**INTRODUCTION BY MR JEAN-CHRISTOPHE DONNELLIER,**

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**AT THE INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON**

**2016-2020 EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY POLICIES**

**BEIJING, 26 APRILS 2016**

Mister Director-General Cao,

Honourable guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of Expertise France I am representing here the French public international cooperation institution which embodies major national agencies previously dealing independently with technical cooperation and bilateral aid in areas such as social security, human resources, public finance and sustainable development.

Our consolidated structure is now proudly in charge of over 300 technical cooperation programmes and projects across the world. We are active in more than 80 countries, including of course China where Expertise France constituents have a long and successful record of interventions in the labour, employment and social security fields.

Expertise France’s realm of intervention is therefore at the core of discussions held throughout this day on interrelations between employment and social security policies in Europe and in China.

We believe that, among the vast human, economic and social fields covered by social protection, the search for synergies as well as the fight against duplication of efforts and, even worse, mutual contradictions among policies and instruments are of the utmost importance.

Labour market restructuring definitely increases the need for social protection and social services. Unemployment benefits and pensions for aged workers cushion the social and economic impact of labour market restructuring, while employment services are vital in reallocating redundant workers. Opportunities for training, retraining, skills upgrading, vocational rehabilitation etc. are in more demand.

Moreover, a modern social protection system, which acts as an automatic stabiliser during economic downturns, might be essential for China’s « new normal » economy with its emphasis on internal consumption. Social protection provides replacement income that smoothens consumption during recessions and thus prevents a deepening due to collapsing consumer confidence and its negative effects on domestic demand.

A modern social protection systems is grafted on the labour market and thus improves labour market functioning. Employment services assist job-seekers and help reconcile labour market supply and demand. They promote enterprise development and support creative innovation. Unemployment benefits protect workers against the financial impact of job-loss and helps them maintain their employability during a spell of unemployment, while improving their chances to find or indeed to create a job matching their skills.

Access to health-care services helps workers maintain their health, while cash benefits protect them against the financial impact of sickness or accidents, facilitating return to employment after full recovery. Maternity leave programmes provide working mothers with the time needed to deal with the requirements of parenthood, while retaining the link with their employers, thus reducing their chances of dropping out of the labour market altogether.

Contributory social insurance schemes promote formal employment throughout active life. In general, social protection provides a framework for the professional career and indeed the life-course of the self-employed as well as of workers and their families. Coordination among social security schemes, across labour markets, between rules governing enterprise creation are keys to decent working and living conditions for populations immune from the risks of poverty and of social or economic exclusion.

This is because we strongly believe in coordination, not competition, between employment and social security policies that we, at Expertise France, welcomed very much the initiative of the Chinese National Development and Reform Commission NDRC to bring together major Chinese and European actors in the fields of Labour and Social protection, at the level of decision makers as well as that of experts. Sharing thoughtful, provoking experiences will mutually enrich an open and constructive dialogue and exchange among us.

Expertise France is proud indeed that the Component of the EU-China Social protection reform project we are coordinating on behalf of our European consortium partners was chosen as the roof under which to host this important event. We managed, when preparing for this afternoon session, to secure the participation of highly recognized European experts and institutions, who will put forward the most advanced European and national examples of social security and employment policies, working hand-in-hand for better living and welfare conditions across Europe.

Our example will show that, far from contradicting each other, social security and employment policies are powerful partners in combating the effects of economic crisis and economic downturns, in preserving social peace and in enhancing social cohesion.

Further, and this may be particularly inspiring for China, the European panorama to be described will appear as one of respect for national peculiarities and specific circumstances in policy design and implementation within a commonly agreed upon solid framework, facilitating Europe-wide employment promotion, labour mobility and high levels of continued social security, spanning over all ages of citizens’ lives.

Conversely, knowing about the formidable results already achieved by China in designing and conducting innovative and remarkably dynamic employment and social security policies, we as European will listen with the utmost interest to eminent Chinese experts introducing their views on how to best confront social security and employment challenges in the years to come, the years to be covered by China’s thirteenth five-years Plan.

We will shortly hear about the interaction between employment and social security policies viewed from the European side. This presentation will help establish that social security protection is not primarily an additional cost factor for production, that it is not an impediment for employment growth, but more fundamentally a powerful tool for promoting employment opportunities that are lasting, efficient, responsive to rapidly evolving economic conditions.

This presentation will be delivered by my colleague from Expertise France Mr. Xavier Coyer, who will use the first results of a European-wide study sponsored by our project and entrusted to the French National School for Higher Social Security Studies, which has a long tradition of established partnership in and with China.

Renowned European experts, Mr Koen Vleminckx from Belgium and Professor Stefano Sacchi from Italy have also kindly accepted our invitation to share with us their views and in-depth knowledge on how to react to structural employment problems resulting from national economic transformations.

Their reference to the role of vocational training as well as to the shift in modern labour market conditions impacting on employment promotion and social security protection tools and devices will no doubt be enlightening for our debates and useful for future China policy decisions and practical action.

Once again, I am particularly happy and proud that our project could be part to such a positive and action-oriented event. I am thankful to our partners in the European Union delegation and in the NDRC for making this possible, as well as to the experts and colleagues, Chinese or European, who contributed to today’s event practical implementation.

With this in mind, I now wish us full success for our works and I thank you for your kind attention.

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