

1950-2025

75 Years of Finland-China Diplomatic Relations

Beijing Reception

October 15, 2025

Speech by Permanent State Secretary Jukka Salovaara



Assistant Minister Hong Lei, Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is a great pleasure to be here tonight to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Finland and China. Thank you all for coming to mark this historic occasion.

History of foreign relations often contains some interesting details, such as what the first contacts between the countries were, or what kind of developments led to the establishment of official relations. Let me make a brief overview of the relations between Finland and China.

Finland was among the first Western countries to recognize China and to establish diplomatic relations with it in 1950.

When this happened, post-war reconstruction was taking place in both countries. Finland became independent in 1917, and at the end of the 1940s, the war against the Soviet Union had ended and the recovery was well under way. In China, the Civil War was over, and the newly established People's Republic started to gain international recognition. Both countries needed contacts, support and trade relations as building blocks for their international status. (And both countries were fortunate enough to receive all this.)

The establishment of diplomatic relations was followed by the swift development of sports diplomacy and trade relations. A team of 40 Chinese athletes traveled to Helsinki for the 1952 Olympics. The first trade agreement between Finland and China was signed already in 1953. In the same year, a sizable cultural delegation from Finland visited China and the first Finnish students – two of them – arrived in Beijing. In 1956, relations between the Parliament of Finland and the National People's Congress of China were established. Considering the rather modest starting point, I find it remarkable that five or six years after the establishment of diplomatic relations, commendable exchanges were already taking place.

The development of bilateral relations never takes place in a vacuum but is influenced by external circumstances.

The end of the Cold War and China's modernization opened gates for further exchanges. Finnair was the first European airline that launched regular direct flights from Europe, that is – Helsinki to Beijing in 1988, tourism boomed, and Nokia used to make the most popular mobile phone in both countries. We came to know China's economic, technological and social development that proceeded in an unprecedented way. It is fair to say that both countries have greatly benefited from the expansion of contacts and cooperation in multiple fields.

Ladies and gentlemen,

History is important, and it is necessary to understand where we come from. However, it is even more important to realize what we have learnt from history and how we use the means available to us to help those who are suffering now. We should do our utmost to end different wars in the world. The news last week about the ceasefire in Gaza were promising and well received everywhere. We sincerely hope that the suffering of Gazans will finally end, and all hostages will be returned to their families.

At the same time, Russia still continues its war of aggression against Ukraine. Ending this illegal war is also the responsibility of all the permanent members of the Security Council – including China. Finland's position is clear. We continue our firm support to Ukraine while it fights in defense of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. We urge all third parties to cease their support to Russia. Any support for Russia's war economy, whether military, financial or material, prolongs the loss of life, not least among innocent civilians.

During the past decades, both Finland and China have been active in building international institutions and participating in the multilateral cooperation. Finland is a staunch supporter of international law with the UN Charter at its very core. China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the biggest contributors to the UN's budget. Importance of the multilateral system is obvious to both of our countries. Together with the entire international community, it is our responsibility to make sure that the UN maintains its ability to deliver on its functions as enshrined in the Charter. Finland is strongly engaged in the work of the UN and will remain so. Therefore, we are also standing for election to the Security Council for the term from 2029 to 2030.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Other globally burning questions call our attention, too. Alleviation of poverty, gender equality, climate change and biodiversity loss, to name a few. Finland and China are both committed to strengthening collective efforts towards a sustainable future, guided by the 2030 Agenda. On Monday we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which form the basis of the work on the rights of women and girls and gender equality.

I am very pleased that the bilateral cooperation between Finland and China on circular economy, low carbon development and the fight against climate change have been elevated as overarching goals in our bilateral Joint Action Plan and that both countries have set ambitious national goals for their carbon emissions. Bilaterally, we are also committed to long-term cooperation in the forestry and water sectors. Finland fully recognizes that China's active participation is needed to solve many of the global problems, and we are ready to do our best there, too.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we now celebrate the 75th anniversary of our diplomatic relations, we have reached a notable milestone. We mark a long, unbroken history of friendly relations. It does not mean that we always agree on everything, but since the basis is strong, we are also able to disagree and have candid conversations. This is one of the greatest outcomes of our common history, strong evidence of the quality of relations and it is our genuine wish to keep it that way in the future too.

Thank you.