

## SDC graduation, 24 June 2017

### Speech by SDC graduate, Katarzyna Grycel

Distinguished guests, dear students and graduates

I am honored to be here today representing the graduates of 2017.

— Now, representing so many people can be difficult. We are all different, but we have at least one thing in common, and that is our experience at SDC.

We have chosen to join the SDC programme because of different reasons. Some of us wanted to experience an adventure and there is nothing quite like moving to a mysterious country across the globe.

Some of us needed a change in our life.

— Some of us (well, hopefully all of us to some extent) choose a study programme that was so interesting and unique that there was no other choice but to follow our academic instincts.

I am standing here today on my and your graduation day, and even this experience is unique for SDC students. As most of the international students are in different countries, for those of us who could come to Beijing and attend the ceremony it is a reunion and I can say for myself that it is a sentimental one.

Coming to China meant leaving my life as I knew it behind me for two years and starting something different, a new chapter of my life. I knew that I would meet challenges along the way, that there would be good and bad days, but I did not realize just how much I would learn from the experience.

— Exposing yourself to a different culture, which is in the definition of SDC, can be life changing and I believe that it has been for all SDC students.

This experience goes both ways. We often think that the contrast was bigger for international students, because we have to move to another country, but I believe that our Chinese classmates were experiencing it too. They were taken out of their comfort zone.

We all have faced challenges, frustration and at times defeat, but they were always passed with positive thinking, personal growth and even more successes.

We sit here today no longer confused and anxious, but surrounded by friends.

I dare to say on behalf of all the international students that every single one of us has left a part of ourselves in China.

Some of us choose to stay here in China, some have found good job opportunities, some continue in a further academic path, and some have found love. China welcomed us with open arms, and we learned to appreciate it.

I do not want to make it sound like a goodbye. It is not for me. On Tuesday, I am going to Shandong province with my dear friend Doudou, whom I have not seen for six months, but we make sure to stay in touch and that is just one example of my personal connection to China.

There are still places to visit and opportunities to be met. This is definitely not the end. This is just a beginning of life post-SDC with a different mindset and following a different lifestyle.

Thanks to the persistence and the unbroken spirits of SDC. Another group of young, educated people has entered the world.

We have some advantages though we learned to cooperate in different ways depending on the environment.

Problem solving has gained a few new aspects and flexibility definitely came into play on numerous occasions. So let us remember what the experience at SDC has given us and move another step into adulthood with confidence and pride.

Congratulations everybody.

Thank you.