**Czech Beer and Fly**

**2nd September 2016**

**Speech by Consul General of the Czech Republic Mr. Zbyněk Noha**

Dear Deputy Director Generals, Dear Chairman of Kaile Group, Dear Colleagues, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me welcome you here today and let me thank you for joining us to celebrate a number of important moments for Czechia in Southwestern China.

Exactly one year ago my Consulate General did not exist. At that time also just true optimists dreamed of having a regular direct flight between Chengdu and Prague. And yet we are here today with a glass of the best beer in the world in our hands to celebrate. We celebrate creation of this direct airline by Sichuan Airlines. We celebrate one year anniversary of the establishment of the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chengdu, which was officially opened on 8th September 2015. And we have the pleasure to celebrate all this with a glass of Czech Beer.

Over the years our Consulate General has become fully operational and issued the historically first Schengen visa. Soon after, we have opened three visa centers – in Chengdu, Chongqing and Kunming. We helped to organise many delegations from and to Southwestern China, including a trip of Vice Governor Liu Jie and Secretary Wang Dongming – just to name a few.

The Representative Office of Central Bohemian Region was officially opened in Chengdu in June. We have been working hard to bring Czechia and Southwestern China closer together at a number of events at which we had a pleasure to see some of you.

Some time ago I promised that the visa service of the Czech Consulate General in Chengdu would be fast, modern and streamlined. I promised that “our kind personnel would work just as fast as Sichuan Airlines fly”. Even with an incredible increase in visa applications I can assure you that this has very much came true.

Let me therefore thank all my colleagues at the Consulate General who work really tirelessly to make sure that no passengers of Sichuan Airlines (and no other travellers, of course) will miss their flight because of a visa problem on our part.

On 25th February 2016 I took the historically first flight by Sichuan Airlines connecting our two beautiful cities – Chengdu and Prague. It was a charter that later became a scheduled flight that carries hundreds of Czechs and Chinese travellers twice a week in a smooth and comfortable way.

 I myself count to the best customers – just imagine: Earlier today I drove my friends – a Czech family of four who had visited me – to the airport and they boarded the direct flight to Prague. On Wednesday I already picked up my next visitors – a family of three who came by direct flight too. They all praised Sichuan Airlines for the high quality service and most of all for their friendly approach.

Today we are toasting with a glass of a great beer. Czech Beer is often described as the “soft power” of Czechia. No other country can be proud of having the best beer in the world – the golden drink that fits so much to Sichuan food.

Many Czech companies have introduced their beer brands at Food and Drink Expo here in Chengdu in March this year. Since then, we can see more and more stores and restaurants offering Czech beer to customers here in Sichuan. And today, I am more than happy to invite you to taste some of the best brands of Czech beer – Budweiser Budvar and Primator.

The connection of Czech beer and the direct flight – “Czech Beer and Fly” – is very pertinent. Those who drink the great Czech beer in China certainly cannot resist of flying over to see the country where it comes from. And those who travel to Czechia and taste the Czech beer for the first time will demand the Czech beer also after their return to China!

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me thank to all who contributed to the fact that we are meeting at this event tonight – all sponsors and partners including

* CzechTourism Beijing Office
* Kaile Group
* Misura Travel
* Ding Long Travel Group
* Bossy Photography Studio
* Budweiser Budvar
* Primator

Let me also express my personal thanks to fellow organizers – Sichuan Airlines and CzechTrade Chengdu. The Director of CzechTrade has been working very hard and without him this event would not have come about.

Please do enjoy your time with us tonight!

Cheers and “Na zdraví”!

Thank you. Xiexie.