

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Opening Ceremony of the Confucius Institute at the University of Cyprus. A non profit organisation which aims to promote the learning and teaching of the Chinese language and the understanding of the Chinese culture. We are confident that the opening of this Institution will facilitate cultural, research and educational exchanges between Cyprus and China.

We are now focusing on the prospects and possibilities through the interconnection and interaction of Cyprus and China via the establishment of the Confucius Institute at the University of Cyprus. I wish to express the appreciation of the University of Cyprus to the Beijing Institute of Education, the collaborative institutional party, the Embassy of the People`s Republic of China in Cyprus and the Board of the Confucius Institute at the University of Cyprus for their efforts and hard work which give us today the pleasure to celebrate the establishment and operation of the UCY Confucius Institute.

The Institute is the place to meet, interact, communicate and exchange ideas. Ideas for corporations amongst the two countries in several levels: cultural, social and business. Understanding each other is the first step for enhancing a successful collaboration.

Reaching each other through intercultural activities hosted by the University of Cyprus is essential for creating those foundations for a valuable corporation between Asia and Europe, China and Cyprus.

The opening of the Institution is another milestone for achieving the internationalisation of our University. The results from intercultural corporations between the University and other institutions are valuable. Such an example is the establishment of *Aula Thervantes* in 2011. An institution, which has been strengthening the relationship of our University with university institutions of Spain, while increasing students` mobility from Cyprus to Spain and vice versa, via Erasmus and other exchange programs.

Moreover, the European Studies Programme has been offered by the Department of French Studies and Modern Languages, bringing together key European languages. Also, we have launched the Jewish Studies Project in the Department of History and Archaeology, whereas the Programme of Armenian Studies and that of the Middle Eastern Studies are planned to be offered soon by the Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies Department.

If Cyprus wishes to focus on becoming the linkage between Europe and Asia we have the obligation to approach Asia`s culture and civilization; To provide young people and researchers the opportunity to communicate through an organisation, which aims to bring people and their ideas together in order to create a world of welfare and social and economic prosperity.

One of our many objectives at the University of Cyprus is to attract international students and provide them a positive educational and research experience. An experience they will carry throughout their lives and which will also affect the lives and way of thinking of the local students and the local university community.

It is our belief that education, culture and research can bring people together; We can achieve a multilevel growth via the productive dialogue of youngsters through face to face interaction and communication at the buildings we have created at the University campus: an ongoing and dynamic project for people to meet, create and work together.

For this project to succeed, we require the support of the government, the Parliament and the society in general for adding in our undergraduate programs courses in foreign languages so as to reach 2000 students per year via Erasmus and other exchange programs.

This is a target we wish to reach soon in an approach to strengthen our relationships with research and education institutions worldwide.

In these strange and challenging eras we live, the main mean to enhance peace, growth and prosperity is the mutual understanding and acceptance of our cultural differences. Education and research collaboration broaden the thinking horizons of humanity and help people realise the uniqueness and equality of all nations. Educational and cultural relationships can become the bridge of peace and understanding that citizens of the world crave.

I would like to end with a Confucius quote: “*Without feelings of respect, what is there to distinguish men from beast?*”

### **Distinguished guests,**

Mutual understanding and respect is the key for peace. It is what distinguishes humans from monsters. Education is the solution and the answer to acts of hatred, war, fear and racism. We hope that through the collaboration of Universities and educational and research institutions all over the world, such as the Confucius Institute at the University of Cyprus, humanity will finally enhance and value diversity thus working for creating a world of peace, a world with a better future.

Thank you.