Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

Welcome to the China-CEEC Summit. This Summit takes place as countries are going all out to fight COVID-19. To meet at such an unusual moment shows our resolve to stand together in face of difficulties and pursue shared development through cooperation.

It has been nine years since cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) started. Nine years ago, with a commitment to win-win cooperation and common development and a resolve to create a better future together, we jointly initiated this cooperation mechanism between China and CEE countries, a decision that responded to the call of our times and the trend of development. China-CEEC relations have thus entered a new stage.

Nine years on, China-CEEC cooperation has stood the test of time and intricate changes in the international landscape. It has developed some principles that are reflective of its distinctive features and accepted by all parties.

First, making decisions through consultation. China-CEEC cooperation is based on mutual respect and has no political strings attached. All countries involved, regardless of their size, are equal partners in a cooperation mechanism featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Guided by the conviction that "17 plus 1 could make more than 18", we have set up a multi-dimensional cooperation framework led by the leaders' summit and covering 20-plus sectors to ensure the participation of all CEE countries. Mindful of each other's concerns, we have drawn up plans and decided on projects based on the national reality of each country, and encouraged all countries to find the best way to leverage their respective strengths in cooperation.

Second, delivering benefits to all cooperation partners. With its focus on real results, China-CEEC cooperation has served the purpose of supporting our respective development and bettering the lives of our people. To make our cooperation more balanced, we have pursued both economic cooperation and cultural exchanges, placed equal importance on trade and investment, and made sure that the fruits of cooperation are shared by all countries and communities. Today, trade between China and CEE countries is nearly 85 percent bigger than nine years ago, and growth in China's import from CEE countries is 22 percentage points higher than that of export. The number of mutual tourist visits has grown nearly five times. The China-Europe Railway Express has reached most of the CEE countries, running more than 30,000 freight services so far. Impressive progress has been made in a number of cooperation projects, including the Port of Piraeus in Greece, the Smederevo Steel Plant in Serbia, and the Peljesac Bridge in Croatia.

Third, pursuing common development through openness and inclusiveness. China and CEE countries share the conviction that openness brings opportunities and inclusiveness ensures diversity. This is the key to the sustained vibrancy of China-CEEC cooperation. We have drawn on each other's strengths through mutual learning, and narrowed differences and resolved disagreements through consultation and cooperation. We have followed widely-accepted international rules, conformed to market principles, and respected EU standards in our cooperation. We also welcome the participation of other countries and international organizations in our cooperation to achieve win-win results.

Fourth, achieving bigger growth through innovation. Acting in an innovative and pioneering spirit, we have taken steps early on to explore the possibility of aligning cross-regional cooperation with Belt and Road cooperation, making Central and Eastern Europe the first region where all countries have signed agreements on Belt and Road cooperation. In light of the needs and unique geographical locations of CEE countries, we have worked hard for good progress in the Budapest-Belgrade Railway and other major cooperation projects.

Colleagues,

We are living in challenging times. Changes unseen in a century, coupled with the global COVID-19 pandemic, have had a far-reaching impact. In the face of such unprecedented challenges, countries must come together and respond with solidarity and coordination like never before.
In 2020, overall China-EU relations made new progress despite the challenges caused by the pandemic. The two sides concluded on schedule negotiations on the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, signed an agreement on geographical indications, and launched partnerships for green and digital cooperation. The two sides also stood firm for multilateralism and took on global challenges together. China-CEEC cooperation is part and parcel of China-EU relations, whose good progress means new opportunities for China-CEEC cooperation.

Colleagues,

China-CEEC cooperation is a cross-regional cooperation platform with important influence. Under the new circumstances, what could we do to take our cooperation forward? I want to share with you the following four thoughts of suggestion.

First, we need to tackle COVID-19 head on and boost confidence in cooperation to tide over the tough times. Fighting the pandemic is currently the most pressing task for us. To complete this task, China will work with CEE countries through solidarity, coordination and cooperation. Our two sides could enhance joint response and experience sharing on prevention and treatment, explore cooperation on traditional medicine, and scale up public health and medical cooperation. These efforts will contribute to a global community of health for all. China will continue to provide vaccines to countries in need to the best of its capability, and do what it can to make vaccines a global public good and promote their equitable distribution and application around the world. China stands ready for vaccine cooperation with CEE countries. So far, Serbia has received one million doses of vaccines from a Chinese company, and there is ongoing cooperation between Hungary and Chinese vaccine companies. China will actively consider such cooperation with other CEE countries if there is the need.

We need to stay committed to open cooperation. We need to promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, work to build an open world economy and move the world economy out of the shadow of crisis as early as possible. The priority for the time being is to coordinate COVID response and economic and social development, resume travels and economic activities in a prudent and orderly manner, and keep industrial and supply chains stable, so as to bolster our efforts to contain the coronavirus and revive the economy.

Second, we need to focus on connectivity and develop smooth avenues of cooperation for interconnected development. We need to keep improving connectivity as a solid foundation for interconnected development at a higher level. We could pursue high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, speed up such major projects as the Budapest-Belgrade Railway, and continue to support the development of the China-Europe Railway Express to unlock the full potential of our cooperation.

It is also important that we deepen customs cooperation to ensure trade security and faster clearance. China will work toward the establishment of a China-CEEC customs information center and a focal point for customs clearance coordination for countries along the China-Europe Land-Sea Express Line. We could also explore cooperation on a pilot basis under the "Smart Customs, Smart Borders and Smart Connectivity" initiative.

Third, we need to aim for concrete results and increase cooperation outcomes that benefit both sides. China will work with CEE countries to help the region share in the benefits of China-EU cooperation as early as possible. More should be done toward mutually-beneficial trade and investment cooperation to promote balanced and sustainable trade growth. China intends to import, in the coming five years, more than 170 billion US dollars of goods from CEE countries.

Platforms like the China International Import Expo and the China-CEEC Expo would be better leveraged for China to import more goods from CEE countries; and measures will be taken to set up a China-CEEC sanitary and phytosanitary working group mechanism and a focal point for inspection and quarantine affairs and to merge risk assessment procedures on a category basis, in order to refine the assessment process for agri-food products from CEE countries and speed up their entry into China. We could also strengthen business cooperation at the sub-national level and continue to develop demonstration zones and industrial parks for China-CEEC business cooperation in Chinese cities like Ningbo and Ganzhou.

We need to deepen agricultural cooperation in a bid to double CEE countries' agricultural exports to China and raise two-way agricultural trade by 50 percent over the next five years. We propose setting up a farm produce wholesale market in the CEE region and introducing an exchange program for young agricultural professionals.

We need to enhance exchange and cooperation in culture, education, tourism, sports, media and press, and among think tanks, young people and sub-national entities. The Beijing 2022 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games are a good opportunity for strengthening China-CEEC cooperation in the sports field. We will hold a new round of Education Policy Dialogue and Higher Education Institutes Consortium meetings this year, and support establishing a university in Hungary by Fudan University. The two sides could jointly develop more tourism products with local features and co-organize training of tourism professionals. The outcomes of the fifth China-CEEC Local Leaders' Meeting should be fully implemented to produce more fruits from sub-national cooperation.

Fourth, we need to focus on green development and forge drivers of future-oriented cooperation. On the basis of our "green consensus", we need to steadily advance international cooperation on climate change, jointly implement the Paris Agreement and contribute to the success of COP26 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and COP15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, both to be held this year. To enhance green development, we may take the China-CEEC Year of Green Development and Environmental Protection as an opportunity to deepen exchange and cooperation in green economy, clean energy and other related areas.

We need to step up cooperation in science, technology and innovation (STI). China proposes setting up a China-CEEC STI Research Center and holding a China-CEEC Forum for Young S&T Talents, and will publish the China-CEEC STI Scorecard 2020. We need to capitalize on various emerging business forms to widen our cooperation on the digital economy, e-commerce and the health sector. China supports setting up a China-CEEC dialogue mechanism on e-commerce cooperation and a China-CEEC alliance in the public health industry.

Colleagues,

This year will be the beginning of China's 14th Five-Year Plan for economic and social development, and the start of the country's new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country. Entering a new stage of development, China will quicken its pace in fostering a new development paradigm with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other. This will unlock the full potential of China's vast market and
domestic demand generated by the 1.4 billion population, including the over 400 million Chinese in the middle-income group. It will thus boost global demand and create more opportunities for the rest of the world, China will continue to open its door wider, with a focus on institutional opening-up that covers rules, regulations, management and standards. We will continue our efforts to foster a business environment that is based on market principles, governed by law and up to international standards. We will take a more active part in bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation that delivers higher levels of mutual benefit for all. China's continued development and opening-up will inject powerful impetus into global economic recovery and growth, and broaden the horizons for China-CEEC cooperation.

Colleagues,

As a saying in Central and Eastern Europe goes, "Good advice is better than gold." I hope our discussion today will build on our consensuses and draw a new blueprint for China-CEEC cooperation under the new circumstances. With our shared commitment and efforts, we will surely achieve more solid, substantive and enduring progress in the cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European countries.