**Transcription of Ambassador TAN’s interview with Telegraaf**

**So since you've been here for a while, what were your first impressions? The Netherlands is a small country. You came in a very strange time, I guess, due to the corona virus and everything.**

Yes, in fact my previous post was ambassador to Ethiopia. So I joked I flowed down from the highland to the lowland. Ethiopia is a least developed country and here the Netherlands is a developed one. So it's a contrast, and because of the pandemic, I haven't traveled as much as I had hoped to.

But I've learned a lot and I've made a lot of friends and a lot of contacts with the government, with the business, with academia.Of course, I hope to establish a good working relations with the media.

I don't think the Netherlands is a small country. It might be small in size and in population, but ever since I arrived, I have a lot of surprises, there are happy surprises. When talking about the European Union or Europe, people may think about France, Germany or UK, but the Netherlands is big in many ways, like its trade with China. The Netherlands is the second largest EU investor in China, and it is the largest destination of the Chinese investment among EU countries. And, well, like in the summer Olympics in Tokyo, it was quite a surprise because you did very well in terms of the medals. I mean, you have got more medals than any other EU countries. So the Netherlands is not small.

I've also learned that the Netherlands has many famous sinologists, like Robert Hans van Gulik, and recently three Dutch sinologists finished translation of the most famous Chinese novel, which was written in the early 18th century- the Dream in the Red Chamber. I've learned that so many people in the Netherlands are very fond of the Chinese culture.

So that’s the happy surprise.

But to balance, I have to say that, the media reporting and the public opinion about China is a challenge, and it should be an important part of my work.

**Here is a brief response question, because you reacted to the article in the telegraph about Taiwan, sort of the start of this for us to come together. Yeah, obviously, that was on the opinion page, so he's not a member of our staff of course. What was your problem with how the Taiwan issue is being reported?**

Our position is very much clear and consistent. That there is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and we oppose to any form of official or political interaction between Taiwan and countries that have diplomatic relations with China.

This has been a firm and consistent position of China, and in fact, this one China principle has been universally recognized by the international community, including countries in the west. And it is also the political foundation of bilateral relations between China and other countries, including the Netherlands.

And now there are a lot of talks about the tensions across the strait. I think the root causes of the current tension in the cross-strait relations are the repeated attempts by the Taiwan authorities to solicit for support for Taiwan dependence, and also certain countries seek to use Taiwan to contain China. In their eyes, Taiwan is seen as an unsinkable aircraft carrier. Recently there have been official contacts between some countries and Taiwan authorities, military drills and rhetoric by some western countries.

And also you mentioned the opinion piece. I wish to say that this Taiwan question relates to China's core interest. So it is absolutely necessary for China to respond to Taiwan independence, separatist activities and external interference and safeguard our sovereignty, security and territorial integrity. I have to say that our response is the reaction to the provocations and violations of these countries on their commitment on Taiwan question. So you see the casual relationship here. I do hope that the media reports not only cover China's response, but could also cover the part that has caused China's response, so as to make it a more balanced report, so that readers could have a better understanding.

I know the worries about the military actions. We hold that the Chinese should not fight fellow Chinese, and we are striving for the prospect of peaceful reunification and making every effort with utmost sincerity. But at the same time, we cannot renounce the use of force. This is not targeting the people of Taiwan. It is to deter the separation forces and foreign interference. It will only be the last resort, when we are forced to do so by Taiwan separation forces and foreign interference.

**But Taiwan can’t be a threat to you, it’s so small. So why did the military build up there from China?**

Some countries may put it in a geopolitical kind of context, so that's a different story. And also those forces inside Taiwan, they are seeking foreign support to advance their separation agenda. I do hope that the people around the world understand the aspiration of the Chinese people to realize the goal of unity of the Chinese nation. And I do hope that the one China principle could be observed and no wrong signals sent to Taiwan independence forces.

**Officially, the Taiwan authority hasn't said that they want to be independent. I know there is a tendency, but I mean it's not their official line. It's not that the government says we want to be independent of China.**

I think the politicians and authorities and high level officials have said something along those lines, including when they were campaigning for their posts or after taking office. I do hope that the media reports could also follow those remarks. As I said, not just focusing on China's reaction. Like how other countries are doing the military drills in our part of the world. And also what the Taiwan authorities remarked in that regard.

**I can understand Taiwan has belonged to Chinese for ages. But I mean it has never been part of, let's say the CCP regime, CCP never ruled there.**

It is universally acknowledged that the People’s Republic of China is the legal government in the international community representing the whole Chinese nation.

When Chiang kai-shek was defeated, we all agreed that Taiwan is part of China.

**There are worries because they said, look, we had a situation with Hong Kong where, according to some reports, the democratic forces have been crushed down or limited. So people in Taiwan said, what happened to Hong Kong could happen to us. We don't want that. We want to stay separated with different systems. How do you see that? Is there a connection?**

I think they are making excuses to advance their agenda. Because they have been saying that long before the development in Hong Kong. They said that even before Hong Kong's sovereignty was handed over back to China. And in fact, the two sides across the strait have agreed upon the 1992 consensus, But later they revoked that consensus. So, simply put, they are making excuses. They have been advancing their independence agenda for many years.

**So how do you see the way forward to get the tension around Taiwan being slowed down or being lowered.**

I do hope that there should be no foreign interference. This is an internal affair of China, and the interference will only make things worse. I also hope that the cross-strait talks based on one China principle could resume.

**After Donald Trump, we have got Mr Biden and I think half of the world or the whole world expected the relation to get better between China and America, do you? How do you feel about that? is Mr Biden better than Mr Trump?**

I think we did expect that the relationship could be better with the change of the administration. But the reality is not as encouraging as we had hoped, and in the eyes of many Chinese, the U.S. is still pursuing the policy of containing China.

In our view, the relationship between China and the United States should be characterized by peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and win-win cooperation. I wish to mention that on the 16th of November, the two leaders of China and the U.S. had a very good exchange, candid, substantive and productive. They both agreed that this is a very important bilateral relationship, could be the most important; and there should be no new cold war. So we hope that the consensus could be followed through and translated into action by the two sides.

On the U.S. side, is there a fear for losing a top position? Is it all about world power? Or who will be the dominant force? In fact, it is not our policy to replace anyone. We have made it very clear, our goal is to meet the growing needs of the Chinese people for a better life. We are not interested in power politics or in this kind of competition for the number one post, our central task is to promote development and bring real benefits for the people.

So when I heard some years ago, the U.S. leader said, I quote, “I will never accept the second place for the United States of America,” frankly speaking, I was a bit surprised. What did that mean? We don't want to engage in this kind of a competition, which might lead to a new cold war.

And I'm happy to say that, now the two sides have made it clear that we don't want a new cold war. I do hope that there could be a coexistence peacefully and not to view each other from the geopolitical point of view. And there could be win-win economic cooperation.

But now you see a lot of sanctions from the U.S. against Chinese companies. If they say the Chinese companies are spying, then they should give evidence. We want to be integrated into this global supply chain, and also we want to move up from the low end to the middle and high end. Then we are wondering if, in the eyes of some people in the west, developing countries can integrate, but only at the low end. I mean low tech, labor intensive, polluting kind of jobs. Because when you move up, then they will sanction you, blacklist you. This is not a fair competition. Heads I win, tails you cheat. Of course we will play by the rules, international rules, including respecting the intellectual property.

**China joined WTO 20 years ago, there's also a complaint in the west that it's more difficult to invest in China than it is for Chinese companies here. They say that the rules are quite complicated in China.**

In terms of the ease of doing business in China, if you look at the report of the chamber of commerce of the United States, of the European Union, of Japan, I think the conclusion is quite clear. It is good and it is improving, many companies from the west are making money, and most of them have made it very clear that they will stay and they will expand their business there. We must listen to those people who are doing business in China rather than the politicians.

A lot of people say China has benefited a lot from world trade. I think it’s the same for the west. For the past two decades, China’s contribution to the global growth every year amounts to 30%.There might be trade disputes. But there are more disputes with the U.S. from other countries than with China. I read a report, since China joined WTO in 2001 , 12.2% of the disputed cases in the WTO are related to China, while 28.4% of the disputed cases are with the United States.

**How would you put Holland on the list of the countries where you have certain difficulties with? Would you say everything is fine or apart from the media reporting? But what would you say about the stand of the Dutch government?**

In the year of 2014, the leaders of our two countries announced that we will build an open and pragmatic partnership for comprehensive cooperation.  
So we have an objective and there have been fruitful achievements of cooperation in various sectors and our economic relations are in good shape.

Last year, our bilateral trade reached the U. S dollar 91.8 billion, up by 7.8%.  
So I was told that the trade with China was the only positive growth for the Netherlands last year, against the pandemic. And this year from January to October, the trade volume was U.S. dollar 92.4 billion, up by 27%, a historical high. Among all European countries, the Netherlands is the largest destination of Chinese investment and the second largest source of investment to China.

Also looking into the future, I see huge potentials. China has a population of 1.4 billion and a middle income group as strong as more than 400 million, and China’s economy is still expanding. Our two countries could further deepen and widen our win-win cooperation in the fields like green development, digital economy and new energy, agriculture, etc.

And it's not just bilateral. We regard the Netherlands as the gateway of Europe, thanks to your location, policy, and also your entrepreneurship, the resilience of your business. And it's not just economic. Both countries support multilateralism, care about environment and commit to fight against the climate change.

Of course, at the same time, I also see challenges, the public opinion, the media report are negative and also many motions against China in the parliament, different understandings on issues like human rights. But I believe that there are more opportunities than challenges in our bilateral relations.

China and Netherlands are not allies, but definitely we are not enemies. We are partners and we have shared interests, we have no conflict of fundamental interests.

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the ambassadorial relations between our two countries. I do hope that our two countries could work together to enhance mutual understanding and maintain the momentum of our cooperation. So as ambassador, I have been working very hard and will continue to work hard.

**I understood from our correspondent in China about the pollution from coal burning. It's also true that China is making a massive investment in clean energy. How would you see the transition? How committed is China to the green deal?**

China is very much committed to achieving green development. If you look at the Chinese policy especially since the year 2012, China has done a lot of investment in green energy and try very hard to make the transition.

In China's energy structure, coal played a very important role. About 70% of China's energy was based on the burning of the coal for many years. Today the percentage may be a bit lower, to my knowledge, about 60%. So the transition won't be easy, but our commitment is very firm and we have announced that we will peak the carbon emission before the year 2030 and achieve carbon neutralization before the year 2060. The years China needs to achieve that goal is much shorter than European countries and western countries. China is still a developing country, and we rely very much on coal, but we have set the objective and we will follow through. We will achieve that.

Recently there have been a lot of power cuts, the main reason for this power cut is that many officials are under pressure of achieving the goal , they have used up their portion and we have quantified the goal of the transition. But I haven't seen much report, let alone appreciation of China's efforts in the west. But we will do that as they are good for ourselves and also a major contribution to the international effort to mitigate climate change.

**I understood from our correspondent that one of your Olympic side is built on the old coal mine near Beijing. She visited there that she said it was an old coal mining, but now it's very nice.**

I do hope there could be more reports on that, because we have made a lot of efforts and we hope that our efforts, our contributions, could be acknowledged and appreciated, and also I hope that we can understand each other better and join hands in achieving a clean word.

**About understanding, apart from Taiwan, I guess one of the other issue was the political boycott from a few countries. It has something to do with the human rights like Uyghurs in Xinjiang. What do you say about that?**

So I take that as two questions.

First, I respond with regard to the U.S. policy of not sending officials or diplomats to the winter Olympics. I think the U.S. announcement is seen as an act of politicizing sports in the name of human rights and freedom. This gravely violates the principle of political neutrality in the Olympic charter and runs counter to the Olympic motto of “together” and stands on the opposite side of global athletes and sports fans for the Olympics. The protagonists should be the athletes, not politicians. And according the Olympic rule, national leaders attend the Olympics at the invitation of the Olympic Committee and register in the international Olympic Committee system. To date, many heads of state and government and royals have registered for the Beijing Olympics, and they are most welcome. The Beijing Olympics will be a success, regardless of whether some countries and officials coming or not. Chinese are very much confident the Beijing Olympics will be a streamlined, safe and splendid international event, and it will be a success.

Now coming to your question about the Uyghur issue. It is very clear that we are for the protection of human rights. The Constitution of China stipulates the protection of human rights and the protection of the languages and the preservation of traditions and customs of all ethnic groups, including Uyghurs. Over the past 40 years, the Uyghur population in Xinjiang doubled. The Xinjiang related issues are in essence about countering violent terrorism and separatism, and deradicalization. It is not about human rights or ethnicity or religion.

Since 1990s, China suffered hundreds of terrorist attacks. I wonder whether in the Netherlands and in the west they have the knowledge of this. Let me give you an example. On July the 5th, 2009, in a single terrorist attack, 197 people were beaten or burned to death and about 2000 people were injured in the provincial capital of Xinjiang. Our approach is to address the root cause of terrorism, like the under development and unemployment and the radicalization. China has been earnestly implementing UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, and the UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy. We have noticed that certain country has tried to foment unrest and create division and disorder in Xinjiang. Some high level officials made no secret of the scheme, and you can find the video footage of their remarks in the YouTube.

**But what I understood is that for a long time there have not been terror attacks anymore in Xinjiang. And it seems that when I read the reports from Human Rights Watch and those organizations, they claim that you punish a whole population, millions of people, for the behaviour of a small. So is that true? Can you call them reeducation camps? What do you say to those criticisms ?**

Those criticisms are not based on facts, they are not factually correct. It's misinformation and disinformation.

You mentioned for quite some time there have been no terrorist attacks. That is due to our efforts to address the root cause of the terrorist attacks by helping people to get the skills for employment and promoting development in Xinjiang.

There are forces in Xinjiang, whose aim is to separate it from China. They are spreading the disinformation. Our efforts have got the support of the people in Xinjiang, including the Uyghur population. We are not punishing the whole ethnic group because of some, we are promoting the development which can bring benefits to the whole ethnic group of Uyghurs and other ethnic groups. How can you promote development by putting people in camp? There have been a lot of smear on China about this issue. But if you look at the facts and figures, people's life expectancy increased, their per capita income increased and their life improved. Those improvements of their livelihood are achieved because they are put in the camp? There is really no logic.

**The western world is looking more and more critical to China, compared to 10 or 15 years ago, I guess is there an element of jealousy in it that you became too successful? That you are the powerhouse for economics, you are making the products of the world. I mean, when I open my cupboard and there will be a lot of things from China in it.**

You may ask those people whether it is because of that jealousy or not. But I would say that we have all benefited from China’s development. So why not join hands for the further development for two countries, for the region and for the world? That is my question.

China is for development, for international cooperation. China is a firm supporter to the multilateral system. We support the international system with UN at its core, we support the international order with the international law at its base. China has achieved the development within the system and order. And China has never resorted to war or colonization or this kind of means to achieve its development. So it's it's really a win-win thing.

Why see us as a rival? I asked my Dutch friends here and the European friends here. Can you tell me if China has done anything that have harmed the interests of the Netherlands, the Europeans or the world? And if you look at China throughout its history, in the ancient times the Chinese built the Great Wall for defense purpose, and in the early 15th century, Zheng He made the seven sea expeditions to reach as far as the east coast of Africa, 87 years before Columbus sailed to America and there was no colonization followed. So, we are peace loving. I do hope that this kind of jealousy or even fear could evaporate through dialogue, through exchange of views. So let's join hands for a better world, to fight against the covid19 or the climate change, or the terrorists, or for the economic recovery.

**Speaking of covid19, is there anything we could have learned from China?**

In our case we believe that we have done well. If other countries are interested, we will be happy to share our lessons learned. But we never export our model or claim ourselves to be the role model, the best. China has done well, be it in the fight against the covid19 or achieving economic development. Because we have found the way of development that suits to our national conditions, that's how we see it. I believe that each country may have their own national conditions and may find a way of development that suits to their own conditions.

We export goods. We do not export ideology. If you ask whether there are any lessons shared or something that you can learn, I think it's up to the Netherlands or other countries to decide. But we are not exporting anything and frankly speaking, we don't want to be interfered in our internal affairs by foreign force and we we will not interfere in the internal affairs of others. But we will be happy to have dialogues, equal-footed dialogues on whatever issues. We don't like teaching and preaching and we will not do that.

**I read about the new silk route or the the Belt and Road Initiative from China. Now the European Union is trying to do something the same called Global Gateway. Is that sort of flattery when you're being copied?**

Many countries or regional groups have come up with their initiative. We are happy to see that. The Belt and Road Initiative is for 5 connectivities, trade-, financing-, infrastructure-, policy- and people to people connectivity. We made it very clear that this initiative is open and we want to do it by aligning our initiative with others. This is important because our purpose is to enhance international cooperation, not for sphere of influence, or grab the natural resources from other countries. It's open, a global public goods. Those initiatives can complement each other and I do see a lot of shared interest.

For example, when I was in Africa I had a lot of talks with colleagues from the U.S. or from the EU. I said we are for North South cooperation, South South cooperation, tripartite cooperation. If we join hands to make contribution to Africa's development and then the U.S.’s concern of terrorist expansion and the European’s concern of migrants from Africa could be relieved. We can make a difference. Because with a more developed Africa, those issues can be mitigated to quite extent. So why not join hands? I do hope that these initiatives will not be seen as competing or rivaling, but as complimentary. So again, why not join hands? Why not cooperate? That is my question. I do hope that countries in the west see China as a partner, not as a rival. And together we can make huge contribution to the world.

**So what is your message at the end of the interview?**

I think the message is that China is for international cooperation. China is now the second largest contributor to the UN budget and the peacekeeping operations. China has made great efforts in the global fight against poverty, China is the largest suppler of covid19 vaccines and will continue to contribute to the fight against climate change.

My message is that, we are now living in a globalized world, we should strive for a community of a shared future. We share our fate in the same boat, and I think China definitely will not rock the boat, China will stabilize it. China is part of the solution, not part of the problem. There will be great benefits if we can work together to promote international cooperation. The only way out of covid19 is through international cooperation. Virus respects no border.

**Obviously your system of government is so different from the west. So it’s difficult for the west to accept this message you're giving me. Is it because the fear of communism or whatever you want to call it?**

The fears are not necessary. You talk about this kind of differences, and I think diversity is the source of our strength and not necessarily the source of conflict. And in the UN, there has been the consensus that there should be no one-size-fits-all development model. So if you want to impose this kind of model in other countries, well, they could fail, like they failed in Afghanistan. So let's respect this diversity and let's join hands.

There are some people who like to exploit this kind of fear to set up an imaginary enemy.That's not good for the international cooperation and for the peace and development of the world.

**We have a lot of misunderstanding, but what is the biggest one?**

The biggest one is what they call “systemic rival”. The EU has been pursuing a three-tiered policy toward China, namely cooperation in areas like climate change, competition in areas like economy and systemic rival. In reality, it is the competition that seems to define the relationship, and highlighting the systemic rivalry in words and deeds, in our view, is not helpful to our relations. I haven't heard politicians even bother to strike a positive note after listing the three tiers, by saying that they want the corporation to be the main stay. Well, our two sides could cooperate for the good of both, not highlighting rivalry. See each other as real true partners.

**How long will you stay in the Netherlands?**

I don't know because we follow the instructions from the capital. If they believe I'm doing a good job, well, I could stay long. Or, if I'm not doing a good job, I could be recalled. It is an honor and heavy responsibility to be the ambassador of China to the Netherlands. As I said, Netherlands is not a small country. It can be big in many ways, right?

I see a lot of opportunities, and I also see the challenges as we discussed. I do hope that the media reports could be balanced and public opinion could be improved. I will do my part by working very hard; I will reach out through more dialogues, in good faith, with an open mind. I like Dutch directness, I say that I can also be equally direct. But the thing is that, sometimes, if I'm direct, some people will call me a wolf diplomat. Well, I see the worries, the anxieties, the fears, but I see more the necessity for communication, for dialogues.

**Is that a new policy from China? To explain more?**

I do believe we need to have more communications with the outside world. Previously, we might be focusing on the specific cooperation projects. Frankly speaking, in the past, there might be not as many reports about China as today. So, we do see the need. Chinese ambassadors are encouraged to communicate more, we need to talk with the media, talk with the academia and with not just government. We have realized how important the media can be. When I say important, whether constructive or not constructive, it depends. It depends on the quality of our dialogue and also depends on your professionalism.

**Anything else you wish to say?**

Recently there has been a lot of media coverage of Lithuania’s relations with China. Lithuania has misled the others when they say that the opening of the Taiwanese representative office, I quote “is based on economic and cultural interest and has no diplomatic status”. You know what, the act of Lithuania has been hailed by the Taiwan authorities as, I quote, “an important diplomatic breakthrough, a major diplomatic achievement of special significance”. These are the words of the Taiwan authority. In fact, these are the words from the facebook of its leader. So when Lithuania say that this has no diplomatic status, they're not telling the truth. The assertion is a far cry from the reality. I hope that there could be more reporting on what they did and why they did that.

**But still you're punishing Lithuania.**

The Taiwan question relates to our core interest and they harm our interest. We are not punishing. They are misleading the world. They have violated their commitment on Taiwan question first. And again, as I said, we are reacting. We did not make the first move.