



**Welcoming Remarks by Ambassador Chen Mingming
Embassy Reception Marking the
First Anniversary
Of
The Chinese Language Foundation
17 May 2005**

Good evening,

Honourable Trevor Mallard,
Dear members of the Chinese Language Foundation
And Members of the Wellington community

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me much pleasure to host this evening's function to mark the first anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Language Foundation.

I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you all. Thank you for your interest in the promotion of Chinese learning in New Zealand. I also wish to extend a special welcome to Minister Mallard. I know how busy you are, with many responsibilities, and I very much appreciate your being with us this evening.

In May last year, a group of committed individuals set up the Chinese Language Foundation in Auckland to promote the learning of Chinese in New Zealand. When I was asked to be the patron of the foundation, I readily agreed, for I could see no better way to enhance the friendship and understanding between China and New Zealand than through *encouraging and enabling New Zealanders to learn the language of our country*.

As you may *know*, interest in learning Chinese has been growing in New Zealand in the past few years. *All over New Zealand, especially in the big cities*, Chinese is taught in universities and schools, and *there are also* Chinese speech contests and other *less formal* language learning activities, *such as Mandarin Corners*. During the past year, the Chinese Language Foundation has made great efforts to promote the learning of Chinese, *especially in Auckland*, with particular focus on schools and business. It has thus given further impetus to the learning of Chinese, and I wish to thank all the members of the Foundation for the marvellous job they have done. *Now we wish to extend knowledge of the foundation and bring some of their activities to Wellington*.

The learning of Chinese by New Zealanders, just as the learning of English by Chinese, is of great importance in building strong ties between our two countries. This is particularly so against the background of *the* increasing political and economic integration that is taking place in the Asia Pacific region in which both China and New Zealand have been deeply involved. More than ever, our two countries are drawn together; and more than *ever*, we need each other. China is an Asian country with an oriental culture; and New Zealand has a European *and Maori* cultural tradition. As there are quite obvious cultural differences between us, we need to know more about each other to build a strong partnership between us. To do so, we need to overcome the language barrier. Thus, learning the languages of our respective countries is crucial in bringing our two countries and peoples closer *together*.

The Chinese Language Foundation is committed to playing precisely this role, and it deserves your support. I hope that by coming to today's reception and mingling with its members, you will learn more about

Encouraging and Enabling New Zealanders to Learn Chinese

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its mission and join its activities. It is also my hope that, *as they have done in Auckland*, the Chinese Language Foundation will *now* work closely *in Wellington* with other organizations and institutions that are involved in promoting the learning of Chinese in a joint effort to enhance the bond of friendship and understanding between China and New Zealand.

Once again, thank you all for coming and do enjoy the evening.