

Shanghai gala

8 juni 2010

晚上好 Wanshang hao (Goedenavond)

Ladies and gentlemen
(consul, gouverneur,...)

Tonight the province of Antwerp is feeling at home.
Not only because we are on Belgian soil but also because we are in China.

The province of Antwerp has a sister-agreement with the Province of Shaanxi for already 25 years. I am sure that you all will agree with me that the idea to join hands two and half decades ago, was a flash of brilliance. In the footsteps of dr Paul Janssen we established a very productive friendship.

This year in September we celebrate the 25th anniversary. For this reason we welcomed an exposition on the Tang-dynasty in Antwerp a couple of months ago. One of the many highlights in our collaboration. Later this year we will organise a seminar in Shaanxi on sustainable economy, geothermic and sustainable construction.

Just recently I have learned that my former colleague Governor Yuan has been made Party Secretary of the province of Shanxi. Therefore he could not be present here today. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate mister Yuan. Thereby I am convinced that the good relationship between Antwerp and Shaanxi will remain. A very special welcome to(vervanger)

The past couple of days I have spoken a lot about the different assets the province of Antwerp has. Our diamonds, fashion, harbour, high-tech companies, universities,... Tonight everyone represents one of those assets, benefits from them or is curious to explore them better for mutual gain.

As a governor I have the honour to represent them all and welcome you to this gala-reception.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As governor of the province of Antwerp I am very happy and proud that every week in the Belgian Pavilion is kind of Antwerp week. Even the architect of the Pavilion is from Antwerp. The contribution of Antwerp spearheads is remarkable. Lots of the crown jewels are shown there permanently. Diamonds, fashion, creative economy, smart logistics, sustainable development,...

That is no coincidence. The province of Antwerp is a highly prosperous industrialized region in the north of Belgium. Belgium is one of the founding members of the European Union. The capital of Belgium, Brussels, is home to the headquarters of the European Union and a host of other international organizations and corporations.

The province of Antwerp is widely acknowledged as a powerhouse of the national economy. The province is strategically located in Flanders, Belgium's Dutch-speaking region but well known for its highly-educated multilingual population. One of the strengths of Antwerp is the priority given to R&D and the implementation of technology in the field of sustainable energy.

Economically, Antwerp has long been recognized as one of the world's premier cities for diamonds and fashion.

But Antwerp has far more to offer. For any company pursuing European market expansion, Antwerp is the logical base because of its world-class port, multimodal Europe-wide connections, highly creative workforce and inexpensive real estate. The people from POM Antwerp, our development authority, can inform you about this. Tonight is the end of their economic visit to several regions in China. To enhance trade relations between China and Belgium they have appointed a representative in Chongqing.

All this combined with the general high quality of life makes our province the ideal place for people willing to invest, work, live or study.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Tonight is an opportunity to get to know each other better. I would like to thank the Consul for his hospitality by giving him an example of Antwerp fashion.

Let this evening be a proof of the cordial ties which have always united our countries, notwithstanding the distance that separates them. This distance however only exists in kilometres, not in our minds.

Thank you,

Cathy Berx