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Informal Meeting

of Senior Officials of Ministries of Culture
and Senior Officials responsible for culture
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Inquiry in the
“Culture in EU External Relations”
a European Union Commissions Agenda

I am honored to be a panelist in such a distinguished company.

Within, the total cultural cooperation, between the EU, and China I can refer to my specific experience for Greece.

My involvement with China dates back to 1956 when the Greece-China Association, was, established. Since, that time, the efforts of the Association have been almost exclusively, devoted, to cultural relations, learning, mutual visits, seminars and language classes.

This activity was of course, supported by a common spiritual heritage of 3.000 years a fertile ground, for, interchange.

Plato, Aristotle, the Socratic philosophers lived side by side with Confucius, in history. Through turbulent times, their ancient spirituality and cultures survived. Honor uniting people and nations.

Greece can speak of similar cultural and spiritual strengths ensuring its, continuity, of existence through the millennia.

Both these ancient civilizations have, nurtured, world cultures and now China's, new silk Road will, with the new economic cross border cooperation of the Eurasian States, bring rich cultural interaction of diverse cultures, same as 2.000 years ago during the Han Dynasty.

Today the inquiry of “Culture in EU relations, describes in detail all steps, necessary, to ensure, cultural relations and its importance is recognized in a difficult global environment. It advocates mutual learning and sharing and envisages, a global cultural citizenship furthered by digital revolution, social media and large scale political and social changes world wide.

It touches also I believe, a crucial point that leads to a general question as to the form Societies are developing.

I quote

“Yet there is also a dark side to this globalization. Cultural actors both in Europe and elsewhere are confronted, by the growing, concentration of ownership and power in the hands of massive trans-national conglomerates, as well as in a small number of privileged cities and regions. This concentration is already limiting cultural freedom

and creativity. It will also restrict the scope of trans-national cultural exchange, unless mechanisms are devised to promote small scale and local cultural entrepreneurship”.

In this respect China, same, as other countries is facing the challenge of a globalized popular culture, mostly connected to consumption industries.

Culture in the sense of creating civilizations, through language and all arts, is in danger, of a being overrun, by commercialized mass cultural movements. These reach down to the broad population, to towns and villages.

Besides content, however, even notable works of art, of diverse cultures are, as aforesaid, in a world primarily of commerce, under corporate control of few and become more showcases, a form of entertainment, rather than, reaching broadly through society in the process of learning.

These thoughts deriving from cultural relations, obviously beg the question as to the values and culture of the future. Is a mostly practical and hedonistic consumption culture that confronts what virtues kept the fabric of society intact from globalization to challenge greatly the diversity of cultures?? For instance, here in Greece we already see the emergence of foreign (mostly English) vocabularies in everyday linguistic usage, with a rapid decrease of knowledge of their own mother tongue and its great richness.

Simplifications and growth of the technical world, foster the growth of such developments and it is clear in this example that language being the crucial means of rich communication and symbolism starts to atrophy.

China’s leaders we understand are gravely concerned about many cultural imports of the West and attempt to promote their traditional ways and values.

Her stance and evolution culturally will be highly important for the world considering her population, power and influence. What is the future of a new Silk Road?

A new road has been created by Greek Seamen and others between Europe and China; it could be named the Salt Sea Road.

Over 2.500 ships have been built by Greek Nationals in China and a large number of engineers, architects, businesses, experts in Shipping, traders, brokers are now living in China acquiring the same time the experience of the Chinese people, their philosophy and their art.

Thousands of tons of goods are transported daily from China to Europe and vice versa, daily.

This new Salt Sea Road together with the airline traffic, in addition to the New Eurasian Roads will change the culture eventually of both nations of China and the Westerns nations.

Exchange of Tourism increasing daily is playing an important role.

The Chinese people are eager to learn our culture to see our antiquities in a way that shows that we feel our heritage and our traditions.

All these aspects have to be carefully studied in order these developments, bring us near to a better, more prosperous and peaceful world.

Ancient civilizations have established the roots for such, an expansion. It is for us now to create and implement future visions.

We hope that our Leaders our Teachers our Politicians our Universities will educate the new generation in this spirit.

All this can only be achieved with a common and continuous dialog between nation and people who share the same principles. Promoting Economic Links education and employment.

Our Association and our sister Association in all European countries are ready to assist this effort with the coordination of our Head office for Friendship between nations in China.