

OPENING SPEECH BY NICOLAI PRYTZ Consul General

Spoken word counts

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, distinguished colleagues. First of all, I would like to thank the Nordic Centre, Aalborg University and University of Eastern Finland for inviting me to this event. I have read the programme with great interest and must say that it is very satisfying to see the high level of knowledge and competencies you have gathered here today. It is also very satisfying that experts from China and the Nordic countries jointly address the great and important challenges created by our longer life expectancy. These topics are of global importance and something that will feature prominently in the bilateral collaboration between Denmark and China in the years to come. As I am sure you know, Denmark and China have a longstanding and exceptionally good relationship. In a little less than one month – on 11th May – we celebrate 68 years of uninterrupted diplomatic relations. This testifies to the commitment made by both our countries to the importance of international collaboration and friendship. And our bilateral relationship keeps growing in both strength and depths. This year in particular, we are proud to celebrate the 10th anniversary of China and Denmark's Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Denmark is among a selected number of countries to have a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with China. A key element of the comprehensive strategic partnership is our Joint Work Programme which was launched in May 2017 by President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. It details the many activities that Denmark and China are jointly working on – activities that span more than 80 Danish and Chinese authorities and public institutions. Including activities related to food, healthcare and drug administration. There is good reason for this. Despite the difference in size between

Denmark and China, both our countries share similar healthcare challenges. And some of these challenges relate directly to the topics you will discuss today. Let me mention a few examples:

An aging population and fewer hands to take care of this growing segment of our societies.

A dramatic increase in lifestyle diseases. A growing pressure to improve treatment and lower the costs. And finally ensuring equal access to high quality healthcare also outside metropolitan areas. Today you will focus on issues related to the aging population. These are issues of great importance to Denmark. Our Social Welfare model is one of the most extensive and generous government models among the Western welfare states. One-in-fifth person above 80 years is currently living in nursing homes. Nursing homes is an offer to Danish citizens who are no longer able to cope at home. In these homes, nurses and healthcare professionals are responsible for the wellbeing of the residents. Nutrition and food play an important role as a means to keep the residents happy and healthy.

Therefore, Danish universities and public institutions have started to pay more attention to food and food composition and are developing new technologies that will improve nutrition values and increase the entire experience surrounding the daily meals in nursing homes and other public institutions.

Of course, when it comes to food there are cultural issues involved. For instance, social aspects of the meal, ingredients, colour, taste and so on. As Danes we know this very well. The New Nordic Food trend that originates in Denmark is all about taste, colour, ingredients and so forth. In the past few years, we have been actively involved in exposing these Nordic culinary traditions to Chinese consumers and we have organised different events where Nordic and Chinese culinary traditions meet. When reading the conference's background material, however, I realised that some of the technologies that are involved in improving food quality and avoiding food waste represents another obvious area for collaboration between Nordic and Chinese experts. I am thinking of artificial intelligence

and image recognition. Danish scientists are experimenting with AI and image recognition as a way to analyse what food and how much food is consumed for instance by residents in nursing homes. AI and image recognition are two areas where Chinese scientists and companies are among the world's leading experts. And so, I am sure that in this particular field there is great potential for collaboration. In short, I believe the food4growth agenda is of great value to our societies in the Nordic region, to Denmark and to China. Therefore, I also expect that important new initiatives will materialise from your discussions here today. I wish you a great conference and thank you once again for inviting me to take part in the proceedings. Thank you.