**Cocktail Celebrating the First Flight Chengdu – Prague by Sichuan Airlines and First Schengen Visa issued by the Czech Consulate General in Chengdu**

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

Dear Vice Chairman Chen Wenhua, Dear Vice mayor Liu Shoucheng, Dear Directors General,

Dear Consuls General, Colleagues, Members of Czech Community, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentleman,

Let me welcome you here today and let me thank you for coming to the event that represents opening of a whole new chapter of the Czech-China partnership. Today we celebrate two historic moments that stand for nothing less than a progress itself.

First, I am happy to announce that the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chengdu is fully operational. We have issued the historically first Schengen visa and we will keep on ensuring that eager Chinese visitors will have no difficulty to receive a visa before traveling to the Czech Republic.

Second, it is my great privilege to see the first flight by Sichuan Airlines connecting two beautiful cities – Chengdu and Prague. Between them this air corridor creates a metaphorical bridge. But just like the majestic Anshun Bridge, it offers much more than a simple passage from one place to another. The airway between the Czech Republic and Sichuan will provide many possibilities and enrichment for both Czech and Chinese visitors, their businesses, culture as well as our friendship.

On behalf of the Consulate General of the Czech Republic in Chengdu let me thank all who contributed to both.

Emergence of such possibilities naturally calls for a high quality service. I can assure you that the Czech General Consulate in Chengdu represents a combination of a modern system and traditional Czech helpfulness. Moreover, our kind personnel work just as fast as Sichuan Airlines fly. Therefore Chinese travellers will receive their visa to explore Prague just within four days.

At the same time, it will be my great pleasure to see more Czech visitors coming to discover the magnificence of Sichuan province and the city of Chengdu. I am positive that Mount Qingcheng, Wenshu Yuan Monastery or the glorious countryside of Sichuan will entice many tourists. And the attractive Sichuan market will captivate more Czech businesspeople as well.

A long and strong partnership between Sichuan province and the Central Bohemian region clearly shows that the Czech-Chinese collaboration is beneficial and fruitful. The visit of Vice governor Liu Jie to the Czech Republic that begins tomorrow will bring further impetus in this well-functioning partnership.

Today we are here to celebrate. To celebrate connectivity, speed and closeness, modernity. We are here to pay the tribute to the progress.

It reminded me of a great Czech entrepreneur and visionary Tomáš Baťa, who once said: “*Without a will to make a change, there’s no progress – without the progress there’s no prosperity*.”

I couldn’t be gladder, that both our countries dispose of such a will to change and improve. I couldn’t be happier, that today we can witness this main historic progress. And I couldn’t be more excited about adding another piece into the mosaic of One Belt One Road Initiative.

Fulfilling Tomáš Baťa’s words, thanks to the improvement we made, thanks to the progress we achieved, our regions, whole our countries, are heading side by side towards even greater prosperity.

Thank you. Xiexie.