**Speech by Peter Kasalovský, representative of the Informal Economic Forum – Economic Club and co-founder of the International Peace Committee, on the occasion of paying tribute to the citizens of the People’s Republic of China by awarding them with the ‘2015 Peace Prize from Slovakia’ for 2017**

**Distinguished Assembly,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

When I founded our association in 1993, originally as a foundation, I was pleased with the interest of the Chinese diplomatic mission in good relations and a mutually beneficial partnership. To some extent, it was symbolic that, subsequently, the then U.S., Russian and French ambassadors, excellent diplomats and people, Theodore Russell, Sergey Yastrzhembsky and Michel Perrin, also expressed this interest. Hence, in one of the smallest countries in the world, we could see not only a manifestation of the politics of the superpowers and France, but also joint activities aimed at understanding problems and promoting improvement of the international situation and, later, alleviating tensions, but always aimed at stabilising peace at the Central European, European and global levels. It is a fact that this cooperation and, especially, exchange of information, was followed with interest by presidents Michal Kováč, Rudolf Schuster and Ivan Gašparovič.

Over the period of almost twenty-five years, we had the opportunity to communicate directly with several personalities from the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In 1994, it was Li Tieying, a member of the State Council of the PRC and minister in charge of the State Commission for Restructuring the Economy, and, later, other politicians and renowned experts from different areas of human activity. From 2013 until his tragic passing in 2015, we exchanged our views on the development of our civilisation and, in particular, our own development within it with Dr Rongxiang Xu, a leading scientist in the field of regenerative restoration of the human body. Together, we arrived at the idea to create the International Peace Committee. This officially happened on 6 and 7 May 2015 and, today, we can rely on support from twenty-five personalities from the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States.

International life became more complicated at the end of the first decade and during this decade. Too many political leaders have come to the conclusion that they are no servants of democracy, but the ones who have the pouvoir to determine how and what people should think. And, having lost their memory, they are acting accordingly and want to change people’s will without the people. We should keep in mind that, since the time the regime changed, our country, too, has forever lost over two million ‘memories’. Just like many times in the past, within a very short period of time, we have repudiated people who, even at the cost of personal sacrifices, moved things forward. A significant number of contemporaries are not aware of the victims of German and Italian fascism and fascism in general, including Japanese fascism, which killed ten million Chinese. They know nothing about the effort to eliminate or enslave Slavic nations.

We, as contemporaries, have contributed to the progress of the European-wide integration process and understand Robert Schuman, François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer. The new home for European nations had and still has solid foundations, but, by diverting from the original projects, the successors of these greats have disturbed its roof, and the ‘large building’ has suffered damage. Where there is no accuser, there is no judge, but the building can still be restored. This will happen when democracy returns to Europe and the minority-elected, self-appointed rulers no longer dominate. They often put themselves in the position of people’s educators while acting without majority support from citizens. The consequences of the arrival of economic migrants to Europe and forcing and dictating to the states rejecting migrants to accept them is what started the disruption of the European Union and led to Brexit.

The same applies to why we are not acting to relieve the tensions in the relations between superpowers, why we are accepting the opinions of others about specific actions without verifying and confronting them. One example is the history of Crimea, but also the enduring criticism of China’s internal affairs. Who has been called or even chosen to act like this? Again, it is non-governmental organisations, power-hungry individuals, people yearning for disintegration, who, however, lack majority support from citizens and, what is worst, have no responsibility for the human and material damage caused. In our country, too, there are people, some even democratically elected, who present their opinion as the generally valid one. It should be added that such actors, who would be labelled as foreign ‘agents’ in the United States, actually receive support from members of our government.

**Distinguished Assembly,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the end of the past decade, European well-being became a memorabilia item. Today, there is discomfort and fear of what politicians will or will not do next. Voters are late in realising how they have been deceived or even betrayed and that they have, in a figurative sense, found themselves ‘off-side’ or have been given a ‘red card’ by those they have elected. This discomfort and social, or even existential, fear is being brilliantly fuelled by many media outlets owned by corporate clusters, meaning those who want to rule and have power. Persons receiving all-round attention from a variety of non-governmental organisations are helping the evident effort to twist public opinion to suit oligarchs’ needs. In fact, they will now be able to substitute state authorities and institutions in a whole range of activities, for taxpayers’ money.

As our experience with the actors from this sphere tells us, we must be careful if we do not follow their line. Today, we have foreign visitors again, this time from the most dynamic country, at least since the early 90s, and, at the same time, the most populated country in the world. It has not overheated its economy, despite the predictions of renowned economists, which, in a way, is one of the miracles of the present day. This miracle, which provides stability for the region, is a factor in resolving the Korean problem and has almost the same impact on the sustainability of peace in the world as the actions of the United States and Russia, has been created and fostered by people. The developments in China could be compared to Beamon’s jump in 1968. It took twenty-three years for his record to be broken. It was as if he had gone past human limits. Now we have the ‘Chinese jump’, which seems to be unbeatable from today’s perspective.

Li Tieying’s predictions and plans have become a reality. At the time, we presented the situation and vision to the public on ten newspaper pages, which was appreciated, among others, by the then Down Jones Vice President Jim Ottaway. China’s reality and progress are not something pleasant for the powerful Western leaders, so they keep looking for or manufacture mistakes, shortcomings and problems. There is an effort to create the impression that the conditions in China are undemocratic or even inhumane. The only truth is that they do not follow the current trends in the West – yet, there are more ‘western’ rules or models at work in China than in the West itself. This is, indeed, worth of a spontaneous applause and a deep bow. But it is also a call to do all that we can to ensure that we are close to China and China is close to us, in the spirit of the Declaration on Chinese-Slovak Relations of 6 January 2003.

The ‘spirit of the Silk Road’, which is present together with the Chinese philosophy of the millennium, has developed and existed based on the principles of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, sharing of experiences and benefits, and mutual respect and trust. I am convinced that this Chinese orientation and the project of the 21st century ‘Silk Road’ will dominate on a global scale. Eventually, it will bring together those ununitable today, and we will be in awe to realise – we will witness events, the bottom line of which will not be power or material wealth, but the actual welfare of people. We are not naive, and we are not dreamers, we simply refuse to live with the ‘truth’ that things can only be the way they are today.

A few weeks ago, I visited China as a representative of the International Peace Committee. This time, I was only in Beijing. Again, I had the opportunity to compare the past with the present, but especially to spend time with people – to stay close to the most ordinary people who represent the majority in every country. Kind, welcoming, attentive, cultured, respectful, receptive, diligent and well-minded people, who are also curious, who place high demands on themselves and take responsibility for their lives. Above all, I was in a megacity where you see no litter, no cigarette butts or dirt in general, where greenery is landscaped even in the most impossible of places. It was the same three years ago and even before. But now, it is about a higher standard of living and lifestyle and about what can only be found on a small scale or exceptionally elsewhere in the world. And it is also about ties to old traditions and the greatest achievements at the global level.

I met with representatives of MEBO International, a member of the International Peace Committee. We held discussions with Song Jingwu from the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and his colleagues. They are with us here today. After returning home, I was thinking about how we could express our respect, admiration and gratitude for the Silk Road, the economic and social stability, promotion of peace and, most recently, the sensitive approach to the Korean problem. At the end of last year, Xi Jinping, the highest representative of the PRC, ranked again among the top three personalities in our World Peace and Security Personality poll, just like in 2013, 2014 and 2015. It is no different this year. Therefore, I was not surprised by the suggestion to consider awarding the ‘2015 Peace Prize from Slovakia’ to China and, hence, symbolically express our relationship to the creators of the new China.

Several weeks ago, the members of the International Peace Committee took their position on the proposal to award the people of China extraordinarily with the ‘2015 Peace Prize from Slovakia’ for 2017. This special form of support for peace-making activities was approved on 9 March this year. The result is clear: I have the honour to request Mr Song to accept our medal and certificate and pass on our deep respect and gratitude to representatives of China, an ancient country with a profound history and, today, the promoter of peace and global progress and the new ‘Silk Road’.