

The 48 Group Club

Speech at the Annual Dinner of the Young Icebreakers of the 48 Group Club by Dr. Johnny Hon, United Kingdom, 30th June 2016

Your Excellency Ambassador Liu Xiaoming
Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear Friends

It is a great pleasure to be with you all this evening and my company, the Global Group, is delighted to sponsor this year's Young Icebreaker Dinner.

I know that we are about to enjoy a magnificent meal. Bright Courtyard has set a new standard for Chinese fine dining in London. Long may it continue and prosper.

When the date for this evening's dinner was set, although we knew that it would come in the wake of the referendum to decide whether or not the United Kingdom would continue to be a member of the European Union, none of us could have predicted the degree of upheaval that would engulf British politics and the uncertainties that would be unleashed in the life of Britain, Europe and the world.

I think that it would be a foolish person who would at this moment predict the actual course that events will now take. If anything, I am reminded of these words from William Shakespeare: "Mischief thou art afoot. Take then what course thou wilt."

Perhaps in times of great change one can draw some comfort from the timeless wisdom of a man who died four hundred years ago this May, a man with justifiable claim to being not just England's greatest playwright but the world's.

Although Britain and China are thousands of miles apart and differ in culture and in so many things, one thing that certainly joins us together is our shared respect for history and love of tradition. This helps us to cement a bilateral relationship that also rests on common strategic interests and economic complementarity and opportunity.

Thanks to the hard work and patient efforts of the leaders of both our countries, we have at last reached the point where some have described the relationship between Britain and China as being in its golden era.

I believe that, whatever form the political changes in the UK might take, there is now a broad national political consensus on the importance of good relations with China and that we are friends for the long-term. To maintain and build on our good relations with China is so important not only for our two countries, but also as an anchor of stability in our troubled world and troubled times.

These are precisely the positive bilateral relations for which the 48 Group has worked, hard and consistently, to create and develop over more than six decades. That is why the Global

Group is proud to be not simply a member but a staunch and active supporter of the 48 Group, The Icebreakers.

We specialise in venture capital, angel investment, private equity and strategic consultancy, in diverse sectors and markets, but with a strategic focus on China and its increasingly central place in the world economy.

And we are open to exploring ways to cooperate with all of you. I started my business when I was studying for my PhD at Cambridge University. So, I trust that qualifies me as a Young Icebreaker!

It is now my privilege to introduce His Excellency Mr Liu Xiaoming, the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China. Prior to his posting in London, Ambassador Liu had already enjoyed a distinguished diplomatic career, with postings to Zambia, the United States, Egypt and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Clearly, he is a man who enjoys variety and relishes a challenge!

Since arriving here in 2009, he has gone on to become the longest-ever serving Chinese Ambassador to the UK. And I believe that he has visited, over the last seven years, nearly every corner of the country and has made friends with people from all backgrounds and walks of life. His sense of duty, responsibility and friendship is illustrated by the fact that he has never missed a Young Icebreaker dinner.

If we can say that UK-China relations are in a golden era and that there is a national political consensus for positive bilateral relations, it is no exaggeration to say that this is in no small measure thanks to Ambassador Liu.

I am therefore delighted to call on Ambassador Liu to address us. I know you will want to give him a very warm welcome.

Thank you.

Dr. Johnny Hon
30/06/2016