1. I am so happy to be here today. It is an honour to see the fourth China-Nordic Arctic Cooperation Symposium getting into action. I am pleased to see that such high level participants have gathered here in Rovaniemi, the official home town of Santa clause.

2. As the speaker of the Finnish parliament I get dozens of invitations to participate at important events, but unfortunately I only have time to attend some of them. This time though, the decision was easy. The Arctic is a theme that is simply too valuable and too interesting to say no to. And the same goes also for Nordic – China cooperation. In this, as in many other areas of co-operation, China is an invaluable partner for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

3. The promises the Arctic holds are vast. Tourism, new shipping routes, oil and gas extraction possibilities and fishing are only the tip of the iceberg. And beneath all this, we can see opportunities that excite us here in Finland even more.

4. Tourism has great potential. In Finnish Lapland we have the world's cleanest air, fells, rivers and crystal clear lakes, not to forget the northern lights and the midnight sun - two things that will keep you awake at night but will mesmerize you with their beauty. I am especially happy that so many Chinese have found their way here to enjoy holidays. And as you can see, we have room for more!
5. Connecting links and data centres represent opportunities that we are interested in. As some of you probably know, we have started to explore possibilities that link Finland to the Arctic cable, which digitally connects Europe and Asia.

6. A newly launched submarine cable system connects already Central and Northern Europe with record-breaking network capacity. The new submarine data cable is an opportunity not only for business in Finland but also the rest of Europe. Combined with Arctic cable connections to Asia, Finland would be at the nexus of data connections. This would be the kind of arctic Finland I would like to see in the future.

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7. The once remote Arctic has become a centre for dynamism and opportunities.

8. But as we see the possibilities, we have to acknowledge also the challenges. And all of them require international cooperation if we aim to confront them.

9. Climate change is the most pressing one. It does not respect the borders of nations, it does not discriminate against who we are or where we live, and it affects us all one way or another. Whether it be a small village by Lake Inari further north in Lapland where my father was born or the buzzing metropolis of Shanghai, China, we all will feel the effects.

10. The former U.S. Vice President Al Gore said in his Nobel Laureate speech that the earth has a fever. And that the fever is rising. In arctic we notice this fever raising twice the speed. The people and the animals, the nature, of the arctic, are the first victims, if nothing is done.
11. This is why everything we do here must be done in a sustainable way, in a way that doesn’t harm the environment. And this is why we have to change our old perspectives when it comes to economic development and choose ways that help to mitigate the consequences.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. In order to address them properly we require scientific information and experience from daily activities. Scientists, This is why we count so much on you. The locals, The Sami people and the decision makers of this region. You have the expertise to guide us. You know what the real life is like in this environment, tell us about it.

13. We must have the best possible understanding of the region, its conditions and drivers. This is why international research is needed. The China – Nordic cooperation is an excellent example of these possibilities that rise from shared knowledge and interest. Your work is extremely valuable.

14. Arctic cooperation has shown how much we can achieve by working together.

15. The best example of this is the work done by the Arctic Council. This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Council. In 1989, Finland took the initiative in commencing organized cooperation among the eight arctic countries for the protection of the arctic environment. This initiative led to the Ministerial Conference right here in Rovaniemi in 1991. The conference was historic. It was the first ministerial meeting
of the Arctic countries and it started a continuous collaboration that was called the "Rovaniemi Process".

16. Today this process is living strong. Each chairmanship has managed to bring something new to the table. Now it is our turn to take the chairmanship of the arctic council. And we must be able not only to secure but also to strengthen the role of the council.

Dear Friends,

17. In Finland we have lived all our lives in Arctic conditions and we know the ice, and snow and the cold, long winter. We have managed to even prosper in these conditions that many believe to be unhospitable, even life threatening.

18. Whether it be ice breaking or search and rescue capabilities, arctic construction work or meteorological technology, Finland has provided solutions. More than 60 percent of the global fleet of icebreaking vessels were designed and built in Finland. The Arctic Centre, one of the world’s leading arctic research institutes, has an extensive multidisciplinary cooperation network around the world.

19. Finding solutions is what we now all need in the Arctic. You, the arctic researches are the first line of defence. With your help, we have at least a chance to pass on a clean and vital Arctic to our future generations. This is what we owe them.

Thank You.