

Ladies & Gentlemen:

First of all, please allow me to express my thanks to the organizer for inviting me to this event, and share some of my personal viewpoints on why the cultural heritages and tourism of China and Italy should work together for a same goal.

As we all know, even though we are thousands of kilometers away from each other, both China and Italy own a common wealth, that is, a long history and a profound culture and traditions, representing respectively the mainstream culture in ancient times in the East and the West. These histories and cultures have, for a long time, strongly influenced the process of world development, leaving behind numerous material and spiritual heritages for the peoples of our two countries, which, further more, become a cultural treasure house that belong to the entire human kind.

Today, these ancient cultural heritages of our two countries are attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. They try, through visiting them, to experience and understand our past and present, and to trace the line of inheritance of the world history and civilizations. With the fast development of world economy and continuous enhancement in the level of science and education, people's desire to seek the interrelationships between the ancient human civilizations and the modern society are growing stronger and stronger. And now, this desire is not only the right of the experts and scholars, but also the expectations of more and more common people.

While people travel back and forth to visit and experience the heritages left behind by our ancient civilizations, it unintentionally pushed the development of tourism, becoming what we call in technical terms the form of tourism with a special purpose of experiencing history and cultures. Cultural heritage and tourism are, therefore, naturally combined together here.

Cultural heritages promote tourism, and in turn, tourism can also help further enhance the functions of cultural heritages. China and Italy have a lot to do in this regard, and are in a very unique position to do so.

Firstly, China is a nation with a 5000 year-old history of great civilizations, during which our ancestors created a large amount of tangible and intangible cultural heritages. Today, China has over 2,600 museums, 2,300 state-protected cultural sites, over 250 cities, towns and villages listed by the state as historical sites, and 30 cultural sites listed as World Cultural Heritages by UNESCO.

In the mean time, the long and great civilizations of Italy also left it with numerous cultural heritages. It has, around the country, 42 sites on UNESCO's cultural heritages list, over 3,200 museums, 6,000 libraries, more than 100,000 churches and 50,000 historical buildings. Italy is referred by many people as a big open air museum.

In this huge treasure house of cultural heritages, many are well-known land mark tourist attractions among the people of the world. For example, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Terracotta Warriors, the ancient Silk Road of China, and the Colosseo, the water town of Venezia, Firenze, the city where Renaissance started, just to name a few. However, we still have a lot of things that are yet to be known but played an important role in the development of our history of civilizations. I myself have been in Italy for almost two years. In the past months, every time when I visited a place, I would be surprised by many new discoveries and amazed at the brilliant creations by the ancient Italian people, which leads me to think of a question: how many valuable places are there that I still don't know and haven't got the chance to visit yet here in Italy? In the same sense, in China, how many cultural heritages of the same nature are still not known to the outside? Our cultural heritages should not stay locked in a box. They are the common wealth owned by entire human beings, because they deeply influenced the process of world civilizations.

And this poses a challenge for tourism industry, that is, how to turn the huge treasure house of cultural heritage into effective tourism resources, through which we can present and introduce them to the people of the world.

As we know, tourism not only increases a much wider recognition of the cultural heritages, but also brings huge benefit to the local economy. Hotels, restaurants, museums and souvenir shops will all benefit from it, thus, promoting local economic development. On the other hand, due to the enhanced economic development brought about by the cultural heritages, the decision makers will therefore pay much more attention to the protection of the heritages. This will then take us into a virtuous cycle where cultural heritages become tourism resources, which promote local economies that in turn leads to a better protection of cultural heritages. And I think this might be the main theme we are discussing here today.

Before my conclusion, I would like to thank again the organizer for the kind invitation extended to me and my colleagues to Luca. This is the first time for us to visit this old but beautiful city. And we are all excited about the visit and looking forward to finding many more surprises here in Luca. Wish all of you a good health.