



**CIBJO PRESIDENT'S
ADDRESS TO OPENING SESSION
NOVEMBER 2, 2024**

- Mr. Deputy General Secretary, the Honorable Liu Ping
- Mr. Li Dong, President of Donghao Lansheng Group
- Mr. Simon Chan, CEO of the China Gem & Jade Exchange
- Mr. Xu Deming, Honorary President of Gems and Jewellery Trade Association of China
- Mr. Baomin Wang, President of the National Gems & Jewellery Testing Group
- Mr. Ye Zhibing, President of Gems and Jewellery Trade Association of China
- Ms. Ferial Zerouki, President of the World Diamond Council
- Mr. Damien Cody, President of the International Coloured Gemstone Association
- Mr. Edward Asscher, Vice Chair of Responsible Jewellery Council
- Fellow CIBJO Members, colleagues and friends:

Huānyíng lái dào shànghǎi (huan-ing lye doh shahn-khai),
or welcome to Shanghai!

This is the first CIBJO Congress to have been held in Shanghai, and indeed in Mainland China, but this is not the first time that we have conducted an event in this beautiful city. We were here 14 years ago, in 2010, when we were

invited to organise a seminar in the United Nations Pavilion of the 2010 World Expo, not far where we are today.

As many of you will recall, 2010 was a very interesting year, coming at the tail-end of what is today known as the Great Recession. But its effects were far less evident in the developing economies of India, Indonesia and most notably China. It emerged from the crisis as the world's undisputed second largest economy, with a growth trajectory that suggested it was headed to becoming the world's largest.

The jewellery and gemstone industry enjoyed a surprisingly robust recovery from the Great Recession, in great part because of the dramatic growth of the consumer markets here in China, which were posting unheard of double-digit growth rates from year to year.

The belief at the time, or more accurately I would say the hope at the time, was that there would be no limit – sales and revenues would be keeping on climbing, as more and more Chinese consumers became enraptured by the lure of fine jewellery.

And that might have been the case, at least for a while longer, were it not for an almost invisible threat that took over all our lives in 2020 – the COVID virus. In the space of

just months the world shut down, and it would be about two years before we returned to a sense of normality.

But history is never circular – it is linear – meaning that world as we knew it in 2019 was never going to be same in 2022, 2023 and definitely not 2024. The COVID period forced us to adopt new ways of doing business, which, as we discovered, were often more efficient. It also accelerated processes that were already underway, like digital trading, remote communication, virtual reality

Post-COVID consumers are considerably more inclined to search for and purchase products online, but they are increasingly likely to demand that those products be traceable and ethically sourced. And in our interconnected and data-rich world, consumers also insist that we not only claim to be responsible, but that we are able to verify it as well.

While the accelerated growth rates of the 2010s are almost certainly behind us, China continues to outpace most other developed markets – and, yes, I think it is correct in 2024 to refer to China as a developed market – rather than simply a developing market.

China is today the world's largest consumer of coloured gemstones, gold and platinum gold jewellery, and unsurprisingly of jade, or Fei Cui as it popularly referred to here. It also is the second-largest consumer of diamond jewellery after the United States.

But what also is significant is that China, like India, is shifting from being a country that manufactures goods that are designed or inspired by mainly Western players, to becoming a trendsetter in its own right, influencing what is being bought worldwide, and exporting its intellectual capital and not only its production capacity.

A case in point is jade, or Fei Cui. Until quite recently, many of us in the developed Western markets considered it as footnote in our trade statistics, indeed, even here in CIBJO, jade and jadeite warranted only a relatively short mention in our Coloured Stone Blue Book.

And then, in 2019, my good friend Kent Wong, CEO of Chow Tai Fook, requested an hour's worth of time on the agenda of the CIBJO Congress in Bahrain. Together with Dr. Edward Lu, he described a market that, at the time, was estimated to have an annual worth of more than \$8 billion, making jade the second largest jewellery category after diamonds.

We were stunned – most of us never realized its size. But thus began a process of formalizing the Fei Cui market on a global scale, based on work being done here in mainland China, and also Hong Kong. The discussions continued last year in Jaipur, and they will once again here in Shanghai. And it's no longer a discussion group that is exclusively East Asian, for it includes gemmologists, traders and academics from across the globe.

Much has been written about the creation of a diamond market in the 1990s here in China, growing from almost zero into the world's second largest. But it's no longer wrong to state that the single-lane highway of taste and knowledge moving eastward has become a dual carriage way moving in both directions, where Chinese and other Eastern trends and innovations find equally receptive markets in the traditional Western consumer centres.

We live in unified global market. To optimize its potential, much of what do here at the CIBJO Congress is of critical importance.

People attending a CIBJO Congress for the first time, and who sit in on the sessions following the Opening Ceremony, are often surprised to discover that there is very little

discussion about prices and value – neither of the jewellery nor of the components of which it is comprised.

Now this is a business community, and as businesspeople we are of course very interested in prices, revenues and profits. Without them, very few of us would be seated here today. But those are not the focus of CIBJO. We do not set prices – the market does, and prices rise and fall along with consumer demand, and most importantly consumer confidence.

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is ultimately what CIBJO is about. We believe passionately in the potential of the products we manufacture and sell, in the timeless beauty of the gems and precious metals of which they are comprised, and in the genius and artistry of the men and women who create the final products. In our hearts we know that these are objects of great value. But we also understand that this value is maintained as a result of an unwritten contract between ourselves and our consumers. If we do not honour that contract, if we do not protect the trust they place in us, then the value of the jewellery – the prices, the revenues and profits – are all worth very little.

What we will be discussed over the coming three days, in the 18 sessions that will follow the Opening Ceremony

today, are the building blocks of the barricades we construct to protect and defend consumer confidence. These are the creation of standards, operating principles and universally understood nomenclature that ensure that, in an industry with supply chains that cross multiple borders, we understand each other, and work together to ensure the integrity of our products. These building blocks are created and maintained by our various commissions, committees and working groups, and are articulated and described in the various Blue Books and guidance documents they produce.

The cement that holds these blocks together can be found in our educational programmes, operating under the umbrella of WJCEF, the World Jewellery Confederation Education Foundation, and now in the recently established CIBJO Academy, whose mission it is to communicate and teach about what we do within CIBJO, to our global industry and marketplace.

And the resilience and hardiness of the building blocks are ensured by our reputation and the image that we project – not simply because we say so, but because of how we behave and seen to behave – as an industry that not only is concerned about not doing harm, but also about providing sustainable opportunities to all our stakeholders.

Last month I had the honour of being just one of only a handful of United Nations-affiliated NGOs to be invited to address a session of the 79th UN General Assembly in New York. Speaking to the gathering, I said the following:

“There is no contradiction in a luxury product industry committing itself to helping solve the world’s most pressing economic, social and environmental challenges. Our raw materials are sourced predominantly in economically under-developed regions of Africa, South America, Asia and the South Pacific, as are many of our key stakeholders. We have an overriding strategic interest in partnering with governments and the international community.”

“CIBJO has long supported a paradigm-change in the world jewellery, gemstone and precious metals industries, by which those countries, communities and individuals, who for centuries have supplied our essential raw materials, become empowered as key decision-makers, able to contribute and benefit equitably from the planning and management of the jewellery business in general, so as to support their own economic and social development.”

Allow me to conclude by thanking all those without whom we would not be gathered together here in Shanghai.

First and foremost, let me pay tribute to our hosts – Donghao Lansheng, the China Gem & Jade Exchange and the Diamond & Gem Administration of China. In particular we all need to show appreciation to the hard-working and talented team of individuals with whom we have worked side by side for almost eight months – led by Simon Chen and Laurence Lau.

Let me also thank our supporters, including the National Gems & Jewellery Testing Group, NGTC, and the Gem and Jewellery Trade Association of China, as well as the Government of Shanghai.

Let me pay tribute to our generous sponsors, who proved once again their absolute commitment to the jewellery industry and its people – the Italian Exhibition Group, the De Beers Group, the World Gold Council, Gemfields, Fuli Gemstones, the Platinum Guild, the Shanghai Diamond Exchange and the Nature Diamond Council.

And, last but certainly not least, allow me to thank all of you, for finding the time in your busy schedules and joining us here at the 2024 CIBJO Congress. The hidden strength of our industry is our sense of commitment to one another. Let us celebrate our family together in Shanghai.

Xie Xie (syih syih)

Thank You