

Speech at Second-U.S. Sister Cities Conference

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July 28, 2005

Dear friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

First of all, please allow me to extend, on behalf of Yangzhou Goodwill and Economic Delegation, our regards to you all, and our sincere appreciation to the organization committee for having given me the opportunity present to you our experiences gained from the sister-city projects we have carried out in Yangzhou.

Located in the middle part of Jiangsu Province along the east coast of China Sea and the intersection of Changjiang River, a world-known river and Jing-Hang Canal, the longest man-made river in the world, Yangzhou is a historic city enjoying a history of approximately 2,500 years.

Dating back from history, Yangzhou used to be a key municipality opening up to the world in earlier times. It was also an important port city of foreign trade and the starting point of “silk road at sea”. A magnificent chapter was written on Sino-foreign exchanges. As early as the 7th century, the number of international residents and tourists amounted to ten thousand. Monk Jianzhen, Chief Master of Daming Temple managed to get through risky voyages and began his spread of Tang culture. Choi Chi Won, a renowned Korean scholar of Chinese language and culture and Marco Polo, an Italian traveler, came along from thousand miles away and arrived in Yangzhou, where they served in local government as officials. As a municipality, Yangzhou came

to be a political, economic and cultural center of the southeast of China. In the beginning of the 19th century, Yangzhou had already been one of the ten world-cities with a population exceeding five hundred thousand.

Exchanges constitute the precondition for cooperation; Exchanges lay the foundation for the opening up. It is the long-term opening up and exchanges that have molded the typical features of Yangzhou, open-minded, comprehensive and creative. In the beginning of 1980's, the time when the reform and open-up began to be initiated, Yangzhou opened a new era in the history for contracting international friendly cities. The sister city relationship established in 1982 with Karatsu of Japan marked the initiation followed respectively in 1994 and in 1995 by Kent of the State of Washington and Westport of the State of Connecticut. In 2003, Jiangdu City under the administration of Yangzhou contracted sister city relationship with Stamford of Connecticut. At present, Yangzhou has formed such relationship with nine cities located in Asia, Americas, Europe and Oceania. Moreover, friendly exchange relationship has been established with over 20 cities in the world.

The friendly exchanges between American sister cities and Yangzhou have witnessed the friendship between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. The friendship exchanges have constituted an epitome of the exchanges since the long-term opening up of Yangzhou. For a long time since the sister relationship was formed, the local government and people have done a lot of work to facilitate the exchanges and cooperation. Thanks to careful planning, exchange projects have been launched one by one. The sister city relationship between Yangzhou and Kent, Westport and Stamford has been continuously reinforced and developed through the projects, which have helped to facilitate understanding, demonstrate city image, promote cultural exchanges as well as business and trade talks.

1. Educational and cultural exchanges aiming at promoting friendship and influence enable the sister relationship to be a household word and gain the

possibility of sustainable development.

The future of the world depends on the young of today. For many years, varying projects have been already launched between Yangzhou and its sister cities: Kent, Westport and Stamford. Youth Ambassador Exchange Program, volunteer teacher project, visiting project of student cultural exchange delegation, teacher exchange project and Youth Art Contest have been organized to facilitate understanding and cultivate friendship.

Youth Ambassador Exchange Program, initially called Student Exchange Program, started its operation in 1995, the second year after the sister city relationship was contracted between Yangzhou and Kent. Each summer, both Yangzhou and Kent designated reps of excellent students for mutual visits. During the month of exchanges, the reps experienced extensive contacts with local governments, civilians, friends, schools and young people and had a deep understanding of the history and culture of the city where they had a pleasant stay. The young messengers involved in the program have helped promote the friendship between the two cities and encourage the young people of both sides to develop their understanding of the world and participate in the undertakings of culture and cooperation between the two cities, aiming at a continuous and sustainable development of the mutual friendship. In the ten years since the program was carried out, 18 local students have been sent to visit Kent and 16 students from Kent have visited Yangzhou. Both Yangzhou and Kent city governments have attached great importance to the exchange project which has aroused extensive social echoing. Every time when exchange students of Kent arrive in Yangzhou, they are welcomed by local government leaders while local students who arrive in Kent are introduced by Mr. White, Mayor of Kent, to deliver a speech at city council. Acknowledged outstanding reps and friendly messengers, the exchange students have contributed to the promotion of understanding and friendship between the two cities. This year, four Yangzhou and Kent exchange students

involved in the project were invited to attend the Young Leadership Conference held in Spokane.

Another long-term project between Yangzhou and its American sister cities is the teacher exchange project launched between Yangzhou and Town of Westport, CT. Coordinated by China Ministry of Education and American Learned Societies, teachers involved on the part of China came from over ten cities. Among the cities involved Yangzhou and Westport are the only pair of sister cities. The special background attracted special attention to the project in the two cities. Since the initiation of the project in 1997, more than twenty Chinese teachers were sent and over ten teachers from Westport were received, they have made significant contribution to the improvement of English teaching and to the expansion of benefits brought about by the project as well.

In addition, gifts signifying friendship are exchanged between both Yangzhou and Kent. In 1998, Yangzhou Pavilion and Kent Friendship Garden were awarded a prize at Sister Cities International Conference. A number of international cultural exchange activities held in Yangzhou, such as International Gourmet Food Festival and International Youth Gala enabled more and more citizens from Kent and Westport to bear in mind Yangzhou as a renowned town typical of hospitable people.

2. Exchanges at governmental and civil levels lay solid foundation for further exchanges of varying fields.

The sister city relationship between Jiangdu city of Yangzhou and Stamford of Connecticut originated from a special dialogue via the air. In May 2002, under the coordination of a crew team with Let the World Know You, a TV program sponsored by International Channel of China Central TV Station, city leaders of the two cities had a dialogue via two-way international satellites. Both parties had

a good understanding of the supplementary advantages for each side and concluded that there existed a promising prospect for exchanges and cooperation. They expressed their wishes for exchange, cooperation and mutual development. Through mutual efforts and rounds of visits, Yangzhou and Stamford contracted formal relationship as sister cities in September 2003.

As early as the second year after Yangzhou and Kent formed sister-city relationship, the two cities began to launch exchange programs, aiming at promoting understanding, making friends and improving professional levels. Since 1995, there have been seven rounds of personnel exchanges. On the part of Yangzhou, involved in the exchanges are front-line staff members with Yangzhou Foreign Affairs Office, professionals from such fields as planning, city construction, news media. The city of Kent attached great importance to the project and made sound arrangements. During their stay in Kent, some of them did in-service practice in the city government to develop some understanding of public administration of the US government, others participated in meetings, activities organized by the sister city committee to learn about the operation of non-governmental organizations and the planning of the activities, still others received special training at Highline Community College, regarding administration, enterprise management and news media. Through one to three months training, the trainees broadened their view, learned about advanced working methods and experience, improved their own working and made a lot of friends. They have come to be the strong force in the foreign exchanges regarding their own fields, which has helped a further development of foreign exchanges in our city.

Mr. Jim White, Mayor of Kent City, has succeeded in a succession of terms of office, during which time he achieved outstanding accomplishments. For a long term, Mayor White has been engaged in civil friendship activities. He takes it his responsibility to promote the friendship among the peoples of different nations.

He himself once acted as chairman of Kent International Sister City Association. Enthusiastically, Mayor White paid special attention to the friendly undertakings between Yangzhou and Kent. He has paid some ten times visits to Yangzhou in person. Also, he has managed to introduce to Yangzhou Kent council members, chamber of commerce and school district supervisors. Mayor White has made great contributions to the friendly exchanges between Kent and Yangzhou.

Ms. May Miller and Ms. Amy Sie who served as chair of Kent-Yangzhou Sister City Committee stayed in Yangzhou for respectively long time. This enabled them to achieve a sound understanding of China, especially Yangzhou culture and customs, and this enabled them to establish predestined relationship with Yangzhou. Out of sincerity, they regard Yangzhou as their second hometown. Every time when local exchanging visitor arrive in Kent, hospitable Ms Miller takes a special trip to treat her guests. During her term as chair, she actively helped raise funds to ensure the smooth implementation of “Youth Ambassador Exchange Program” and “Yangzhou Pavilion—Kent Garden Exchange Project.” Ms. Amy Sie used to be a social worker, whose responsibility led to her special focus on education. Since she came to office, the implementation of volunteering teacher projects went on continuously, which facilitated the educational exchanges between Kent and Yangzhou. When annual plan for annual exchanges is drafted, chair of the sister city committee who is familiar with Yangzhou is able to focus more on reality so as to plan and implement exchange projects beneficial to both parties.

In 1999, when Kent and Yangzhou celebrated the fifth anniversary of the sister city relationship between the two cities, Mayor White and Ms. May Miller, were awarded the title of “Honorary Citizenship” in Yangzhou. In April and June, 2005, Ms. Amy Sie, chair of Kent Sister City Committee, Joanne Schaut, International Program Coordinator of City of Kent, Dr. Elizabeth Chen, trustee of the Highline Community College, and First Selectwoman Diane Farrell of Westport, CT were

awarded respectively “Friendship Prize” by Yangzhou People’s Government.

3. Economic exchanges and cooperation bring about dynamism and real content in terms sister city relationship.

Since long ago, while Yangzhou and its sister cities in the USA share the fruitful achievements regarding education, culture and talent exchanges, cooperation opportunities in economic arena have been pursued. Two parties have unanimously reached agreement that economic exchanges will surely bring about dynamism and real content for sister city relationship, provide this relationship with strong support and bring benefits to the people and trading circles of the two cities. Both parties fix their attention to the development of the exchanges as door and window toward more cooperation in more extensive fields.

For this purpose, local government has planned and implemented in succession a number of comprehensive trade exhibitions, for instance, International Sister Cities Products Fair. Our counterparts were actively involved in these activities. They designated delegations including those from their government, chamber of commerce and related enterprises. For trade and commerce activities, such as Food World, sponsored by Kent Chamber of Commerce and International Trade Day, sponsored by Stanford Chamber of Commerce, Yangzhou responded actively by sending delegations.

What is worth mentioning is that in April 2004, under the support of Mr. Jim White, Mayor of Kent, Kent Economic Development Yangzhou Office was founded in Yangzhou, the first office founded by an international sister city. Mr. Jeffrey Pang, Chair of Kent-Yangzhou Sister City Economic Committee undertook the application, registration and management for the office. The office establishes a link between enterprises of both parties wishing to undertake economic cooperation, as well as a mutual link between the websites owned by the two governments, chambers of

commerce and enterprises. This has effectively facilitated the cooperation in terms of trade and other projects. In April, Mr. Jeffrey Pang was awarded by Yangzhou City government an honorable title—"Distinguished Guest of the City."

Under the mutual efforts of both Yangzhou and Kent, Washington State Day was held in Yangzhou on April 15 this year. Delegations from Kent government, economy, trade, culture and education circles underwent fruitful cooperative exchanges and signed a series of cooperation agreements. To carry out the projects that were agreed upon and to build up a better exchange and cooperation platform for enterprises of both sides, the two cities sponsored Yangzhou Day activity in Seattle on July 25. A delegation of forty members were sent to participate in the activity. Friendly economic groups, auto spare parts inspection group and civil-funded entrepreneur group represented enterprises regarding auto assembly, port transportation, logistics, trade and commerce, clothing making, science and technology, as well as manufactory. This delegation is the newest in form and the largest in number that was ever sent to the United States of America to undertake most significant tasks. During their stay in the US, the delegation effectively presented the latest changes of Yangzhou City in terms of the new framework for communications, new carrier for future development and new advantage for investment.

Ladies and gentlemen, Yangzhou and its US sister cities have laid a solid foundation for cultural exchanges and there exists a large space complementary industries. We sincerely wish sister city relationship will enable the tree of friendship to last evergreen. We sincerely wish people's life will grow better and better. We also wish our mutual cooperation will bear more plentiful and substantial fruits.

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