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Welcoming remarks to the participants of the German-Chinese Symposium on Intellectual Property on 29 September 2008 in Munich

My best wishes go to all the participants of this symposium. Thank you to both the Chinese Intellectual Property Office and the German Patent and Trademark Office for organising this series of events, whose third meeting is being held today.

German-Chinese cooperation in the field of patents has a long and established tradition. Our cooperation started in the early 1980's and has been growing steadily over the past years. Intellectual property plays a key role in our intensive dialogue on the Rule of Law. Just six months ago, 70 high-level experts from both countries met at the 8th symposium in Munich to discuss effective protection of intellectual property as an element of the Rule of Law, as well as to exchange information and discuss their respective experience. Our more than 25 years of cooperation - between both Patent Offices, two of the largest in the world – was put on a broader basis in October 2007 when the partnership agreement was signed in Shanghai.

The focus of your meeting will be on how and where to position the patent system among the conflicting interests of law, economics and technology, as well as the perspectives of international cooperation between patent institutions. Both topics are related. The main challenges facing the global patent system are known: the number of patent applications is dramatically increasing; new fields of technology, such as biotechnology and genetic engineering, constantly require new interpretations and restrictions; competing societal interests, such as the protection of public health, need to be considered; and Third World countries are demanding that their traditional knowledge be given similar legal protection as property. Above all, however, all countries with innovative industries – including the People's Republic of China as well

as Germany – are faced with a common task: namely that of combating product piracy. Technical inventions constitute a raw material of both developed and developing industrial societies; it is essential that we protect them from illegal counterfeiting. In order to achieve this through joint endeavours, we need to have a common understanding of the problem, as well as close cooperation, based on trust, between governments and authorities.

So I expressly welcome the fact that China's new national IPR strategy affirms China's intention to give high political priority to the protection of intellectual property. With regard to the planned legislative reforms in China, I hope that both our countries' patent systems, whose extensive compatibility has proven effective, diverge as little as possible from one another. Any patent law based on the requirements of the world trading system must also ensure that domestic and foreign right holders receive equal treatment.

I am sure that this symposium will lead to deeper insights, concrete proposals and new personal contacts on both sides. I would therefore like to thank our Chinese partners for their visit to Munich and I wish the conference every success.

Brigitte Zypries, Member of the German Bundestag
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