Joint Statement

Eleventh Meeting of the China-EU Round Table
(Hangzhou, 12 and 13 April 2012)

1. The China-EU Round Table held its eleventh meeting in Hangzhou, China on 12 and 13 April 2012.

2. The Round Table was jointly established by the China Economic and Social Council (CESC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in accordance with the Joint Statement of the 9th China-EU Summit held in Helsinki in 2006.

3. The organised civil society dialogue which takes place at the EU-China Round Table forms part of the EU-China strategic partnership and contributes to people-to-people friendship and mutual understanding.

4. The Round Table welcomes the establishment by the 14th EU-China Summit of the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue and expresses its willingness to be involved in this process.

5. The Round Table reiterates its view that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio in June 2012 offers an opportunity to enhance the concept of an inclusive green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. The EESC and the CESC will undertake joint initiatives to encourage a civil society contribution to the Rio + 20 conference.

6. At the meeting, delegates from both sides held extensive discussions on the issues of the Silver Hair Economy and Sustainable Urban Development.

7. A tripartite workshop on small and medium-sized enterprises and employment was also held in Hangzhou, and was attended by the Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. The workshop clearly illustrates that small and
medium-sized enterprises constitute an important driving force for economic and social development, and also play an important role in promoting employment. Effective measures should be taken to encourage and foster the sound and sustainable development of small and medium-sized enterprises and their access to credit so as to create more jobs.

The Silver Hair economy

8. The Round Table acknowledges that as the numbers of older people increase and the ageing trend accelerates, the social question of how to deal with the ageing issue is becoming increasingly urgent. In 2050, 30 per cent of the EU's and China's population could be over 65.

9. The Round Table notes that the increasing proportion of older people will inevitably lead to changes in the structure of social consumption. Older people have specific consumer attitudes, habits and preferences. They have their own specific spending power and consumption patterns, based on their own particular physiological, psychological and behavioural characteristics. They thus represent a genuine source of consumer demand and are a potential consumer market that is set to foster the development of industry for older people and create new economic opportunities.

10. The Round Table recognises that the Silver Hair economy is an emerging sector with a huge potential for further development, driven by the ageing population and changes in the population's age structure. The term covers all economic activities, including commodity production, sales and services, that meet the particular needs of older people. Not only does the emergence of the Silver Hair economy affect the interests of older people, but it is also a remarkable sign of social progress.

11. The Round Table recommends that due importance be attached to the care sector and calls for continuously promoting home and community care services and improving job quality in this sector. This represents many employment opportunities, but also a real challenge for financing these new services in a period of economic difficulty. At the same time, social security arrangements for older people should also be improved.

12. The Round Table supports the development of employment for older people, and encourages them also to participate on a voluntary basis in developing society, to share their experience and expertise and thus benefit the broader community.
13. The Round Table notes that some measures are already in place that could improve employment prospects for older people. These include increasing incomes for older workers, flexible working time, training opportunities, more jobs for older people in small and medium-sized enterprises, a better working environment and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of older workers. The Round Table calls for a further development of these measures but also acknowledge that, in the short term, the economic crisis can be a serious impediment to real progress.

14. The Round Table feels that the talents of older people should be utilised to the full and supported by innovative tools and technologies to make work accessible and less strenuous. Innovation is also needed in all areas of daily life to adapt homes, the workplace and public areas to the need of an ageing population.

15. The Round Table recommends that the EU and China increase exchanges of experiences and expertise in this field as they are both confronted with the same challenge of an ageing population.

Sustainable Urban Development

16. Urbanisation is a major theme of contemporary human history. With the acceleration of global urbanisation (three quarters of the world's people will live in cities in 2050), it has become a common concern for human society to tackle the challenges of population expansion, urban development, ecological deterioration, energy consumption, and uneven development between regions and between urban and rural areas in an attempt to ensure sustainable urban development.

17. The Round Table reiterates that sustainable development must be human-based, comprehensive, coordinated and balanced. Implementing a sustainable development strategy is the right approach for handling the relations between fast-growing urbanisation and our planet's limited load-bearing capacity in terms of resources and the environment. Thought should be given to the role of cities in defining new trajectories of growth for attaining a more sustainable development pattern.

18. The Round Table recognises that several models of sustainable urban development coexist and favours an innovative urban management concept that improves efficiency, preserves the environment, encourages social integration and involves specific measures for the
development of sound transport systems, energy efficiency, broad access to green technologies and a recycling economy.

19. The Round Table stresses the importance of cities in implementing the green economy road map which should be adopted in the UN Conference in Rio next June.

20. The Round Table recognises the importance of urban planning. It recommends strengthening overall city planning so that the sustainable development strategy will be reflected in urban layout. It calls for particular attention to be given to the issue of governance, the need for integrating sustainable development indicators in local public procurements and the need for increased financial resources. It also stress that forecasting lies at the heart of sustainable governance for cities and the need not only for data bases and models, but also qualitative indicators with the support of civil society.

21. The Round Table acknowledges that civil society’s regular and informed involvement in urban planning and review of implementation is essential for meeting the sustainable development challenges. It is also key to promoting and upholding the accountability of the various parties involved. Civil society consultation and public discussion should be guaranteed and formalised with minimal procedures. The creation of Councils for sustainable development at national and local levels and the regional implementation of article 10 on the information and consultation of the 1992 Rio Declaration (such as the Aarhus Convention in the European context) could be instrumental in this context.

22. The Round Table acknowledges that the EU and China have complementary hands to play in overcoming the challenges of sustainable cities in their respective continents. In this context, the Round Table welcomes the establishment of the EU-China Partnership on Sustainable Urbanisation and shares its objectives. It reiterates its willingness to be involved in this initiative and, in particular, in the annual flagship event of the Partnership: the EU-China Urban Forum.

23. As a first step, the Round Table would propose combining civil society dialogue with the learning platform exercise put in place by the European Commission to help create a common vision of the mitigating measures and high-level exchanges of experience between the EU and China in terms of emission quota trading systems.

24. Both sides agree that the twelfth meeting of the China-EU Round Table shall take place in October 2012, and address the two following topics: 1) Intercultural dialogue, 2) Beyond GDP: New indicators and the involvement of civil society.
25. This Joint Statement shall be submitted to the upcoming EU-China Summit.

XU Zhenhuan  
Vice-President  
China Economic and Social Council

Staffan Nilsson  
President  
European Economic and Social Committee