



Speech on the 70th Anniversary of Jiangsu People's Association for Friendship Foreign with Foreign Countries

Nanjing, June 12, 2025

Many thanks to the JSPAFFC for its invitation and for organising such a meaningful event!

On April 3, 2010, the Swiss-Chinese Association – French-speaking Region and the Jiangsu People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries signed a Memorandum of Friendship, Exchange and Cooperation. 2025 is therefore marked by the 15th anniversary of this first agreement between our associations, the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Switzerland and China, as well as the 15th anniversary of the collaboration between the Canton of Vaud and the Province of Jiangsu.

It was indeed on 14 October 2010 in Nanjing that the two regions signed this text. In January 2017, the latter was elevated to the rank of twinning, then renewed in 2022.

During these fifteen years, there have been many exchanges in various sectors: economy, health, social, culture, sport, etc. It should be noted, however, that concrete projects, i.e. with a commitment that goes beyond visits by political or technical delegations, conferences, and sporadic events, have remained limited.

To the credit of the Vaud-Jiangsu cooperation, we note above all a two-month internship in the administration of the Vaud State and of the City of Lausanne of an employee of the Wuxi Foreign Affairs Office; two Vaudois experts sent to Zhenjiang for a week to make an assessment as to the opportunity to act jointly in hospital planning; the one-month observation training of two doctors from the First Suqian People's Hospital in the Neonatology Department of the Vaud University Hospital in Lausanne.

We must face things. Bilateral collaborations are not easy to develop. Signing an agreement is easy, bringing it to life is another story. We have left a euphoric period of the first two decades of this century. Many of the agreements made have not led to tangible achievements. Others survive when they are not completely abandoned. Their development is also intimately linked to the people and organizations that are committed to it. However, looking at the photographs taken 10 or 20 years ago, almost all of these actors have disappeared. Will the next generations take up the torch? Nothing is less certain. Primary motivation is hardly enough, because you have to know how to show endurance and self-sacrifice.

"Victory has many fathers, but defeat is an orphan" 胜则争功,退则推罪 it is sometimes said. To be satisfied with the results obtained is something that should not make us forget what has failed or has been finally neglected, to draw the necessary lessons.

After a devastating pandemic and the multiple geopolitical tensions that are currently disrupting the world, it is high time to return to lively and multiple exchanges. Therefore, let us not put the cart with the horse! 不要本末倒置! Let us start or restart with concrete, simple, and limited projects, like what was mentioned above in the field of linguistic, social, and medical training. When they have been conducted to the satisfaction of both parties, it will always be possible to develop them further and then to engrave them in stone in the form of agreements.



To preserve the foundation on which relations have been established over all these years, it is necessary to prepare for it carefully, with mutual respect and without any complacency. At the same time, our Chinese interlocutors and partners must show understanding of the difficulties we are also encountering both in Switzerland and elsewhere.

"We must combine the pessimism of the intellect with the optimism of the will,"¹ wrote Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* published in 1948. Now that is something to inspire us!

Thank you for your attention.

¹ « Pessimismo della ragione, ottimismo della volontà »