



**Welcoming Remarks by Ambassador Chen Mingming
At Embassy Reception Marking the Founding
Of
The Chinese Language Foundation
2 November 2004**

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to the Founding Trustees, donors, supporters and friends of the Chinese Language Foundation. I particularly wish to welcome all of you who have made a special trip from Auckland to Wellington for this reception.

The founding of the Chinese Language Foundation is a great initiative. And I salute you for the vision, enthusiasm and commitment you have displayed in launching the foundation.

And I am delighted to become a patron of the Foundation. It is an honor which I deeply cherish. To me, this title is just as important as that of ambassador.

Needless to say, I am a staunch supporter of the Chinese Language Foundation. I support it for two reasons.

First, as the Chinese ambassador, I am a little concerned about the huge imbalance in the bilateral educational exchanges. There are over 40,000 Chinese students studying English and other subjects in New Zealand. But the number of New Zealand students studying Chinese is far smaller. We need to address this imbalance, and the Chinese Language Foundation has an important role to play in this respect.

Secondly and importantly, the founding of the Chinese Language Foundation is an important step for enhancing cross-cultural understanding.

When we promote the study of a foreign language, we are not doing so just for the sake of the language, or the beauty of the language. A foreign language is a vehicle for conducting cultural interaction. It is a means of communication by which values, ideas and aspirations are shared among different peoples. It is an essential tool for overcoming distrust and suspicion and enhancing friendship and understanding among nations. In short, we promote the study of foreign languages to bring different peoples together. This is where the importance of the Chinese Language Foundation lies.

The founding of the Chinese Language Foundation couldn't be more timely. With the conducting of China-New Zealand free trade talks ongoing, a close partnership is being forged between our two countries, and China-New Zealand ties are flourishing across the board. Launched against this background, I am sure that the Chinese Language Foundation will, through its work, generate more public interest in learning Chinese and help bring our two

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peoples closer. I pledge my full support to you, and my colleagues and myself will work together with you to assist the Foundation in carrying out its important mission.

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