

Today I am very honoured to represent NZCFS on this occasion to sign the MoU with China Oceania Friendship Association and China Friendship Foundation for Peace and Development. This year, NZCFS celebrates 60 years of friendship with China. In all this time, our relationship with CPAFFC has been of the greatest significance.

From inception in 1952, the first twenty years of our existence, NZCFS played a very important role as a key link between NZ and China, and in 1972 one important objective was achieved with the formal establishment of diplomatic relations, NZ being one of the first Western Countries to recognise China. So this year we also celebrate 40 years of NZ-China relations.

The foundation for all this recent history can be largely accredited to Rewi Alley.

In the last 40 years, our activity has focused on promoting friendship through relationships throughout China, and in promoting understanding of China to New Zealanders through tours and delegations, and through activity in New Zealand to increase awareness of what China is really about. In all this, Youxie has been an important partner.

Now, after 60 years, we are at a crossroads. As a voluntary NGO, we do our best to reach our objectives. But we are in a new era, where relationships with China are increasingly being developed by a broad range of players. NZCFS accept the need to regenerate, encourage a new membership, and seek new ways to define our function in this changing era. We can celebrate this new era with new players, but we in NZCFS feel that we retain a depth of experience established through strong foundations that give us a unique role to play in the New Zealand-China relationship.

So it is in 2012 that we deeply appreciate the opportunity that has been provided to us by the generous Rewi Alley Friendship and Exchange Fund offered to us by COFA and CFFPD. This fund has criteria agreed upon that allow us to expand our current activity in broad areas that can meet the challenge to regenerate and provide a starting point for an important role for the next 60 year.

The criteria cover commemoration of the legacy of Rewi Alley. It also encourages exchanges to promote friendship, culture and the arts, education and youth. In our first round of the fund, we propose four projects that I believe fit readily into these categories. I am proud of the proposals that have come forward from our branches and subcommittees, and believe that they respond with integrity to the intent of the RAFF Fund.

As a representative of NZCFS, I can say that we are committed to implementing these projects with great responsibility. I believe that this is the beginning of our re-generation period that will maintain an important role for NZCFS in the future. In particular, I feel certain that we can attract a younger membership with the exciting opportunities available through these projects and through future proposals.

The applications for the funds have been oversubscribed, but I am pleased to report that NZCFS will provide some supporting funds to allow all the proposals to happen. I am also pleased to report that there is already matching funds offered to NZCFS through a Chinese businessman in Auckland, who has a focus on culture and the arts. This is a significant development that would not have been achieved if it were not for the MoU we are signing today.

I am very pleased to sign the MoU today with Madam Li, and once again extend our very grateful thanks for the recognition this Fund extends to NZCFS, for the generosity of the fund, and for the opportunity the fund provides for NZCFS to move forward into the next 60 years.

Dave Bromwich  
September 2012