

**Speech of German Consul General in Guangzhou Mr. Martin Fleischer at the reception
on the occasion of the German National Day on 26th September 2019**

Honorable representatives of provincial and municipal governments from Guangdong, Guangxi, Fujian und Hainan, distinguished colleagues of the consular corps, representatives of the media, dear guests, it gives me particular pleasure to celebrate tonight, together with you, our national day, the Day of German Unity.

Dear compatriots, the Day of German Unity is, for us Germans, not just an official act, but also a moment of happiness, of contemplation and of gratefulness – gratefulness that the German people could, in free self-determination, regain their unity.

Our celebration today revolves around numerous meaningful anniversaries. In 1849, 170 years ago, the first German constitution was elaborated at St. Paul's church in Frankfurt. But it took until 1919, precisely 100 years ago, until the first democratic German state, the so-called Weimar Republic, was founded. In 1949, built on the ruins of World War II, two German states emerged. These two German states were for 40 years separated by a heavily guarded border which ran right through Germany and even through the city of Berlin. The Berlin wall fell in 1989, 30 years ago, and led to Germany's peaceful reunification which we commemorate today.

As to current relations between Germany and South China, we also have two significant jubilees: The partnership of the German State Rhineland-Palatinate with Fujian province is in its 30th anniversary, and on this occasion the Prime Minister of Rhineland-Palatinate will pay an official visit to Fujian next month. Actually, this partnership is a very lively one, with many cooperation projects in the fields of industry and education, and numerous city partnerships such as between Xiamen and Trier, the birthplace of Karl Marx.

Only in its 15th year, but by no means less relevant, is the partnership of Bavaria with Guangdong. Bavaria's Economic Minister Hubert Aiwanger will come here in November to celebrate this anniversary. Minister Aiwanger sends his best regards to you all and invites you to enjoy Bavarian delicacies which you will find on the buffet in a couple of minutes. The trade volume between Bavaria and China amounted to 33 billion Euro in 2018, making China Bavaria's biggest trading partner worldwide. More and more Bavarian companies operate very successfully in China, and at the same time Bavaria, as one of Europe's leading high-

tech areas, is a preferential location for Chinese companies. And Chinese tourists love Bavaria, especially the classical destinations such as Munich, the Neuschwanstein Castle or the medieval city of Rothenburg upon Tauber. In 2018, we reached 1 million overnight stays of Chinese travelers in Bavaria.

Ladies and gentlemen, nothing illustrates the substantial relations between Germany and our region here as much as the state visit of Federal President Steinmeier last December. Mr. Steinmeier has let me know that he greatly enjoyed the hospitality in Guangzhou, Zhongshan and Foshan. Equally successful was Federal Chancellor Merkel's visit in Shenzhen just a few months earlier. Actually, Ms. Merkel has paid her 12th visit to China just a few weeks ago, and she expressed the hope that the current problems in Hongkong can be solved in a nonviolent manner. I think this is a wish that we can all join in, not least with a view to the further development of the Greater Bay Area.

Not only in terms of political leadership, but also of cultural highlights, Germany has recently sent the best it could offer to South China, such as the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra - which with its 185 professional musicians – is regarded as the largest symphony orchestra, or the Staatskapelle Dresden which was founded in 1548, and is thus the oldest still active orchestra in the world.

Also in the economic field it seems we are about to break records: On 23rd of November, I will attend the groundbreaking ceremony for a petrochemical plant of BASF in Zhanjiang which will be one of the biggest foreign investments in China ever. I am also excited by some smaller but innovative projects such as the cooperation between DHL and Ehang in delivering parcels by drones. At the same time, Germany remains a preferred location for Chinese companies, for instance the smartphone manufacturers OPPO and Vivo have both chosen Dusseldorf as the seat of their European branch. And I am looking forward to even more cooperation opportunities, as the German Chamber of Commerce will – in the so far biggest event of that kind – organize a match-making of up to 500 German and 500 Chinese companies early December in Shenzhen.

Dear guests, to conclude, I wish to express my deep gratitude to those whose support made this celebration possible:

- to our partner Bavaria, and to our sponsors whose logos you find on your invitations and on the backdrop behind me, please also visit their information booths;

- to photo-artist Steve Zhao for providing us with his own views from Bavaria and Rhineland-Palatinate which you can see on the screens here in the ballroom
- to Michelle and Simon, as masters of ceremony tonight;
- to the choir of the Xinghai conservatory for its interpretation of the national anthems;
- to the Graffiti-artists from Germany and Guangzhou, for helping our guests to create their own souvenir of this event;
- to my great team at the consulate, and – last but clearly not least – to my wife for her tireless support.

My dear guests, both the Federal Republic of Germany and the Peoples Republic of China will be 70 years old next month. May I propose a toast, on another 70 years of peaceful and fruitful cooperation.

Cheers!