



**EUROPEAN COUNCIL
THE PRESIDENT**



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**Remarks by President of European Council
Herman Van Rompuy
at the closing session of the EU-China Urbanisation Forum**

First of all let me congratulate the organisers of this magnificent forum and its exhibition for the work accomplished. I understand that so many experts have been participating in the events today. The numbers of European participants that have made the journey to be present at the event and give their expertise is particularly remarkable. I congratulate you all on the success you are having.

We have just come from a successful EU-China summit which has set the tone for the start of a new era of cooperation between the European Union and China. We had a very good meeting with Premier Li Keqiang on numerous issues, not least on China's ambitious plans for the urbanisation of its country. I recall how Premier Li Keqiang launched the urbanisation forum last year in Brussels when he visited us as Vice-Premier at the time. The move of such a large proportion of the Chinese population into an urban environment is a huge undertaking. It will shape the society of the future. It will change the lives of millions of people.

Actually, it will reshape society. Cities have always been engines of change and transformation throughout history and across civilisations. The EU-China Urbanisation Partnership launched just a year ago has already become an important, flagship initiative for the EU-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. It is not just a matter involving urban experts and representatives of local governments from Europe and China but it has to involve by its very nature ordinary citizens from Europe and China. I support the idea of trying to find effective solutions to the challenges of urbanisation at the most decentralized level, where the effects are most keenly felt.

P R E S S

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At the same time, the variety of topics discussed at today's Forum – from urban planning to energy; transport and infrastructure to social protection and health; social mobility to cultural heritage, highlights important issues. Firstly, that urbanisation is a complex and comprehensive process. Secondly, that the EU-China Urbanisation Partnership fills a real gap in our relations and addresses problems and needs which are common for both Europeans and Chinese. And last but not least that there is a great potential to enhance our cooperation.

In fact, China's goal to let move millions of persons from the countryside to the cities every year is unprecedented in the speed and the number of people involved.

This trend should make a positive contribution to economic growth and prosperity. In other words, it is about making individual human lives better. This is our shared aspiration, and the real aim of our partnership.

Urbanisation is a part of an on-going process to find a proper balance between the need to protect environment and natural resources and a legitimate interest in securing economic growth. In this sense although urbanisation in Europe and in China are at different stages, we share the same challenge.

This should be the driving force for our growing cooperation. In this context Europe can offer a lot. Over the years we have been developing experience and expertise in addressing challenges of sustainable development. We can offer numerous examples of successful and vibrant cities, including some that have overcome serious challenges to regenerate, through innovative policy making.

There is also another dimension of urbanisation process – agriculture and rural development, and also in this area, the EU is well placed to present its achievements and share its expertise. Let's us also not forget that urbanisation process should be also a strong driving force for our respective business communities.

I am sure that during the discussion at the Forum many ideas and solutions were identified that will be developed within the framework of the EU-China Urbanisation Partnership and will contribute in meeting our common goal of securing sustainable growth in China and the EU.

In fact we are working on an ambitious, forward looking the EU-China 2020 Agenda, providing a solid basis for expanding our relations in a longer term to meet expectation of both Europeans and Chinese in terms of strategic perspective and concrete engagement. I am pleased to say that the EU-China Partnership Urbanisation is high on our agenda for next several years and I am looking forward to welcoming you next year in Brussels on the occasion of the next EU-China Urbanisation Forum