships of mutual understanding, inclusiveness and cooperation to effectively guarantee the sustainable development of the "16+1 Cooperation", jointly establish the China-EU partnerships of civilization and, more importantly, push forward the progress of human civilization.

Secondly, we should grasp the current opportunities to build a strong foundation for the cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and CEECs. We should make solid progress in promoting the existing cultural and people-to-people exchanges in all fields, fully implement the relevant measures prescribed in the *Riga Guidelines for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries* and *the Mid-Term Agenda for Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries*, so as to strengthen the foundation for cultural and people-to-people exchanges. We should uphold the people-oriented principle to make the cultural and people-to-people exchanges and cooperation ever closer and more favorable to the civilians with more opportunities to join, support and benefit from such exchanges and cooperation. Apart from that, we should further eradicate the obstacles to the cultural and people-to-people exchanges by providing more convenient conditions for personnel exchanges. Several direct flight routes have been opened between China and CEECs. Recently, Serbia, Hungary and Macedonia have all introduced measures to facilitate

Chinese people's application for visa. In that case, the personnel exchanges between two sides will be ever more convenient. It is my sincere wish that both sides continue to explore and discuss the possibilities of opening direct flight routes in accordance with the market principles, and I also expect more CEECs to bring in measures that facilitate Chinese people's visa application.

Thirdly, we should keep up with the times and innovate new forms of "16+1" cultural and people-to-people exchanges. It is only by constantly enriching new contents can the cultural and people-to-people exchanges stay sustainable and progressive. With the strong support from Central and Eastern European Countries, Beijing and Zhangjiakou have been awarded for the right to host the 2022 Winter Olympics, for which we feel very grateful. Some CEECs possess traditional advantages on winter sports, while others even have the experience of hosting the Winter Olympics. China is willing to deepen exchanges and cooperation with all CEECs on hosting the major international sports events, training athletes and coaches, etc. In recent years, the number of Chinese tourists to CEECs has witnessed a sustained increase, which underlines the importance of constantly strengthening the "16+1 Cooperation" on the construction of the tourism industry, exchange of management experiences, research and development on the new tourism products, continuously enriching the tourism benefits, and improving the quality and influence of tourism products.

Fourthly, we should face forward to the future and open up a new prospect of the "16+1" cultural and people-to-people exchanges. We should strengthen the media cooperation and organize events of great effectiveness for the China-CEEC Media Exchange Year. Both sides should also carry out various forms of dialogues and enhance the visibility of the cooperation. The foundation of the "16+1" cultural and people-to-people exchanges lies in the people and the development depends on the youngsters. Both sides should promote the normalization and institutionalization of the youth exchanges. China will organize the "Youth Bridge" programs to invite 1000 youngsters from Central and Eastern European countries to train in China in the next decade. We hope that these young people from 17 countries can join hands to pass on the friendly cooperation to the next generation. In addition, the think tank exchange should be further promoted and developed into a major pillar of the cultural and people-to-people exchanges that provide more intellectual support and countermeasure proposals for the deepening of the

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