

**Welcoming Remarks by Mme. Li Yanduan, Chinese
Ambassador to Samoa
at the “China and the Pacific” Conference**

Honorable Prime Minister Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi,

Vice Chancellor Professor Asofou So’o,

Ambassador Tony Browne,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to attend the “China and the Pacific” Conference and deliver the welcome remarks to all the participants although I know that the real honor should be given to the organizers and sponsors of this event. Thank you all for making this event possible. I should also thank Prime Minister Hon. Tuilaepa for your gracious presence here and enlightening address just now.

I understand this Conference is the first of its kind ever held in a Pacific Island country (PIC), which offers a good platform for academic and policy-wise discussions of China’s role in the Pacific island region, a very important topic which has gained more relevance with the rapid development of relations between China and Pacific island countries in recent years. Actually we couldn’t have chosen a better time to discuss our subject matter since we are now living in a rapidly changing world, most notably with China’s political and economic might growing quickly, which many scholars would attribute to be the most defining variables to the political landscape in the Pacific region. Given that and in light of China’s increasingly active diplomacy in the region, it is not surprising to see some heated debate in both the media and academia

on China's role and its long-term strategy in the region. That's why this Conference is very important and we are delighted to see that the Conference has attracted many prominent scholars and policy makers in the region, who will surely shed more light on our subject matter after putting your great minds together. So welcome everyone!

In my view, the study of our subject matter should be conducted in a holistic approach and put in a historical, political and economic context just as we are going to do later. Undeniably, the current international studies are dominated by Western literature and theories, whereas the Oriental studies or specifically the Asia studies are far from being adequately represented. So I am happy today to see that many Chinese scholars are invited to this Conference, who can offer China's side of the story and make valuable input into this conference. And I believe their remarks will be more interesting than mine since they are not bound by the diplomatic etiquettes and could feel free to speak. Here I would only try my best to offer some food for thought to our participants.

While these issues of methodology and paradigms should be left to academics for better judgment, I want to emphasize that we are now living in an increasingly diversified world and we should be open to alternative thinking when it comes to one country's diplomacy just as we have already accepted that the developmental paths of different states are far from being singular and universal as we used to believe. China's unique developmental path featuring reform, opening up and peaceful development in the past decades has eloquently proven that a country could well follow a totally different diplomacy which is exceptional to the conventional wisdom that a country is bound to be aggressive when it gets stronger.

As to China's role to the Pacific and the world, there are currently two totally different theories among some western academics. One is the older "China threat" theory, meaning a stronger China may lead to hegemony. The second is the newer "China crisis" theory, which cites China's slowed down economy as an evidence of China's diminishing international impact and commitment. For a simple answer I would say neither of these two theories

is well-founded. Let me brief you on China's recent development to make my point.

In recent years, China has indeed faced downward growth pressure. Starting from 2012, China's GDP has grown lower than 8% after 30 years' rapid growth. However, as Premier Li Keqiang recently pointed out in Davos Forum Meeting, China's economy is still in good shape. We have entered a state of new normal, which means we will turn the size- and speed-oriented growth model to one that values quality and efficiency. Starting from 2013, China has started the endeavor to comprehensively deepen reform under new historical conditions. Under a sluggish world economy, we did not conveniently resort to short-term stimulus; instead we vigorously pursued structural reforms, taking measures like streamlining administration and targeted deregulation, hence further unleashing the innovation and productivity. Thanks to these measures, China's economy has enjoyed stable performance with its growth, inflation and unemployment rate well kept within a proper range.

Under this new normal, we will decisively embark on a path of green and low-carbon sustainable development and further deepen the opening up and win-win strategy with other countries to serve the common benefit of the whole world. With the 7.4% growth rate, the Chinese economy is still growing at the fastest speed in the world, which will continue to present the world with "China opportunities" for development. It is estimated that in 2014, China's economic growth accounts for 27.8% of the world economic growth and over 50% of growth in Asia.

Last November, the Chinese government held the second Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs since the founding of new China, and laid out a comprehensive plan for China's diplomacy under the new historical conditions. It has been made clear that China should develop a distinctive diplomatic approach befitting its role as a major responsible country; that it is important to carry on the independent foreign policy of peace and promote a new type of international relations featuring equity, justice and win-win cooperation; and that China should seek other countries' understanding of the Chinese dream and pursue the well-being of both the

Chinese people and the people of all other countries. As per relations with developing countries, we will continue to uphold justice and pursue shared interests, working hard to strengthen unity and cooperation with other developing countries, safeguarding their legitimate rights and interests and promoting the common development of China and other developing countries.

Facts speak for themselves. The fact that China has chosen to and will continue to pursue peaceful development is the inevitable outcome of the historical, institutional and current situation. First, historically speaking, China is a peace-loving nation, which has never pursued an aggressive foreign policy even in its peak of power as a world-leading empire in history. As a benevolent empire in the past, the very occasional wars it resorted to were mostly in defensive nature. Second, ideologically speaking, the new China as a socialist country who has itself fallen victim to imperialism and colonialism has always been strongly opposed to hegemony. The so-called new imperialism or colonialism of China is anything but true and nothing but defamation, which China will not tolerate to have anything to do with. Third, realistically speaking, China has pursued peaceful development out of its own realistic interest, which is to make more friends in international community to maintain a favorable international environment for its national development. In short, the peaceful development is a win-win strategy which serves the common interest of both China and the rest of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Pacific Island countries are an integral and important part of the developing world, which China, as a developing country itself, always attaches great importance to and feels obliged to align with. Although China and PICs are far apart geographically, both peoples enjoy natural intimacy and time-honored friendly exchanges, which date back as far as 150 years ago. Since 1975, China has established diplomatic relations with 8 Pacific Island Countries, and our bilateral relations have since grown strong and steady. China is a sincere friend and cooperative partner of the island countries, who have always been respecting each other politically, complementing each other

economically, and supporting each other in international and regional affairs.

China's relations with PICs have gained further momentum and thus entered fast track of development in recent years. In 2006 and 2013, China held two Ministerial Conferences of China-Pacific Economic Development and Cooperation Forum, giving great impetus to the mutual economic cooperation. Since 2006 the average annual growth rate of trade between China and Pacific Island countries have maintained at 27%, with that of Investment averaging 64%. Since 1975, China has been providing development assistance to various PICs, delivering over 100 projects in industry, agriculture, infrastructure, and public utility, and conducted a great number of technical assistance programs in fields of health, education, and sports etc. We have also provided to PICs more than 4000 training opportunities and hundreds of scholarships.

Last year saw a new chapter of China's relations with PICS, with President Xi Jinping visited Fiji in November, the first visit to the Pacific island region by China's Head of State, and held summit meetings with leaders of the 8 PICs including Samoa to jointly draw a blueprint for the bright future of our mutually beneficial cooperation. In the meeting, President Xi pledged 5-point measures intended to strengthen relations with PICs, which include building a strategic partnership featuring mutual respect and common development, enhancing high-level exchanges, deepening practical cooperation, expanding people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and intensifying multilateral coordination. In terms of development cooperation, China pledged more developmental aid to finance infrastructure, agricultural, environmental and new energy projects for sustainable development in PICs. In five years' time, China will offer 2000 scholarship opportunities and 5000 study and training places of all kinds to the island countries. China will also continue dispatching medical team to relevant island countries and encourage more Chinese tourists to travel there. All these measures are warmly welcomed by the PIC leaders, who are willing to work closely with China to further uplift the bilateral relations to a new level.

The year of 2015 will witness the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Samoa as well as Fiji, the first two countries to established

diplomatic ties with China. China and the two countries will hold a series of celebratory events to mark the deep-rooted friendship and fruitful cooperation between our peoples. Through decades of close cooperation, the 8 PICs have become the accountable friends of China in the region, who have firmly supported One China Policy. We highly appreciate having PICs as our good friends and believe that the further development of the China-PICs friendship and cooperation into a strategic partnership serves the common interests of our peoples. The Chinese government is ready to make the 40th anniversary a pivot for working with the PIC governments and people to enhance mutual understanding and friendship between our countries, expand and deepen mutually beneficial cooperation in all fields, and continue our mutual support and sound cooperation in the international and regional arena.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is our belief that China and PICs enjoy great potential in mutually beneficial cooperation and it is our unswerving long-term strategy to jointly forge a strategic partnership based on mutual respect and common development with PICs. Our policy toward the pacific island region is to promote sustained peace and common prosperity in the region, where we do not pursue narrowly defined self-interest or a sphere of influence in any form. Our strategic partnership with PICs holds an open, inclusive and balanced principle and is not targeted at any third party. We are willing to share experiences of development cooperation with other aid-giving countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect. It is my sincere hope that after this Conference, we can reach some consensus on our subject matter and hence help the general public have a better understanding of China's role in the region. Finally I wish the Conference all the success and our participants all the best. Thank you all.