

bilateral meeting with Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries - CPAFFC.

24 Mar. 2023

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This afternoon I met in Beijing with Jiang Jiang, VicePresident of Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries – CPAFFC. The meeting was highly protocolary, and a lot of the time was spent in polite talk and small talk about food and tea in China. Mostly, it served as my introduction as Secretary General and a reminder that we are not exactly the same as UCLG, although they keep grouping us together.

In essence, the meeting ended with three requests on each side, to which both sides more or less agreed:

From CPAFFC to Metropolis:

1. To ensure that Guangzhou has a preeminent role and keeps the Co-Presidency=> I mentioned that this is a decision of the Board of Directors, but that we are looking with Guangzhou for formulas to have their contribution recognized, basically referring to the conversation about a possible office
2. For me to go to Chinese cities other than Guangzhou (Fuzhou and Hangzhou were mentioned), and more generally for Metropolis to take them into account => I said that yes, with pleasure, and that we need their help to mobilize more Chinese cities in Metropolis, with their help. I also mentioned the work with Chengdu and the visit we are planning in September
3. For Metropolis to uphold the 'One China' principle in relation to Taiwanese cities, i.e. to avoid any reference to Taiwan as an independent country => I explained that as a network of cities it is not our role to challenge international law, UN principles and such issues, but to keep links between cities, and that this is what we will do: focus on the links, without challenging the UN position (i.e. One China). In short, we need to be very vigilant in how we talk about Taiwan, because they will be.

From Metropolis to CPAFFC:

1. To help us ensure that there is a large Chinese contingent with many cities coming to the Brussels Urban Summit => they said they will help and that we should be in touch and send information about it
2. To help us to continue expanding the Chinese membership => they agreed to help and took note of our interest in Qingdao (9M inhabitants), the largest Chinese metropolis outside the Greater Bay area that is not a Metropolis member [bear in mind that I will be seeing three potential members from that area in Guangzhou: Foshan (7.5M), Dongguan (7.5) and Zhuhai (2.5M)]
3. I explained our intention to create in Brussels the role of 'Associate Member' and that we hoped they would become one => they will await our confirmation, sounded like they will become associate member

Now on to dinner: boiled mutton and some Chinese white spirit have been promised. Let us see what that will mean...