

Speech by Vice President Li Xiaolin at 2006 New Zealand Sister Cities Conference

(May 10, 2006 Wellington)

Respected Mayor Ms. Kerry Prendergast,

Respected Chairperson Mr. Alick Shaw,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First of all, I would like to extend, on behalf of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Chinese delegation, warm congratulations to the opening of the conference.

This conference is significant in that it not only marks the 25th anniversary of New Zealand Sister Cities Organization, but also celebrates the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the first pair of sister city relationship between New Zealand and China. In China we call it "double happiness". Since March 4, 1981 when the city of Guilin in Guangxi Autonomous Region and Hastings became the first pair of sister cities, the two countries have twinned 20 pairs of sister cities till now, thanks to the joint efforts made by the two sides. The city of Xiamen and Wellington is among those pairs and this noon, Beijing and Wellington will also formally launch their sister city relationship. Over the years, these sister cities have conducted multi-level and wide range of effective cooperation in fields of trade, technology, culture and education, sports and people-to-people friendship. For instance, in aspects of cultural

communication, Guangzhou and Auckland had held “Guangzhou Day” and “Auckland Day” respectively in the other city. In 2002, in order to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between China and New Zealand, Beijing and Xiamen held the “Beijing and Xiamen Culture Festival” in Wellington, which opened a window for the two peoples to understand each other. In aspects of trade and technology exchanges, Guilin and Hastings are involved in active technological cooperation in the field of horticulture and Guilin built an osmanthus garden in Hastings. The city of Yantai in Shandong Province is in close link with Tauranga in fishery industry. Yantai port and Tauranga port have established friendly ties and the two cities have achieved a lot in cooperation by having frequent senior official exchange visits and sending business delegations to the other city to attend trade fairs. Sister city relationship has opened a new channel for the growth of friendly ties between the two countries and become an effective way to enhance understanding and friendship, promote cooperation and common development between the two peoples.

In the past 25 years, New Zealand Sister Cities Organization had made great contributions to promote communication and cooperation between the cities of New Zealand and those in the other countries. As the organizer and coordinator of sister cities activities in China, the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries has long maintained good cooperative

relationship with New Zealand Sister Cities Organization, providing opportunities for the cities of two countries to exchange information and look for partners. On behalf of CPAFFC, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to New Zealand Sister Cities Organization and those who have made efforts for the continuous development of sister city relations between the two countries.

This time, members of our delegation are from provinces and cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Shandong, Sichuan, Liaoning, Guangxi, Henan and Hainan. Many of the cities they come from haven't yet set up sister city relationship with New Zealand cities, but the delegates are eager to communicate with friends from New Zealand to seek partners. Just as described by the theme of the conference "Capitalising on the Gains", sister cities relationship is one that characterized by mutual benefits. It is believed that through this conference, we will be able to find our shared interests in every field, tap the great potential and inject impetus for further growth of sister city relationship.

As important countries in the Asian Pacific region, China and New Zealand enjoy good bilateral relations and ever expanding cooperation in all fields. China is currently New Zealand's fourth largest trading partner and exporting market as well as the second largest country of origin for imported goods. New Zealand is the first country to sign bilateral agreement with China on China's entry to WTO, the first to acknowledge China's full market economy status and the first developed country to open negotiations with

China on the bilateral free trade zone. Last month, Premier Wen Jiabao just paid a successful official visit to New Zealand where he had talks with Prime Minister Helen Clark. The two state leaders held practical and constructive discussions on strengthening mutual cooperation and achieved important consensus on building an all-round cooperative partnership featuring mutual benefit in the 21st century. The development of bilateral relations certainly has a brighter future.

Both the Chinese people and people of New Zealand are peace-loving peoples. And as an important component of people-to-people friendship, exchange and cooperation between the sister cities serves to promote bilateral development as it suits the fundamental interest of the two peoples as well as their aspiration for world peace and common prosperity. The CPAFFC is willing to work with all friends present here and strive for the cause of sister cities between China and New Zealand in the next 25 years and even a much longer time so as to make greater contributions to the friendship between the two peoples.

In the end, I would like to wish the conference a complete success!

Thank you very much.