

**Speech by Clifford Borg-Marks, Ambassador of Malta, at the Opening Ceremony of the 1<sup>st</sup> China-Europe Legal Forum: Enhancing Legal Exchanges and Promoting Trade and Economic Cooperation, Beijing, October 25, 2013**

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Distinguished guests and participants,

I feel honoured to represent the European Union at this Opening Ceremony for the 1<sup>st</sup> China-Europe Legal Forum.

Five years have passed, almost exactly to the day, since the Opening Ceremony for the China-EU School of Law itself.

Since then the first four batches of CESL graduates from the years 2010 to 2013, have entered the professional work force and started contributing to society as judges, prosecutors, lawyers and in-house counsel, confident in their knowledge of and training in both Chinese law and EU law.

This Forum represents another important milestone for CESL. We expect it to pave the way for a series of similar events to be organized in the years to come, and we are confident that these events will constitute an important platform for dialogue between China and the EU.

The particular theme of this year's event will no doubt benefit the growing economic and trade exchanges, and will further open the path to a sustainable dialogue.

CESL is a flagship project aimed at developing and reinforcing exchanges between China and the EU on the reciprocal knowledge of legal systems, and is therefore closely related to several global objectives of the European Union.

It provides increased opportunities for a common frame of reference when it comes to the vital nature of the rule of law, thus facilitating our dialogue on the gamut of legal issues faced by our citizens and enterprises.

The sound development of EU-China economic and trade relations is closely linked to the goals of this project. The availability of top-notch legal services, reliable law firms, well-trained judges and prosecutors is absolutely necessary, and enhances both legal reform and business confidence.

The EU believes that legal education is a core issue in its co-operation program with China, not only in the area of economic and trade relations, but also with regard to the prevention of environmental degradation, support for an open society based on the rule of law, and respect for human rights, through the promotion of good governance.

What is being done at CESL relates closely to other sectors of mutual interest for China and the EU, and in particular to programs aimed to support postgraduate studies and research for Chinese students in Europe, to increase awareness of competition policy, and to establish best practices in environmental protection law and intellectual property law.

Today's Forum is a clear indication of the maturity and consolidated capacity that CESL has acquired as a platform for academic exchange on relevant legal affairs since the project started.

Today we understand that the EU's challenge in funding CESL is fully shared by China, and we also understand that differences are not an obstacle when there is a common understanding and common goals.

I take this opportunity to thank the China University of Political Science and Law for graciously hosting CESL and for co-hosting today's event, and the consortium of universities comprising CUPL, Tsinghua University and the Chinese National Prosecutors College, as well as 12 universities from 10 EU Member States, for so ably managing the project.

I would also like to thank the other co-sponsors, namely, the China Law Society and China Development Bank for helping to make today's event possible.

I hope you all enjoy a valuable and pleasant learning experience throughout the day!

Thank you.