Introductory remarks by
Herman VAN ROMPUY
President of the European Council
at the EU-China Summit

Mr Prime Minister, dear members of the Chinese delegation,

We have worked constructively for two days during ASEM 8. I thank you, Mr Prime Minister, for the precious contribution you gave to ensure the success of ASEM 8, which followed the success of the previous ASEM you chaired in Beijing in 2008. I was not there at the time, President Barroso was present, as on so many others Summits, but colleagues told me the terrific job you have done in chairing the meeting and I availed myself as a guidance to conduct our important discussions!

Today we meet for the EU-China Summit. I know it is the 13th but I would like to consider it as the first, to protect ourselves against bad luck. The first after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. And it is also my first as President of the European Council.

I welcome also your strong and prominent delegation.

Our relations are rooted in 35 years of diplomatic relations. The 12 previous summits have developed a dynamic and comprehensive partnership. We have come a long way since our first Summit in London in 1998. The EU also has made a long way. The EU of 1998 is not any longer the EU of 2010.

Today, it is not time for complacency. We want to move this relationship forward in the years to come. The EU and China have a strategic partnership of the utmost importance.

We are both major players in the world and therefore naturally share outlook and concern on many issues. In ASEM 8 we discussed global economic governance, especially with the G20 in front of us. We focused on the Eurasian cooperation. And for the Union, China is at the core of this process as one of our key partners not only in Asia but on the global stage.
We share common responsibilities for the world economy. We recognize the considerable contribution of China to world growth. Our contribution at this stage is providing stability in our own area and solidarity with the Least Developed Countries via the Millennium Development Goals and the fast start financing for climate change.

The EU economy is growing again. I just said it at the EU-Korea Summit. It is growing again at an average in 2010 of almost 2%. Our growth is more based on domestic demand than we expected. Private consumption, private investment contribute more than inventories and net exports. The situation is nevertheless fragile, due to the divergences in the eurozone. On the other hand, we showed determination in setting up a safety net of 750 billions euro, in encouraging reform programmes in many Member States and in our economic governance.

The EU is still producing 21% of world GDP. We are engaged to enhance that performance on a structural base, taking into account that mature economies grow slower than emerging countries.

Mr Prime Minister,

I also see a clear scope for further bilateral cooperation. As in a true partnership, we have commonalities, but at the same time also differences in our approach. This is to be expected and should not impede our joint will to bring our relationship to a higher level. To the contrary, they should stimulate our discussion. I repeat that we have common responsibilities. Our own interests coincide more and more with the global interests.

Let this first Summit after the Lisbon Treaty set a common direction, to reinforce our determination, to build our mutual trust and to harvest feasible concrete results.

Once again, I wish you all welcome here in Brussels in this building of the European Council.

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