

INTRODUCTORY SPEECH BY IÑIGO MENDEZ DE VIGO, PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF EUROPE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE SPEECH BY H.E. XI JINPING, PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

(BRUGES, 1 APRIL 2014)

Your Majesties,

President of the People's Republic of China,

President of the European Council,

Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium,

High Representative for Foreign Affairs of the EU

Commissioners,

President of the Committee of the Regions,

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the College of Europe it is an honour to welcome His Excellency Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China. What a great opportunity it is for this institution to listen this morning to your speech on the future of Europe and our relations with your country. Si Chusi Zaoshan jao (sí chuusi tsaoshán jáao).

For the last six decades, the College of Europe has been devoted to European integration. Today, the College is the most prestigious postgraduate institution in Europe. 330 students in Bruges and up to 120 students in Natolin from more than 50 countries work together following an intensive programme. The idea of its founder, Salvador de Madariaga, was to establish a College where university graduates from many different countries could study and live together to overcome the war, support coexistence and build up the European way of life. In 2014, the European way of life means peace, progress, democracy, respect of human rights, cohesion and solidarity.

The relationship between China and Europe is based on trust and loyalty. As a Spanish philosopher, Ortega y Gasset, once said: "loyalty is the shortest path between two hearts". The EU-China Strategic Partnership provides us with a valuable framework to reinforce our relations. But may I say that the real soul of a Strategic partnership are the people who make it possible. At the end of the day, it is us, politicians, professors, researchers, students who bring about our mutual understanding to build a good relationship between our two societies. This is the idea that underlies in the creation of the College of Europe.

Just a few days ago the students of the College of Europe had the opportunity to meet Barack Obama, President of the USA. Now they have the chance to meet another world leader. These students are preparing themselves to be the future European leaders. They will be the ones who will have to deal with those future leaders you are now training in China.

Cooperation in education, research, training, science and culture mutually enriches China and Europe. It also contributes to overcome our society's weaknesses and to allow us to look to the future with confidence and optimism. As Confucius said in the Analects: "Education breeds confidence; confidence breeds hope; hope breeds peace."

Thank you very much.