

Speech by HE Ambassador Wang Lutong to the NZCFS Conference, 2014

His Workship Lawrence Yule, the mayor of Hastings,

Mr. Dave Bromwich, National President of New Zealand China Friendship Society,

Mr. Ngahiwi Tomoana and Mr. Ngati Kahungunu, the iwi chair of the Society,

Distinguished Presidents of 15 Branches,

Mr. Patrick English, the Executive Director of NZ China Council,

Mr. Raymond Huo MP,

Dear friends,

Kia ora. Good morning.大家上午好。

It's truly a pleasure to see all of you here. Hastings is the first city in New Zealand to have established sister relationship with China, it's just fitting and proper to hold the annual conference of Society. It's with excitement that I have been looking forward to this conference. It's a great reunion not only to share the joy of rewarding work of the past years, but also to look to the future of our relationship.

Recently, the *New Zealand Herald* printed a China edition. There were articles and interviews of quite a few influential figures in New Zealand. Here, I just quoted two of them.

Mr. Tim Groser, Minister of Trade, said that with the best possible political relationship and the platform of a comprehensive FTA that other countries would love to emulate, Prime Minister John Key and President Xi Jinping took the decision in Beijing in March to raise the bar once again in terms of the level of our ambition. Sir Don McKinnon, Chairman of New Zealand China Council, in his article named "New Zealand's Chinese Century" said that, our prosperity, our social cohesiveness, our sense of who we are as a nation is increasingly dependent on how well we integrate new Chinese dimension into New Zealand's economic and cultural life. New Zealand's shift to China is the most fundamental change to our external relations for at least two generations.

I was greatly inspired by these encouragements. As the Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand, I also feel much responsibility on the shoulders, when it comes to promoting the relationship and meeting the ever-increasing demands from both governments and peoples. It is indeed a challenging and demanding job, and a long-term and formidable task. I have been here for more than half a year. When looking back, we have every reason to be proud of what we have achieved. It also fills me with confidence. Because at any moment, I could always count on your support and hospitality which has been overwhelming.

Six decades ago, soon after the founding of the People's Republic of China, a group of committed New Zealanders formed the society to promote better ties with China. They reached out their

hands of goodwill and friendship to Chinese people in times of need. They also helped to increase New Zealanders' understanding about the New China, foster the diplomatic recognition of China by New Zealand and bring our two peoples closer through the time. Without their great vision and unremitting efforts, the China-NZ friendship would not have been so prosperous and flourishing today. All the Society members have worked so hard and added so much energy and vitality to the development of our bilateral relation. Your contribution is well recognized.

On this occasion, I'd also like to express our condolences for the passing away of Mr. John Scott last week, who was New Zealand's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and who signed the joint communiqué between our two countries in New York in 1972 with his Chinese counterpart Mr. Huang Hua.

In Chinese, we often say, 前人栽树, 后人乘凉, the younger generations would enjoy the shade as the forefathers plant trees. Since my arrival, I have taken part in quite a few events of the Society related to the young members. In particular, I am delighted to learn that *The New Zealand China Friendship Society Futures Group* was established in early April, and the Facebook page of Wellington branch is now running with the young members' ideas and designing. Is there anything more exciting than witnessing the light green buds sprouting from the trees in spring?

Nowadays young people and youth-oriented projects play a more decisive role in NZ-China exchanges, covering various fields of our social and economic life, among which education is a prominent aspect.

As the largest source of foreign students, there're more than 60,000 Chinese students studying in NZ, accounting for 29% of the total. According to Education NZ forecasts, this number will increase by 6% a year and double by 2025. Meanwhile, there're over 23,000 students in NZ learning Chinese and the number is going up day by day. I believe Mr. Raymond Huo MP would talk more about it and a new initiative this afternoon.

The academic cooperation among universities is also growing vigorously. To name a few, New Zealand Center in Peking University opened in 2006, New Zealand Research Center in Xiamen University opened in 2009 and New Zealand Contemporary China Research Center in Victoria University of Wellington opened in the same year. Three Confucius Institutes are now operating in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Such cooperative ties have not only contributed significantly to the fostering of closer relationship between our universities and young students, but also to the building of a more informative, effective and sustainable relation between China and New Zealand with the participation of young generation.

Last week, while addressing a conference marking the 60th anniversary of the Chinese People's

Friendship Association, Chinese President Xi Jinping remarked that, Friendship Association played an irreplaceable role in promoting friendship between nations. Friendship between peoples is a strength to promote world peace and development, as well as a precondition to realize win-win cooperation. He called on the Association to innovate and explore broader people-to-people exchanges, including the building of sister cities and cooperative ties at local level.

An ocean away in New Zealand, the NZ-China Friendship Society has been playing such a crucial role for decades in the deepening of mutual understanding and friendship. The Society has always been and will continue to be one of the most valued friends of the Chinese people, and a lighthouse to guide the young generation in broadening and deepening such friendship in their vision and wisdom.

We strongly believe, with broad and consistent support from peoples of all walks of life, this time-honored friendship will lead us into a richer, stronger and more diverse partnership in the days to come, and benefit our two peoples from generation to generation.

Last but not the least, I would like to convey the greetings from an old friend of the Society, Mr. Jayson Zhang, the husband of Chinese consul-general Tan Xiutian in Christchurch and also a former senior diplomat. Mr.Zhang, who launched his Chinese-English poetic album *The Beauty of New Zealand* at the conference last year, has generously donated 5,000 NZ dollars of the profit to the NZ China Friendship Society.

Before I wind up my speech, may I ask you to join me for a big applause to Mr.Zhang's generosity and devotion to China New Zealand friendship.

Thank you.

Ambassador Wang Lutong,

23rd May 2014, at the NZCFS National Conference