

## **Speech by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Mr. Maarten Camps, at the 4th annual CEIBS forum, Beijing, May 17th 2015**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you kindly for the opportunity to address a few key words to you.

When I was on my plane on my way to Beijing, I thought of my compatriot, the late Jacob Corneliszoon van Neck.

He was the **first** Dutch sailor who left home and reached China in 1601.

His journey had been highly hazardous.

He had not been traveling for hours, but for months. Unlike me, he could not choose meals like the 'Oriental City menu' in a plane.

Jacob van Neck did not meet the authorities directly at first.

But today, we are delighted to enjoy close and frequent relations at all levels, including the highest.

We have had the pleasure President Xi Jinping in 2014 visiting the Netherlands.

The President had chosen the Netherlands for his first European state visit in the month of March.

During that visit the opportunities of the Chinese agricultural sector were addressed and discussed.

This year our prime minister, Mark Rutte, and 70 companies visited China.

'Our doors are open, and we keep close ties', was our motto.

Entrepreneurs obviously are eager to cooperate with you, to invest and to trade.

Recently, when Huawei had opted to base three offices in the Netherlands, Huawei's CEO in the Netherlands, Mr. Wang Dexian, shared his observations with me.

Mr. Wang Dexian noticed our open mentality and our climate of innovation.

**The Netherlands**

Over ages, both of our countries have been working hard. The Dutch have been busy creating polders, gaining acres of land and constructing defensive waterworks.

We had to develop a sense of pragmatism, creativity and teamwork.

These have always been our surviving instincts in a country where two thirds lie below sea level.

It has left us much more than colored fields of tulips.

The heritage of that mentality is an open, international economy.

And of course, lots of Chinese friends, 'China towns' in our cities, and a nice variety of Chinese products in our supermarkets.

We have a global economic position, even though our country is two and a half times **smaller** than the Beijing area!

Even though it is **impossible** to meet up with China's 1.3 billion inhabitants, nor with over 120 cities with over one million people,

and we cannot beat annual growth figures of about 7 per cent.

But

The Netherlands is the **second biggest** exporting country worldwide in agricultural products.

And we are the **largest** exporter in the world in flowers, flower bulbs, vegetable seeds, tomatoes and seed potatoes.

The harbors of Rotterdam and Amsterdam Airport offer excellent facilities and links to Europe.

This is almost equaled now by our mainport for data on the internet.

Our patent system is quite helpful, as it is open to all of the innovators wanting to share inventions.

Dutch companies know China's economic potential still increases. Over a thousand of them operate in China.

## **China and the Netherlands**

China equals in that position quite well.

Being the world's second largest economy, China is internationally focused too, and tops world rankings too.

We are proud to be China's second-biggest trading partner in the European Union, and the third largest EU-investor in China.

A lot of companies are attracted to the Netherlands, including over five hundred Chinese companies.

Chinese companies increasingly invest in Dutch companies.

Dutch companies like Kruidvat, ICI Paris XL and AVR are now owned by Chinese companies.

These companies are very well known in the Netherlands.

### **Global challenges**

Global challenges appeal to both our countries.

If climate changes, how do we adapt?

How do we tackle uncertainties of energy provisions?

If the world population will grow from seven billion today to nine billion in 2050, where do we get the food?

Some foretell, that, by then, seventy per cent of the world population will be living in the cities of the world, and not in the country.

How can their food be distributed?

Do we have enough water?

These questions are not solved **automatically** by mentality and characteristics.

Nor by trade alone.

We need innovation and cooperation.

We call this: **Dutch solutions for global challenges.**

Economic policy in the Netherlands is designed to set goals by means of innovation and cooperation.

It involves cooperation between three parties in the creation of opportunities:

Dutch entrepreneurs, the government, and scientists,

all of them openly sharing their expertise as much as they can.

The successful cooperation within this triangle is at the heart of nine economic sectors in which we excel globally.

All nine sectors generate innovative activities, resulting in a series of research projects, innovative new companies and science driven businesses:

It is a long list of nine sectors:

1. High Tech sector,
2. Energy sector,
3. Logistics,
4. Creative Industry,
5. Life sciences,
6. Chemicals
7. Water
8. Agro-food
9. Horticulture and Propagation Materials.

As a result, academic institutes have grown into magnets of knowledge, their scientists cooperating with entrepreneurs all over the world.

TNO, for instance, is helping China to make the mining and chemical industries safer.

Experts in land drainage, the ones who formerly made the Netherlands world-renowned for its water management skills, now operate in all continents.

Dutch engineers and urban planners share expertise on how to limit the risk of flooding locally.

Or they invent ways to store water, for instance on greenhouse roofs.

And ways to transform greenhouses into real power stations.

Chinese dairy companies seek for cooperation with the Wageningen University to improve the storage of dairy products.

A prime example of cooperation between China and the Netherlands is the Holland Center, with the involvement of the Chic Group and CEIBS alumni.

### **Agro-food and Horticulture**

The government, universities and entrepreneurs have been jointly operating and investing in the Agro-food and Horticulture sector over a long time.

Today, these sectors are among the most innovative sectors in the world.

Almost forty per cent of our agricultural production derives from horticulture - flowers, seeds, fruits and vegetables.

We are also leading in breeding vegetable seeds, and in flower bulbs and seeds for flowers.

And we have a growing number of international suppliers in horticulture like greenhouse builders, companies that specialize in installation techniques, irrigation, heating, internal logistics, consultancy, and Information and Communication Technology.

So I dare to claim we can answer the food demands of a growing population.

Food questions urge here in China, as well as in many other parts of the world.

A global challenge, Dutch solutions.

Let's have a look at some Dutch ideas.

What do these fruits of agro-innovation taste like?

**DACOM** has developed sensor technology to optimize plant growth.

Besides this technology, companies offer farmers all kinds of operating systems.

Dutch farmers often operate via the computer on board of their tractors, sometimes using satellite information.

Farming machines know the exact location of each individual plant, its condition and whether or not it needs extra manure.

Maybe, drones will be hovering over our potatoes soon, monitoring their growing conditions.

Empty office buildings are excellent locations for horticulture.

Horticulteur **Jami** was the first to use LED-light technology to grow tomatoes.

Specialized machinery manufactures form an economical sector on their own.

Some farmers use a mobile milking machinery, like the one from **Lely**.

**Koppert** provides a system of specialist knowledge supplying biological crop protection.

**Holst Centre** has made packaging smart.

This R&D center has developed a quick quality check for fresh products.

**Enza** seeds is one of the companies optimizing seeds. The entire innovative seed industry is highly knowledge driven.

Combining in the new seeds the knowhow of tenths of thousands international geneticists and tenths of thousands years of evolution.

Offering the world large possibilities to enhance all kinds of seeds to improve growth.

And to ensure that less pesticides are necessary for cultivation.

Natural disinfectants can be used to protect seeds from fungus and bacteria.

These are random examples.

We are active, mostly in cooperation with local counterparts, in similar projects that contribute to the world food demand in many agro-areas in the world.

In China, Dutch companies have already been creating interesting initiatives.

Scientists from Dutch universities already work with the China Agricultural University, willing to share with you their knowledge.

But we could answer the food question even better if we could remove hindering administrative measures.

If Dutch seed companies could more easily invest in China for instance.

Or if fresh products could be distributed more effectively in outer parts of China.

Or if we could take advantage from our close ties and establish new forms of cooperation, like doing more business by e-commerce.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the 17th century, the permanent immanence of floods also permanently marked our mind-set.

It is a mind-set for cooperation and innovation.

No Dutch would have arrived, if Jacob van Neck's crew had not cooperated at sea so well.

We think global issues can be tackled through teamwork.

It is where great projects come from.

It is where China and The Netherlands can join hands.

The Dutch government focuses on innovation and cooperation between the government, businesses and knowledge institutions.

Including close cooperation between countries, combining each other's strengths.

Adapting new perspectives.

But most important, I know from our Chinese friends, here and in the Netherlands, that we share a very optimistic mind-set.

I hope that this mind set may inspire us all today, here at the CEIBS forum.