

## EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR CHINESE STUDIES

His Excellency Hu Jintao  
President of the People's Republic of China

Zhongnanhai, Xichengqu,

Beijing

People's Republic of China

### OPEN LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

January 15, 2010

Your Excellency,

The European Association for Chinese Studies represents more than 800 scholars from 36 countries, mostly in Europe, who dedicate their efforts to the understanding and promotion of China, its ancient culture, as well as its recent spectacular transformation and rise on the global scene. As sinologists we are particularly happy about the contacts we have established with scholars and scholarly institutions in China since the beginning of the policy of reform and opening up. Cooperation and academic exchange between specialists in Europe and China brings out new results in our work and also helps the promotion of Chinese culture in Europe in general.

Given all these positive developments in China in recent years, we are disappointed and saddened by the trial of Liu Xiaobo, who on December 25, 2009 was sentenced by No. 1 Intermediate People's Court in Beijing to 11 years in prison on charges of "agitation activities aimed at subversion of the government". Dr. Liu Xiaobo, former Beijing Normal University lecturer, is a well-known scholar in the field of Chinese literature and philosophy, and a renowned writer. His main "crime" was the active part he took in drafting and disseminating Charter 08, a document made public more than one year ago, in December 2008.

After careful scrutiny of the full text of Charter 08, we are convinced this document does not call for subversion, but for a discussion about political and social reforms indispensable for harmonization between the dazzling economic growth and modernization in China and those features in the administration and legal system which create unhealthy developments in Chinese society. If the problems and suggestions for their solution as they are outlined in Charter 08 are criminalized instead of discussed, they could in a long run impede the healthy development of the country.

In our view, Charter 08 aims at continuing the policies of reform and opening up, policies of modernization and improvement of life for all Chinese people, and as such it deserves to be studied and discussed in the spirit of “seeking truth from facts”. One of the things Charter 08 says is “we should end the practice of viewing words as crimes”. This reminds us of the ancient Chinese wisdom recorded from earlier sources by the great historian and humanist Sima Qian: “To block people’s mouth is worse than blocking a river”.

We urge you, your Excellency, to reconsider the official position of the highest leadership of the People’s Republic of China in this matter, and to use all your authority to ensure that Liu Xiaobo’s case will be reconsidered and he will be released. We rely on your genuine concern for the future glory of your country and the Chinese people, and strongly believe that our plea will not fall upon a deaf ear.

Brunhild Staiger (President, EACS)