



## **“The Hamburg Summit: China meets Europe”**

Opening speech

by

**Gerhard Schröder**

**Former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany**

*- Check Against Delivery -*

Hamburg Chamber of Commerce

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Mayor Dr. Tschentscher.

Mr Bergmann,

Mr Li,

Mr Schmidt-Trenz,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The foundations of our trusting and long-lasting cooperation are solid.

In the last four decades, China and Germany have built a very successful partnership - based on a long tradition, mutual respect and a dialogue, which also includes difficult issues.

Germany is China's most important partner in Europe. In recent decades Germany has always chosen the approach of political cooperation in its relations with China.

I am convinced that Cooperation rather than confrontation, should characterize the relationships between countries, even when their political and economic systems differ.

Economic relations constitute an important component of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Germany.

Bilateral trade between the two countries reached more than 180 billion euros in 2017.

This made China Germany's most important trading partner for the second consecutive year, ahead of the United States.

There is evidence of a significant increase in Chinese business activities in Germany. There are currently some 900 Chinese companies operating in Germany.

This economic exchange is enormously important for the opening and internationalization of both our societies, which can learn from one another's social traditions, values and attitudes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In times of great global challenges, China and Germany are important partners for each other.

And in times of global uncertainty, our two countries should strengthen this cooperation. This applies to the full spectrum of Sino-German relations.

It is true that every era confronts uncertainty - however uncertainties at this time are more profound than for decades.

Because the challenges facing us are immense - to name just a few of the most important:

- There is the threat of international terrorism and there is privatised violence, the disintegration of entire states and their structures and the fear of weapons of mass destruction.
  
- Some states seeking to ignore the rules-based order - an example is North Korea with its nuclear weapons and ballistic programs - threatening regional and global security;
  
- Then the election of President Trump in the United States. The “America first” stance will bring about changes for all of us - in trade policies, as well as in foreign and security policies.
  
- European integration has undoubtedly suffered setbacks in recent years. And Great Britain’s decision to leave the EU is a grave example of this.
  
- Bloody wars rage in North Africa and the Middle East, causing millions to flee their homelands.
  
- And Globalization and digitalization of the economy proceeds unabated.

The international rules-based order that has been built up since World War II is under strain.

We have witnessed attacks on international trade and the system that supports it, which is based on the free flow of goods and capital.

Colder trading times will come, times in which national interests are at the forefront. This is not good news for the export industries.

Nevertheless, we should remain committed to the global rules-based trading system.

President Xi and Chancellor Merkel have clearly expressed their commitment to multilateralism, to open trade and just globalization.

Because we have learned that economic exchange between equal partners and on the basis of fair agreements is in the interest of both countries.

We should continue working on this and further expanding the political and economic cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am convinced that dialogue is important at a time when the European Union, Germany and China now have a responsibility for an open global economy.

For example, China is now building corridors that are connecting Europe and China by land and sea, as well as online.

I welcome the opportunities created by the "One Belt one Road initiative".

It will bring people and businesses in Asia and Europe closer together.

This initiative has been received with great interest all over the world – including Germany and Europe.

It is a strong signal that China wants closer, faster, better connections with its main trading partners.

Germany's government is open to cooperation. We want to create synergies between European and Chinese approaches, but we are also committed to our principles.

It should be an open initiative - based on market rules and international standards.

A level-playing field for trade and investment is a critical condition, if we want to maintain the political momentum and support for better connectivity between Europe and Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Sino-German partnership is based on a common conception of the politics of international relations: the strengthening of multilateralism.

We must use the tool of international cooperation to solve old conflicts and stand united to fend off new threats.

In today's world, there is no country that can master all these new challenges alone. The tasks we are facing require a strong and effective multilateral system.

This is why we must intensify the Sino-German strategic partnership in all areas – in politics and culture, as well as in the economy and civil society.

We must resume on the path of partnership in international politics. For this, we need to make use of dialogue and cooperation.

Only together we can successfully master the challenges facing us.

Therefore, we should strengthen our outstanding bilateral partnership – for the mutual benefit of our people and to increase peace and stability.

I wish the Hamburg Summit full success!

Thank you very much for your attention!