Maritime Silk Road Forum
Opening Ceremony

Welcome Remarks
by Mr. LI Yong
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Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here today, representing the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, at the opening of the Maritime Silk Road Forum, organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Fujian Provincial Government and China Central TV of the People’s Republic of China.

The revitalization of the historic Silk Road and establishment of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road was put forward by the President of China, Mr. Xi Jinping, in late 2013. It marks a turning-point in the economic development of China, and re-opens the doors to a greater integration of the region’s diverse economies. The inter-linkages of these economies – both by land and by sea –
will undoubtedly provide an indispensable foundation to the future long-term growth and prosperity of the Asian region as a whole.

The concept of the renewed maritime Silk Road is intended to strengthen the links between established and emerging economies through facilitated trade and upgraded infrastructure. This strongly echoes the values and precepts which UNIDO promotes through its mandate of *Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development*. Through the transfer of not only goods and money, but also of knowledge, technology, and know-how, the benefits of economic cooperation will become tangible to everyone. Productivity levels will rise, new jobs will be created, advanced technologies will be adopted, and a shared culture of cooperation will be developed.

The Maritime Silk Road directly promotes the inclusiveness of economic and industrial development. But its long-term viability will be determined by the measures taken to ensure its sustainability. Industrial pollution all too often affects the world’s oceans and maritime resources, creating devastating effects on a source of energy, nourishment and well-being for countless numbers of people.

It is no coincidence that UNIDO’s three international conferences on Green Industry have all been held in Asian port cities: Manila, Tokyo, and Guangzhou. These are the conduits of heightened industrial activity, the fruits of which are exported throughout the world. The site of the last Green Industry Conference –
Guangzhou – is even designated as an official waypoint on the new Maritime Silk Road, connecting East, South, and West.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that Fujian Province has played an important role in the development of the Maritime Silk Road. Its cities, namely Quanzhou, Fuzhou, Zhangzhou and Xiamen, are pivotal hubs of the Maritime Silk Road, and will continue to contribute to the creation of wealth in the countries and regions along the route. Today, the mayors and leaders of the cities assembled in this conference room will share, with all of us, their success stories and their plans to enhance cooperation and strengthen common development along the Maritime Silk Road.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Maritime Silk Road offers participating countries a unique opportunity to make a decisive change and develop their industries and trade in a sustainable manner. In this respect, it is absolutely clear that industries that act today will be the winners of tomorrow. Industry has no future unless it is sustainable. Therefore, sustainable industrial production – or Green Industry - can and should become a hallmark of the Maritime Silk Road. This will help ensure not only investment and growth, but also the preservation of our environment – a
resource that is critical to long-term economic growth and elementary to human development.

It is thus with high expectations that we open today’s Forum. We know that the countries along the Maritime Silk Road are embarking on a journey during which cooperation will trump competition. The common interests and shared destiny binding the countries along this route will breed in them a sense of mutual responsibility – towards one another, and also towards their shared resources. The world’s nations are now working to develop the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, which will shape the future they want. It is imperative that we do not engage in a “race to the bottom” that would perpetuate a downward spiral of resource abuse, environmental degradation, social exclusion, and so on.

Instead, let the Maritime Silk Road be an example of how countries can join together in partnerships spanning regions, oceans and continents, in order to share the benefits of their rising productivity and pursue a model of inclusive and sustainable industrial development together.

Finally, I wish all of you very successful deliberations, and look forward to seeing a positive and inspiring outcome of this important event.

Thank you.