

Speech: Matt Hancock speaking at the CBI Annual Chinese New Year Dinner

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Or, as I hope translates to English: good evening Ambassador Liu and honoured guests.

It's a real privilege to be here tonight to celebrate Chinese New Year with you all and mark the arrival of the Year of the Dog.

I was born in the Year of the Horse; apparently Horses like me 'are either naturally good public speakers or have a habit of talking too much'.

I'm not sure which one applies to me – let me know in a couple of hours after I've finished...

It's an exciting time for relations between our two countries. As we open the next chapter in our golden era, look at the breadth of the cultural, political and economic partnership just over the past two months.

The V&A Museum has opened a brand new design gallery in Shenzhen, the first branch of a national British museum outside the UK.

The historic Terracotta Warriors are on display in Liverpool.

And the Prime Minister visited China to meet President Xi and Premier Li, signing over 9 billion pounds worth of commercial deals, building on the vast rise in trade over the past decade.

And as we look forward to the Year of the Dog, I want to take a moment to look at this vital relationship.

And especially, talk about how we can use the transformational power of new digital technology to make this golden era even more golden.

Making the most of change

The world around us is changing faster than ever before. And yet the blistering pace of change we're currently seeing is probably the slowest that we'll see in the rest of our lifetimes.

And it's down to the incredible potential of new technologies, especially AI, which are constantly learning and getting exponentially better every single day.

Both China and Britain understand the potential of this fourth industrial revolution – and the need to relentlessly pursue new technology.

This forward thinking approach has been at the heart of our strengthening

relationship over the last decade, and we've seen some remarkable hi-tech success stories over the past few months.

Huawei has recently announced a new commitment to 3 billion pounds of procurement from the UK. Gordon – thank you for your personal commitment and Huawei's vote of confidence in our world-leading tech industry. You provide the sort of leadership which is crucial for forging this sort of relationship.

Cambridge-based Astra Zeneca and Chinese tech giants Alibaba have announced they're coming together to build smart health systems, to help chest patients in China get vital treatment more quickly.

And the futuristic driverless pods used at Heathrow's Terminal 5 will soon be appearing in China thanks to a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding.

And it's not just tech firms and start-ups that are making the most of these opportunities.

Tech is revolutionising all sectors, whether through autonomous vehicles helping us drive more safely or machine learning making it easier for doctors to find cancerous cells, saving and improving lives.

The question that matters is how we can seize these opportunities of change to expand the potential to make both our nations more prosperous and better places to live.

Looking forward

We share this ambition and determination. AI pioneer and founder of Google China Dr Kai-Fu Lee recently said the UK is home to the 'hottest AI companies in the world, producing breakthroughs of global significance'.

Here, we're investing heavily in AI and robotics and are working hard to attract the best and brightest research talent from all over the world.

We are determined to be one of the leading places in the world for the development and deployment of AI. And we will share that global leadership with China.

Our universities – the second biggest destination for Chinese students – lie at the heart of this revolution.

But we cannot do this solely from our shores. To make the most of these opportunities we will need to reach common understanding and co-operate on a wide range of issues. We must do this together.

And let's be frank. China and the UK come at some of the questions around, for example data protection, from very different philosophical backgrounds.

This makes it more important than ever that we understand each other – and respect each other's point of view – so we can come to the right solutions and work together.

We, for instance, have stronger protections for data and intellectual property. And while we ask China to respect these protections, we also respect China, and the progress we have seen in mutual understanding.

I was delighted that in December, we partnered with you in the first bilateral science and innovation strategy that China has developed jointly with another country.

This outlines, in the most advanced way yet, shared principles for intellectual property.

Agreements like this are crucial to unlocking the vast opportunities of co-operation and harnessing this technology for good.

We want to work ever closer with China, and other tech-minded countries around the world.

And I was delighted that during the Prime Minister's recent visit, agreements were signed on emerging technologies across the board – twelve in total, including space, smart cities and autonomous vehicles.

For this is the future. Countries that work with, not against, technology, will be the ones that flourish.

Flourishing as two vibrant, prosperous nations using technology to drive growth and make life better for our citizens and people across the world.

For if we have learnt one thing this past generation, then we have learnt this.

Free markets, in a proper framework, have been the most powerful force for good the world has ever seen – underpinned by the protection of property, openness to trade and sound finance.

China's journey is testament to this fact. Britain may have pioneered the market economy but, by God, China is proving it works.

You have lifted people from poverty more quickly than ever before in human history. We salute you.

And what's more, the free market rests on an understanding that business, done right, is a force for good in the world.

You can't run a good business unless you're solving problems for someone else. Solve them so well that they're prepared to pay you.

This is how prosperity is built. Our nations both understand this.

Conclusion

The UK and China are no strangers to changing history through our innovation and enterprise.

And as we celebrate the Year of the Dog, let's channel this spirit and just

imagine what more we can do when we work together in the years ahead.

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Culture and education, tools to strengthen European identity and social cohesion

The aim of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. At the meeting of the CoR's SEDEC commission on 21 February, members discussed two opinions focusing on the role of education and culture for strengthening European identity and social cohesion.

Rapporteurs **Tanya Hristova** (BG/EPP) and **Babette Winter** (DE/PES) pointed out that education and culture have a broad impact on all areas of life and contribute to social inclusion and cohesion. Therefore the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage should provide a framework for supporting regional cultural development, opening up new opportunities for sustainable cultural tourism and improving opportunities for cultural mobility.

Ms Hristova's opinion on ["Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture"](#) was adopted by SEDEC members in Wednesday's meeting. It welcomes the European Commission's aim to establish a European Education Area by 2025. While education remains a national competence, it recommends Member States to promote language learning from an early age and familiarise learners with a common European cultural heritage, European history and the processes of European integration. SEDEC members strongly support boosting the Erasmus+ programme with the aim of doubling the number of participants.

The opinion underlines the critical importance of looking into the regional disparities and economic and social consequences that arise from skills gaps and mismatches in the EU. Against the backdrop of digitalisation of European education, the rapporteur – Mayor of Gabrovo – pointed out that many rural and sparsely populated areas still lack high-speed connectivity and regions facing demographic and social challenges may struggle to provide teachers with adequate digital skills, competences and equipment.

Following a request from the Bulgarian presidency, Ms Winter is preparing an opinion which focuses on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for more cohesive and sustainable regions in the EU. The rapporteur, State Secretary for Europe and Culture in the Thuringia State Chancellery, highlighted that European cultural heritage can contribute to bringing communities together, promoting regional development and creating long-term local employment. Both

opinions are scheduled for adoption at the CoR plenary on 16–17 May.

In the second semester of 2018, cultural heritage will also be the priority area of the [Knowledge Exchange Platform](#) (KEP) set up between the European Committee of the Regions and the European Commission to present new R&I solutions, innovations and best practises. Regeneration of city centres and rural landscapes and innovative re-uses of heritage buildings will be some of the themes to be discussed in various workshops. During the first half of 2018, the KEP will focus on innovating cities with nature and nature-based solutions. More information: [KEP action plan 2018](#)

Following two opinions were also adopted by the SEDEC members:

The next meeting of CoR's SEDEC commission – standing for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture – will take place on 23 April.

[Statement by President Juncker ahead of the Italian parliamentary elections](#)

Elections are a moment of democracy, and this applies to Italy – a country that is very close to my heart.

On 4 March the Italians will go to the polls and cast their votes. Whatever the outcome, I am confident that we will have a government that makes sure that Italy remains a central player in Europe and in shaping its future.

[European Week of Regions and Cities 2018: Still looking for counterparts?](#)

□Some regions and cities have expressed their needs to find or join a regional partnership.

Have a look at the final [partner search overview](#) and get in touch. Application to become a partner of the European Week of Regions and Cities 2018 is open until 30th March.

Get also inspired by the sessions organised in the framework of the [#EURegionsWeek 2017](#).

Background – EP Press Kit for the informal EU summit on 23 February 2018

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