

President Ning's remarks on the Opening Ceremony of the joint Confucius Institute, in Leuven, Belgium, on Nov. 20, 2008

President Johan De Graeve,

His Excellency Ambassador Zhang,

Educational Counselor Mr. Wang,

Educational Counselor Ms. Xue,

Dear distinguished guests,

Dear colleagues and students of GROUP T and Beijing Jiaotong University,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good afternoon!

Today is a special day. Together we welcome the opening of the Confucius Institute in Leuven. On behalf of Beijing Jiaotong University, I would like to express our warm congratulations to our dear colleagues from both the Chinese side and the Belgian side who made today's achievement possible. As Co-Chairman of the Confucius Institute, may I share the pride and pleasure with our Chairman, Dr. Johan De Graeve, President of GROUP T. We are so glad to see the final outcome of our long-time joint efforts turn out to be so pleasing and encouraging. We are also glad to see the opening event of our Confucius Institute so well attended by so many distinguished friends, and colleagues and students from both

GROUP T and Beijing Jiaotong University. Thank you all for joining us!

Leuven is a renowned historical center of culture and education in Europe. For hundreds of years, Leuven has been the place where classic knowledge is passed on and modern frontiers are explored. Among such classic knowledge is the wisdom and philosophy of an ancient Chinese sage, Kong Zi, also known as the Confucius. Among such new frontiers is the establishment of the Confucius Institute as a new form of international education and culture exchange and a new bond to promote friendship between China and Belgium.

Born in 551 BC, the Confucius was the most famous and respected philosopher and educator in Chinese history. Throughout his life, he had been dedicated to the cause of searching for the ultimate answer to a better living and peace in a war-plagued era, disseminating knowledge to the common people, and promoting the philosophy of ruling and living with the virtues of benevolence and care. Trying to realize such purposes, the Confucius traveled as far and long as he could into all the ruling states in the Chinese empire. At his time, such traveling was already considered “inter-national”. Given his perseverance and determination, if he had already known about the rest of the world, he would have definitely traveled into those places as well. Although he didn’t see the successful adoption of his philosophy during his own life, the

over two thousand years of Chinese history after him saw it. For those two thousand years, although there were from time to time periods of turmoil, it was benevolence and care that always returned to restore peace and harmony among our people.

Peace and harmony are what is demanded most by the whole mankind right now. In today's world, the powerful try to manipulate for endless more benefits with less consideration of welfare for other peoples, which causes much international hostility and conflict. Especially when we look at today's worldwide financial difficulty, it is actually a result from the unchained greed and irresponsibility of those who have the power. Maybe it's time for us to start recollecting the Confucius' philosophy of benevolence and care. And I hope our newly born Confucius Institute in the heart of Europe can serve as a small step towards that direction.

The Confucius Institute is purposed to promoting cultural and educational exchange. We believe in cooperation and partnership out of good will and mutual trust. We believe in sharing and understanding.

As a good and handy example, the success of cooperation between Beijing Jiaotong University and GROUP T has been a result from good will and mutual trust, sharing and understanding. That's why for over eight years, our cooperation has been getting even stronger

and more robust. That's why today we walk side by side to establish this Confucius Institute.

Without mutual understanding and trust, collaborations won't last, because people's feelings get hurt. We need to insist on the idea of extending benevolence and care to our partners. We need to pay considerations to our friends. We try to find out common interests in the long run and visions into future.

With GROUP T, we see the international environment of undergraduate engineering study as our common interest and vision. As a national key university in China, Beijing Jiaotong University has been known for her strengths in engineering and technology. Besides that, we also offer multi-disciplinary opportunities for our student in management and humanities, because for today we need to foster all-around engineering talents, entrepreneurs, social scientists and policy makers. At the same time, for years, we have been putting a great amount of effort in internationalizing our education for the benefits of our students, professors and partners. We have established active and fruitful cooperative relations with over 50 universities abroad, focusing on different areas and directions. In undergraduate engineering study, GROUP T has the advantage of programs taught in English. In common thinking, both of our two institutions want to foster talents for the globalizing world, where we found the basis and

foundation for our successful and fruitful cooperation.

Today, we have found another area of common interest, the Confucius Institute, as President De Graeve has long been an enthusiast in Chinese culture and we share the belief that our world can a better one if we can give more thought about the Confucius' philosophy of benevolence and care.

We found international connections through the joint undergraduate engineering education with GROUP T. GROUP T found Chinese connections through the joint Confucius Institute with Beijing Jiaotong University. It's been a great pleasure and gain for both sides.

We have big plans for our Confucius Institute. We hope the Confucius Institute will serve as a bond of friendship and a place of cultural exploration not only between our two institutions but also between our two countries, and even further, between the East and the West. These plans will be achieved through our closer collaborations and joint efforts.

Once gain, I must express my sincere gratitude to our colleagues who contributed to the establishment of the Confucius Institute, and to our friends who are kindly present at today's event out of your busy schedules. I also want to say a few words to our dear

students of Beijing Jiaotong University. You are always the greatest asset to your alma mater. You are here in Leuven because we at home have high hopes for you. We hope you can keep excelling in an international environment. We hope you can serve as ambassadors of friendship to Europe. We hope you can set an example of successful cross-cultural educational cooperation. And prior to all the above, we hope you study well, not only the major, but also the languages and the cultures, and enjoy life in Belgium.

Thank you!