

**Speech by Da Hsuan Feng after his inauguration as
the Honorary Board of Trustees of Nanjing University,
Nanjing, China
March 20th, 2003**

President Jiang Susheng and distinguished guests:

Some fifty-five years ago, my late mother was here in Nanjing. As her son, I am very proud that she was one of the first, if not the first, Chinese female student to study at the world's top music academy, the Julliard School of Music. However, I am even more proud that she was a professor of piano of the then Jinlin Woman University (JWU) here in Nanjing city. In the past twenty years, I have visited Nanjing many times. Each time, I think about her walking on these grounds in the late 1940's.

My very first scientific connection to China, which occurred immediately after the collapse of the dark era of the "cultural revolution," was from this University. For professional reasons, in the 1980s, I often visited this campus.

Therefore, today, words to describe our feelings escape my wife YiWen and me. The honor you have bestowed on me, being an honorary member of the Board of Trustees of this great university, Nanjing University, is truly monumental. Of course, I fully recognize that this honor comes with grave responsibilities. After today, I represent Nanjing University. Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to promise you, President Jiang and members of the audience, that I shall do my utmost to deserve the faith you have placed in me. I will do to the best of my ability to work with you to further propel Nanjing University to one of the top 100 research universities, not just in China and Asia (which you have achieved long ago), but the world.

I mentioned earlier about my mother, who was born on the last year of the Qing Dynasty, the third year of Xuan Tong, 1910. Just think about it, in terms of this country's life time, that is a very short period. Even a country with a short history like the United States is more than 200 years old. Less than 100 years ago, China was still deep in the feudalistic traditions. In science and technology, the nation was way behind most of the rest of the world. It is therefore exhilarating for me, standing here today in Nanjing University, to see that in these 92 years since the Qing Dynasty was overthrown, (the leader of that movement was Sun Yat Sen, whose mausoleum is right here in Nanjing), despite of the war of resistance with the Japanese, the long and brutal civil wars, the painful cultural revolution, and countless massive upheavals, China managed to reinvent itself and reach the current state of openness and modernization.

I have often told my friends that it was indeed a miracle of the 20th century that China did not collapse into economic and political abyss. If that were to happen, with 1.3 billion

people, embedded with total and profound economic and political chaos in China, the world would not see peace.

In the landscape of today, clearly one of the best shining examples of China on the move is its national aspiration of having world class universities to train and educate its best and the brightest. One of its best is Nanjing University!

Mankind in the 21st century is facing unprecedented global challenges: rapid population explosion (I still recall the saying in the 50's or 60's about "si wan wan wu qian wan zhong guo ren", or 450 million Chinese. Today, it is already a factor of three times that number!), deep environmental devastation, rapid depletion of fossil fuel resources and global political instabilities, to name just a few. There are still massive starvation and enormous ignorance in large percentage of population throughout the five continents. In addition, as more and more old diseases were eliminated, new ones are now emerging, such as SARS, and some are already beginning to eat into the fabric of human society, causing not only undue hardships, but also shaking the stability of nations.

I am an eternal optimist. Even in my lifetime, I have seen fundamental changes in the way humans interact. Indeed, in science and technology, the transformation is profound. For one thing, humans are communicating with each other far more than they ever did, and in ever increasing speed. Just in the past 60 years, we have seen the development of semiconductors, polymers, computers, networks, genomics and drug designs, to name just a few.

I believe that the Chinese have the most appropriate phrase to describe the current global situation - "wei-ji," or "dangerous opportunities." Indeed, there are enormous and incredible opportunities in seeking solutions to these complex global challenges. Some people say that technology can solve problems. In my opinion, that is not true. Only people can solve problems. And to solve these problems on a global scale, one needs to find people with global thinking and global outlook. To solve these problems require bold creativity and innovation never before known to mankind. Where do you think that such people can be found? I dare to say in the best research universities.

Therefore, to become the top 100 universities of the world, you folks in Nanjing University, which now will include me, will have to work hard, even harder than you have until now, to get there from here. Once you get there, you also have the sacred responsibility to ensure that the world be a better place because of your greatness!

As an American with deep Chinese cultural heritage, I would be remiss if I do not take this opportunity to voice a deep concern of mine. Undoubtedly, in the 21st century, the United States and China will be two global economic, and military powers. Human history has taught us that whenever there are two major military powers with strong economic competition, it may, and often does, lead to conflict. Therefore, great universities in both countries have the added responsibility to devise a plan, now, so that such a situation will not arise. These great universities, such as Nanjing University, with its national influence and international outlook and outreach, with its abundant open

thinkers, are some of the best entities in both countries, to ensure the world that no such eventuality will occur! This is not just a great challenge for the United States and China, but for all mankind.

Finally, I am deeply impressed to know that every one I have come into contact with in Nanjing University, without exception, has the great courage to dream that someday soon, the school will attain the global distinction of being one of the world's top 100 universities. It will be known to the world then that standing next to the mighty Yangtze River is one of the world's centers of intellectual achievements and creativity and one of the world's economic engines! It will be a place where new, innovative, bold and maybe even provocative ideas will emerge to improve the lives of not just all Chinese, but humanity in general.