

Dear Mr administrator ..., excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman, good afternoon,

I am truly honoured to be taking part in this year`s CAAC Development Forum that aims to discuss the latest developments of the aviation sector in China, international cooperation and also aviation related aspects of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Czech Republic, as well as other countries involved, has studied the recent **Belt and Road Initiative** document published in April this year with great interest. We see it as a very interesting project that could further develop cooperation with China on both multilateral and bilateral levels. I believe, that the Belt and Road Initiative can be seen as an equivalent to “development” and “interconnection”, and aviation is definitely one of the first topics that come to mind if we talk about these two concepts.

The Czech Republic will take an active approach; it will strive to introduce several possible areas for cooperation and launch concrete pilot projects within the Belt and Road Initiative – at bilateral level, EU-China level and at the 16+1 Initiative format.

Currently, the Czech-China bilateral relations are going from strength to strength and during the last two years we have had many important bilateral visits on both sides, in China and in the Czech Republic. Last year, we celebrated the 65th anniversary of Czech-Chinese diplomatic relations. The year was filled with high level bilateral visits, the most important of which was the visit of the President of the Czech Republic Mr. Miloš Zeman to China. This year is no different. We have already had a visit of the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic Mr. Jan Hamáček to China, together with a large group of businessmen. This month, the Vice-Premier of the People`s Republic of China was on an official visit to the Czech Republic. We expect another Presidential and a separate Prime Minister`s visit to China this autumn.

Aviation has always had a special place in our bilateral relations and many aviation companies are already active in China. More and more companies are interested in cooperation and we therefore welcome the approach of Chinese partners to find as many opportunities as possible. The CAAC Development Forum is the ideal platform for discussing potential projects and finding even more opportunities for cooperation.

The first concrete “bilateral” Belt and Road project could be **the project of establishing a direct flight connection between Beijing and Prague** that is in its final stage of preparations with the aim to start in September. Hainan Airlines and Czech Aeroholding are both working hard on the common goal. This will connect our capital Prague, an important hub in Central and Eastern Europe, with China and in itself will create new options for further exchanges with Chinese businessmen, tourists, students, as well as other members of our societies. The flight will enhance regional cooperation between Central and Eastern Europe and China in general.

The Czech Republic has also put much emphasis on promoting the **Czech General Aviation** by means of concentrated efforts of several Czech institutions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport, the Light Aircraft Association of the Czech Republic, Ministry of Industry and Trade and the CzechTrade Agency. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has even devoted a special project of economic diplomacy to the aviation sector. The project is called “**Czech General Aviation: A to Z Solution for China**” and it unites all efforts of Czech companies and agencies in introducing the Czech

General Aviation Experience to China. Czech Republic offers everything from airport infrastructure, including radars and other ATM products, planes with up to 19 seats, flight training, maintenance, helicopter emergency medical services, electronics, IT and so on.

Czech Republic is not a big country, especially compared to China, but we could call the Czech Republic a relatively big “aviation country”, which has many producers and exporters of aviation products, especially in General Aviation. We also have unique know-how and experiences with building a “general aviation empire” and are willing to share these with Chinese colleagues.

Another very concrete example of Czech contribution to “development” and “interconnection” under the umbrella of Belt and Road Initiative could be **the solution for short distance passenger transport in several Chinese provinces**. One successful commuter plane produced in the Czech Republic and exported to many countries all over the world – L-410 by Aircraft Industries – has already found many potential customers in China and we hope that it can soon become “one stone” in the new Silk Road.

We are in frequent contacts with distinguished colleagues from CAAC on all these topics, including on certification of Czech products. One Czech light sport aircraft has already been certified by CAAC. Czech companies are also coming to China on a regular basis to attend the main aviation shows – like the Zhuhai Airshow. They take part in General Aviation Conventions all over China, including Xian, the official starting point of the new “Silk Road” where Czech aviation will be introduced again this year, or Sichuan Province, where we will organize already the 3rd Czech-China Aviation Seminar.

We are not only planning to include aviation cooperation in the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding on common development of the Belt and Road with MOFCOM, or the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between MIIT and Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, both to be signed in the autumn of this year. But we are also working on a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding with CAAC with the emphasis, but not exclusively, on general aviation and light aircrafts (Annex II.). One bilateral project (workshop) has already taken place in September last year and one is being prepared for this year.

Another important platform of cooperation is the EU-China framework. Czech experts have taken an active part in the last project between EU and China in civil aviation (EU-China Civil Aviation Project, EUCCAP). In 2014, the final year of its implementation, we have taken part in four activities. We are awaiting the new project that is in the pipeline and will take an equally active approach there.

We are glad that the EU-China discussion on aviation issues is very frequent and support very much the efforts on both sides for closer cooperation in all areas.

Last but not least, I would like to mention aviation as a topic for China and CEEC countries (16+1 Initiative). Every year, the Czech Republic organizes the China Investment Forum, in which aviation has always been an important subject. This year will be no different and Belt and Road has been selected as the main theme for this year’s Forum. Even though it started as a bilateral activity, last year’s CIF took on the “16+1” format and this year’s Forum will have the same setup. We are ready to explore further cooperation and experience sharing in aviation in the 16+1 format.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your kind attention. I wish all the success to this Forum and hope that it will bring many new opportunities to the amazing world of aviation.