

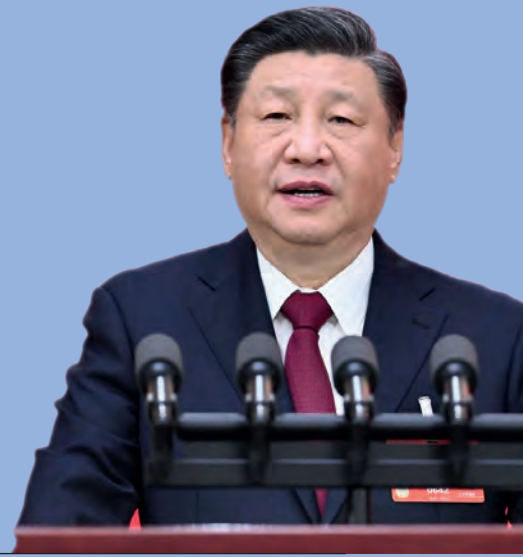
NEWS FROM CHINA

CHINA-INDIA REVIEW

Building China into A Great Modern Socialist Country



“ The grand goal of building a great country and achieving national rejuvenation is encouraging and motivating. We should seize the day, remain confident in our history, exhibit greater historical initiative, uphold fundamental principles and break new ground, maintain strategic resolve, carry forward the fighting spirit, and strive to overcome all difficulties, to contribute to the great cause of building China into a great country and achieving national rejuvenation. ”



Two Sessions: A New Journey of National Rejuvenation

The annual meeting of China's national legislature, better known as "Two Sessions," was held this year in Beijing from March 4 to 13, 2023. The meetings of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) and the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) have drawn a new blueprint for national rejuvenation and initiated a new journey for making China into a great modern socialist country.

The national legislature gave a big thumbs-up to Xi Jinping by unanimously electing him as China's president, thereby empowering him to lead the country of 1.4 billion people on the path towards people-centric development and people-focused modernization. He was also elected chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) by a unanimous vote. Under Xi's leadership, China's economic growth and development have recorded new milestones, with China's GDP increasing to around \$18 trillion. In this journey towards Chinese rejuvenation, the country has created a miracle in human history by eradicating absolute poverty and built the largest education, social security, and healthcare systems in the world.

At the Two Sessions, the "Government Work Report" was approved, which outlined China's economic and social development in 2022 as well as expected goals for 2023. The outlook for 2023 is optimistic: GDP growth is expected to be around 5 percent. About 12 million new urban jobs will be created, and the surveyed urban unemployment rate will be about 5.5%. In his address at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress, President Xi captured this mood of optimism about China's future. "The Chinese people have become the masters of their future, the Chinese nation has achieved the great transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability."

In the area of bilateral relations, there are positive developments. Last year, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi attended three Summit meetings and exchanged greetings on the sidelines of the G20 Bali Summit. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar three times in 2022. In March this year, Foreign Minister Qin Gang, during his visit to India to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a bilateral meeting with Minister S. Jaishankar and had an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation. Overall, the current border situation is stable. The two sides continue to maintain communication via diplomatic and military channels, promoting the transition of the border situation to normalized management and control. Bilateral trade continues to grow, and people-to-people exchanges have resumed. China supports India's presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the G20 and is willing to strengthen communication and cooperation in the multilateral arena. Going forward, China and India could find a way to live in peace and develop together as major neighbouring countries as to realize the promise of an "Asian Century".

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CON

**TWO SESSIONS**

- Xi Jinping Unanimously Elected Chinese President, CMC Chairman **7**
- People are Central to Building China into A Great Modern Socialist Country: Xi **10**
- Highlights of 2023 Government Work Report **14**
- Premier Li Qiang Addresses First Press Conference: Follow Strong Leadership of CPC **19**
- China's National Legislature Unveils New Cabinet line-up **28**

TENTS



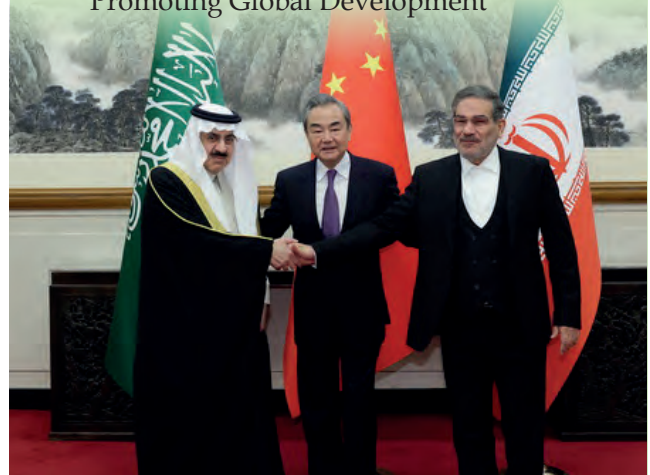
THROUGH FOREIGNERS' EYES

- Why does China's "Two Sessions" Matter To The World? **29**
- China's Economic Rebound Sparks Renewed Spirit of Confidence and Hope **32**
- Understanding What an Open China Means to the World Through "Thinner" Suitcases **35**



CHINA AND THE WORLD

- Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization: Xi to World Political Parties **38**
- Wang Yi Chairs Closing Meeting of Talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Beijing **43**
- Wang Yi: Saudi-Iranian Dialogue in Beijing is a Victory for Peace **45**
- China will always be a Builder of World Peace: Foreign Minister Qin **46**
- Enhancing Multilateralism and Promoting Global Development **56**



CHINA-INDIA RELATIONS

- China, India Promise to Improve Bilateral Relations **58**
- China, India Hold 26th Meeting of Working Mechanism on China-India Border Affairs **60**
- CDA a.i. of the Chinese Embassy in India Briefs Media **61**
- China, India and the Promise of the Power of Two **65**





Xi Jinping, newly elected president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the PRC, makes a public pledge of allegiance to the Constitution at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, March 10, 2023. Xi was unanimously elected president of the People's Republic of China and chairman of the Central Military Commission of the PRC at the third plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).



Xi Jinping Unanimously Elected Chinese President, CMC Chairman

History was made on March 10, 2023 as Xi Jinping was unanimously elected president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), assuring the Chinese leader a place in the pantheon of great leaders. Under Xi's leadership, the world's second-largest economy is marching on a model of modernization that has not been seen before.

Xi Jinping was unanimously elected Chinese president on March 10 at the ongoing session of China's national legislature, leading the country of 1.4 billion people onto a new journey toward modernization.

He was also elected chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) by a unanimous vote.

A total of 2,952 deputies were present at the third plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) on Friday morning, to exercise their constitutional right to elect China's state leadership.

The voting was anonymous.

Thunderous applause broke out across the Great Hall of the People when the results of the elections were pronounced.

Xi, donning a dark suit with a burgundy tie, rose from his seat and bowed to the lawmakers.

Born in 1953, Xi joined the Communist Party of China (CPC) in January 1974, and became the Party branch secretary of the Liangjiahe Brigade in rural Shaanxi Province, later the same year.

He then embarked on a journey across China that saw him work in different provinces and municipalities and rise from the grassroots level to the helm of the Party and the state.

Xi was first elected general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and named chairman of the CPC Central Military Commission in November 2012. He was elected Chinese president and CMC chairman of the PRC in March 2013.

“Over the past 10 years, we have overcome one obstacle after another, and created miracle upon miracle. Most importantly, the people are happier, feel safer than ever, and have a stronger sense of fulfillment under his leadership,” said NPC deputy Chen Zhen, head of the Sanjiang Dong Autonomous County in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

A total of 2,952 deputies were present at the third plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) on March 10, to exercise their constitutional right to elect China's state leadership.

The CPC has established Xi Jinping's core position on the CPC Central Committee and in the Party as a whole and established the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. The decision was made at the sixth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee in 2021.

Experts believe the decision has been further consolidated by the elections of Xi to be Chinese president and chairman of the PRC CMC.

The solemnity of Friday's assembly was underscored by a ceremony of Xi and other newly elected state leaders pledging allegiance to China's Constitution.

After a chorus of the national anthem was sung by all present, Xi placed his left hand on a copy of the Constitution and held up his right fist.

“I pledge my allegiance to the Constitution of the PRC to safeguard the Constitution's authority, and fulfill my legal obligations, be loyal to the country and the people, be committed and honest in my duty, accept the people's supervision, and work for a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful,” Xi said.

Under Xi's leadership, the world's second-largest economy is marching on a model of modernization that has not been seen before.

In the past decade, China's GDP has grown to 121 trillion yuan (about 17.37 trillion U.S. dollars) from 53.9 trillion yuan in 2012.

The Chinese economy has come to account for over 18 percent of the world economy over the past 10 years, and its contribution to the world's economic growth has averaged over 30 percent.

The country has eradicated absolute poverty and built the largest education, social security, and healthcare systems in the world.

The average life expectancy of the Chinese has increased from 74.8 to 78.2 years over the past decade, and there have been historic, transformative, and comprehensive changes in ecological and environmental protection.

China has also joined the ranks of the world's innovators, and achieved an overwhelming victory and fully consolidated the gains in the fight against corruption.

China has also created a miracle in human history, in which a highly populous nation has successfully pulled through a pandemic while maintaining social stability and steady economic development.

The country's military has been through an all-around revolutionary restructuring, becoming a much more modern and capable fighting force.

China has also created a miracle in human history, in which a highly populous nation has successfully pulled through a pandemic while maintaining social stability and steady economic development.

Observers believe the March 10 elections will inject greater certainty into China's modernization drive.



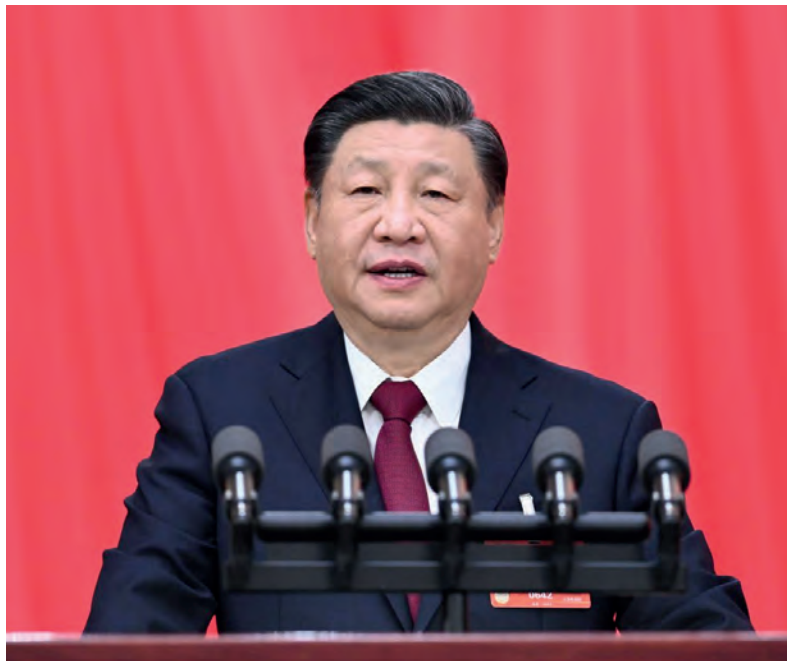
Xi Jinping at the third plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).

"I pledge my allegiance to the Constitution of the PRC to safeguard the Constitution's authority, and fulfill my legal obligations, be loyal to the country and the people, be committed and honest in my duty, accept the people's supervision, and work for a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful," Xi said.

"The elections will ensure that there is a steady hand at the helm, which will serve China well, particularly in this new era of new challenges," said Josef Gregory Mahoney, a professor of politics at East China Normal University.

"President Xi has already led us out of poverty," said Peng Xiaying, a villager in Shenshan Village of Jiangxi Province. "Now we put our faith in him to bring an even better life for all." ■

People are Central to Building China into A Great Modern Socialist Country: Xi



Days after he was elected China's President, Xi Jinping delivered a defining speech at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress on March 13, 2023 in which he shared his views on building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts.

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at the first session of the 14th National People's Congress, the country's national legislature on March 13.

The following is the full text of the speech:

Fellow deputies,

I was elected at this session to continue to serve as the president of the People's Republic

of China (PRC). I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the trust placed in me by all the deputies and the Chinese people of all ethnic groups.

It is my third time to take on this noble position of the president of the PRC. The people's trust has been my greatest source of strength to go forward and also the greatest



responsibility on my shoulders. I will faithfully fulfill the duties prescribed in the Constitution, take the needs of the country as my mission and the people's interests as the yardstick to follow, be committed and honest in my duties, devote myself to my work without reserve, and never fail to live up to the great trust of the deputies and the people.

The Chinese people have become the masters of their future, the Chinese nation has achieved the great transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability.

Fellow deputies,

The Chinese nation, with a civilization spanning over 5,000 years, has created a myriad of glories and also been through a lot of hardships and adversity. With the advent of modern times, China was reduced to a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society, when bullying by foreign powers and frequent wars tore the country apart and plunged the Chinese people into an abyss of great suffering. Since its founding, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has closely united and led the Chinese people of all ethnic groups in working hard for a century to put an end to China's national humiliation. The Chinese people have become the masters of their future, the Chinese nation has achieved the great transformation from standing up and growing prosperous to becoming strong, and China's national rejuvenation has become a historical inevitability.

From now until the middle of the century, the central task of the Party and all Chinese people is to complete building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and advance national rejuvenation on all fronts.

And the baton of this central task has now been historically passed on to our generation. In accordance with the strategic plans made at the 20th CPC National Congress, we must implement the Five-Sphere Integrated Plan and the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy, speed up Chinese modernization, strive in unity, and continue to break new ground, so as to make achievements on the new journey that answer the call of our times and history and meet the expectations of our people, and make due contributions of our generation to building a great country and achieving national rejuvenation.

Fellow deputies,

On the new journey to build China into a great country and to achieve national rejuvenation, we must unswervingly promote high-quality development. We must fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts and accelerate the efforts to foster a new development pattern. We must fully implement the strategy for invigorating China through science and education, the workforce development strategy and the innovation-driven development strategy, and focus on achieving greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology. We must also promote transformation and upgrading of industries, promote coordinated urban-rural and regional development, make further efforts to build a green and low-carbon economy and society, and effectively upgrade the quality and appropriately expand the output of our economy, so as to constantly increase our economic strength, scientific and technological capabilities and composite national strength.

We must remain committed to putting the people first. The people are the decisive force for building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects. We must proactively develop whole-process people's democracy, uphold the unity between the Party leadership, the running of the country by the people and law-based governance, improve the system of

institutions through which the people run the country, fulfill the people's will, protect their rights and interests and fully inspire their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity. We need to implement a people-centered philosophy of development, improve the system of income distribution, perfect the social security system, and enhance basic public services. We must ensure that the basic living needs of all our people are met, and work hard to resolve the pressing difficulties and problems that concern them most. We must do a better job of seeing to it that the gains of modernization benefit all our people fairly, and make more notable and substantive progress in promoting common prosperity for all. We must strengthen the great unity of the Chinese people of all ethnic groups and the great unity of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation at home and abroad, thus mobilizing all positive factors to give shape to a mighty joint force for building a great country and advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

We need to better coordinate development and security. Security is the foundation of

development and stability is the prerequisite for prosperity. We must resolutely pursue a holistic approach to national security, improve the national security system, strengthen our capacity for safeguarding national security, enhance public security governance, and improve the social governance system. With this new security architecture, we will be able to better safeguard China's new pattern of development. We should comprehensively promote the modernization of our national defense and our armed forces, and build the people's military into a great wall of steel that can effectively safeguard our nation's sovereignty, security and the interests of our development.

We should solidly promote the practice of "one country, two systems" and the great cause of national reunification. The long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions is indispensable to the building of a great China. We should fully, faithfully, and resolutely implement the policy of "one country, two systems," under which the people of Hong





Kong administer Hong Kong and the people of Macao administer Macao, both with a high degree of autonomy. We will remain committed to law-based governance in Hong Kong and Macao and will support Hong Kong and Macao in developing their economies and improving people's livelihood, so that they can better integrate themselves into the overall development of the country. Realizing China's complete reunification is a shared aspiration of all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation as well as the essence of national rejuvenation. We should implement the Party's overall policy for resolving the Taiwan question in the new era, uphold the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus, actively promote the peaceful development of cross-strait relations, resolutely oppose foreign interference and separatist activities aimed at "Taiwan independence," and unswervingly promote progress towards national reunification.

We must strive to promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. China's development benefits the world, and China cannot develop itself in isolation from the world. We must solidly promote high-level opening up, not only making good use of the global market and resources to develop ourselves, but also promoting common development of the world. We must hold high the banner of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, always stand on the right side of history, practice true multilateralism and the common values of mankind, actively participate in the reform and development of the global governance system, and promote the development of an open world economy. We should promote the implementation of Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative, so as to add more stability and positive energy to world peace and development, and create a favorable international environment for our country's development.

Fellow deputies,

To do a good job of governing the country, the Party should do a good job of governing

itself; and to build a great country, the Party must be thriving. To promote the building of a great country, it is essential to uphold the leadership of the CPC and the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, and to step up Party building in a solid manner. We must remain sober-minded and resolved about addressing the challenges unique to a big political party as ours, and have the courage to carry out self-reform. We must unceasingly exercise full and rigorous Party self-governance, unswervingly fight against corruption, and always maintain the unity and solidarity of the Party. By doing so, we will be able to ensure that the Party will never change its nature, its conviction, or its character, which will serve as a strong guarantee for building a great country and advancing national rejuvenation.

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Fellow deputies,

The grand goal of building a great country and achieving national rejuvenation is encouraging and motivating. We should seize the day, remain confident in our history, exhibit greater historical initiative, uphold fundamental principles and break new ground, maintain strategic resolve, carry forward the fighting spirit, and strive to overcome all difficulties, to contribute to the great cause of building China into a great country and achieving national rejuvenation.

Thank you. ■

Highlights of 2023 Government Work Report

Premier Li Keqiang delivered the Government Work Report at the opening of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress in Beijing on Sunday.

Here are some highlights from the report.



Main Targets for 2023

- China sets its GDP growth target for 2023 at around 5 percent
- China targets inflation rate, or increase in consumer price index (CPI), of around 3 percent for 2023
- China's deficit-to-GDP ratio is projected at 3 percent for 2023
- China aims to create around 12 million urban jobs in 2023 and targets a surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent
- China aims to keep its grain output over 650 million tonnes in 2023



Fiscal, Monetary Policy for 2023

- China to implement prudent monetary policy in a targeted way
- China to enhance intensity, effectiveness of proactive fiscal policy
- China to keep RMB exchange rate generally stable at adaptive, balanced level
- China to encourage, support private sector
- China to effectively prevent, defuse major economic, financial risks



Economic & Social Policy for 2023

- China's COVID-19 response will be more well-conceived, more targeted and more effective in 2023
- China to accelerate modernization of industrial system
- China to intensify efforts to attract, utilize foreign investment
- China to keep personal income growth in step with economic growth
- China expects continuous progress in housing, medical care
- China to stabilize grain output, boost rural revitalization
- China to continue transition to green development
- China to expand domestic demand



On HK, Macao & Taiwan

- China to resolutely oppose “Taiwan independence,” advance peaceful reunification
- Chinese central gov’t to maintain lasting prosperity, stability in HK, Macao

On Diplomacy

- China to work with international community to put into action Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative



On Military

- Chinese military to carry out military operations, boost combat preparedness, enhance military capabilities



Achievements Over Past 5 years

- China secured victory against poverty
- China ensured food security, boosted rural revitalization
- China improved and upgraded industrial structure
- China expanded domestic demand, promoted coordinated regional development
- China steadily improved people's wellbeing
- China strengthened environmental protection, pursued green and low-carbon development
- Law-based govt advanced, social governance innovated
- China improved ethnic, religious work
- China's major-country diplomacy progressed
- China expanded int'l economic, trade cooperation to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes
- China made fresh progress in work related to its Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan
- China developed new ways of macro regulation to support economy



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Premier Li Qiang Addresses First Press Conference: Follow Strong Leadership of CPC

The First Session of the 14th National People's Congress held a press conference at the Great Hall of the People on the morning of March 13, 2023. Premier of the State Council Li Qiang met with Chinese and foreign reporters and answered their



questions at the invitation of Spokesperson Mr. Wang Chao. Vice Premiers of the State Council Ding Xuexiang, He Lifeng, Zhang Guoqing and Liu Guozhong were present at the press conference.

In his opening remarks, Premier Li Qiang said that he was delighted to meet friends from the media and thanked the journalists for their hard work in covering China's NPC and CPPCC sessions. On behalf of himself and the Vice Premiers, he thanked the Party and the people for their trust and noted that they are deeply aware of the important responsibilities and glorious mission upon their shoulders. He underscored that they will follow the strong

leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, rely closely on the people, and faithfully perform the duties entrusted by the Constitution and laws with an enterprising spirit and a strong sense of responsibility. He said they will press ahead with grit, stay honest and

upright, exert their utmost and live up to their mission.

China Central Television: First of all, congratulations to you, Mr. Premier, and the four Vice Premiers. The coming five years will be crucial for getting the efforts to build a modern socialist country in all respects off to a good start. People both at home and abroad are following closely the work of the new government. My question is, what are the goals and priorities of the new government? How will the government carry out its work?

Premier Li: Thank you for your congratulations, and I also want to thank you for your interest in the work of the government.

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held last October laid out a comprehensive and strategic plan for the country's development in the next five years and beyond. Regarding the important issues that are of interest to the people, the 20th Party Congress report has provided clear answers.

The task of the new government is to implement and deliver on the important decisions and plans laid out by the Party Central Committee, turn the inspiring blueprint drawn up at the 20th Party Congress into an implementation scheme, and work with our people to step by step turn this blueprint into a beautiful reality.

In carrying out our work, we will focus on the following priorities:

First, we will firmly follow a people-centered development approach. The ultimate aim of the work of the Party and the government is to improve the well-being of the people. As General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, people's aspiration for a better life is our goal. We will always bear in mind that ours is a people's government, and we will make solid efforts on every piece of work concerning people's livelihood.

Honestly speaking, most people do not keep their eyes on GDP growth all the time. What they care more about are the things that happen in their everyday life, like housing, employment, income, education, medical services and the environment. Therefore, the government must always plan and carry out its work according to the people's wish.

Second, we will focus our efforts on promoting high-quality development. You may have noticed that when attending the deliberations by the NPC deputies from Jiangsu Province during the two sessions, General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed the importance of focusing on the top priority of high-quality development. Indeed, China has made great progress in economic and social development. We are now the second largest economy in the world. This said, China's development is still

unbalanced and inadequate. Any aggregate volume, when divided by the 1.4 billion population, will become a small per capita figure.

Currently, our development is focused on providing for people's basic needs. Going forward, the focus will be shifted toward delivering a life of better quality for the people. In particular, we will enhance our capacity for scientific and technological innovation, build a modern industrial system, and transition toward green development.

All in all, we will make greater efforts to fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, move faster to create a new development paradigm and concentrate on promoting high-quality development.

Third, we will remain steadfast in deepening reform and opening-up. As we often say, reform and opening-up is a crucial move that has made China what it is today. In the historical process of advancing Chinese modernization and realizing the second centenary goal, we must continue to firmly pursue the path of reform and opening-up. We will keep to the direction of socialist market economy reform, promote high-level opening-up, and inject stronger vitality into China's development by deepening reform.

CNBC: Premier Li, this year marks the first since the peak of COVID in China, and many expect the economy to rebound in the near term. What policies will China enact to achieve its full-year growth target? What drivers of growth and drags on the economy does China expect in the year ahead and in the next five years? What kind of policies does China plan to pursue in the next five years to support sustainable, high-quality growth? Finally, how effective have policies been in the last few years in reducing debt, disorderly expansion of capital and other systemic risks in China?

Premier Li: You have really made the most of this opportunity. I counted four questions on six subjects. Due to time limit, let me answer your questions briefly.



The prospect of the global economy this year is indeed not optimistic. We see many factors of uncertainty and instability, and unpredictable factors. Stabilizing economic growth is a challenging task for all countries in the world. This year, we have set the GDP growth target at around five percent, which is based on consideration of various factors. Currently, China's total economic output has already exceeded 120 trillion RMB yuan, a very high base figure. We also face quite a number of new challenges this year. To achieve around five percent growth on such a high base figure is not an easy task, and it would require redoubled efforts.

As for the specific economic policies, the Central Economic Work Conference last year already laid out a comprehensive plan. Basically, we will keep to the general principles of prioritizing stability and seeking progress while maintaining stability, and push for a turnaround in overall economic performance. On stability, the emphasis will be placed on ensuring stable growth, stable jobs and stable prices. On progress, the key will be making new progress on high-quality development.

As for our specific work going forward, we

will introduce a number of policy combinations as follows: a combination of macro policies, a combination of policies for expanding demand, a combination of policies for advancing reform and innovation, and a combination of policies for preventing and defusing risks. These policy combinations will all be supported by concrete implementing steps. We will enrich, adjust and improve these policy combinations in the course of implementation.

The journalist also asked about the drivers of and drags on the Chinese economy. Indeed, China's economic development has quite a number of advantages. For example, we have a super-sized market, a well-functioning industrial system, rich supply of human resources and a strong development foundation. More importantly, we have notable institutional strength.

Talking about difficulties, I think all countries are confronted with some difficulties, and we see no less difficulty for China this year. But think about it. Is there any single period or any single year where we had no difficulty at all? The Chinese people have always pulled through difficult times and achieved new progress. People of my generation are



familiar with such Chinese fabled stories, like Da Yu taming the floods, Yu Gong moving the mountains, Jing Wei filling the ocean with pebbles, and Kua Fu chasing after the sun. These inspiring stories are testament to the spirit of resilience, tenacity and perseverance that has defined the Chinese nation. We, the Chinese people, have never been crushed by any difficulty.

As the economic performance in the first two months of this year demonstrates, the Chinese economy is stabilizing and picking up. Some international organizations have revised upward their projections for China's economic growth this year. To sum up, I believe the Chinese economy will break winds and waves, and sail toward a brighter future. I have full confidence in that.

Phoenix TV: In recent years, Hong Kong has restored order and stability, marking a major turnaround in the situation. Now development in Hong Kong has captured the attention of many. But due to changes in international political and economic landscapes, some believe that the international competitiveness of Hong Kong and Macao is weakening. What is your assessment of the future prospects of Hong Kong and Macao, and how will the central government support Hong Kong and Macao in leveraging their strengths and unique features, and achieve better development?

Premier Li: The central government has all along attached high importance to helping Hong Kong and Macao leverage their unique strengths and features. Since the return of Hong Kong and Macao to the motherland, with the support of the country, Hong Kong's position as a global financial, trading and shipping center has been consolidated and elevated. Macao has also built itself into a world-renowned tourism and leisure center.

In recent years, due to various factors, both Hong Kong and Macao have experienced some difficulties in their economic development. But I believe these are temporary difficulties that have arisen in the course of development. The

central government will fully, faithfully and resolutely implement the policy of One Country, Two Systems. We will give full support to Hong Kong and Macao in integrating into the country's overall development. We will give full support to the two regions in growing their economy and improving people's livelihood. We will give full support to the two regions in further building their global competitiveness. I am confident that with the strong backing of the motherland and the institutional safeguards of the One Country, Two Systems policy, the standing and role of Hong Kong and Macao will only strengthen, not weaken. Hong Kong and Macao will enjoy an even brighter future.

Lianhe Zaobao: Mr. Premier, you worked as the Party Secretary of Wenzhou in your earlier career. Both Wenzhou and other places you later worked in, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai, all have an advanced private economy. We know that you have a keen insight on the private economy. In your view, what additional measures need to be taken to boost the confidence of private companies and support their development? What are the areas where further efforts are needed?

Premier Li: You may have noted that when meeting with the CPPCC National Committee members during the two sessions, General Secretary Xi Jinping elaborated on the importance of ensuring healthy and high quality development of the private sector. General Secretary Xi's words were very well-received, and made private entrepreneurs feel both motivated and encouraged.

I worked in localities with a strong private economy for a long time, and had the opportunity to talk with local entrepreneurs on many occasions. I could say I am pretty well-informed of their aspirations and difficulties in their development. I want to take this opportunity to mainly convey the following messages.

First, the policy of "two unswervinglys", namely unswervingly consolidating and developing the public sector and unswervingly encouraging, supporting and guiding the



development of the non-public sector, is an important component of China's basic economic system. This is a long-term policy that did not change in the past and will not change in the future. Indeed, there were some incorrect discussions about private entrepreneurs last year, which made them feel concerned. As a matter of fact, the Party Central Committee has clear policies and principles regarding the development of the private sector. Both the 19th and the 20th national congresses and the Central Economic Work Conference last year reaffirmed these policies and principles. Our commitment in this regard is unequivocal and steadfast.

This second point I want to make is that private enterprises will enjoy a better environment and broader space for development. Standing at a new starting point, this government will continue to foster a market-oriented and law-based business environment in keeping with international standards, treat companies under all types of ownership as equals, protect the property rights of enterprises and the rights and interests of entrepreneurs in accordance with law. We will create a level playing field for all kinds of market entities and make further efforts to support private enterprises to grow and thrive. As for development space, China has a super-sized market with huge demand. There are a lot of new sectors and new racing tracks that can be tapped. All this promises great opportunities for private entrepreneurs.

Third, the new era inspires private entrepreneurs to write new entrepreneurship stories. This is a point I particularly want to make on this occasion. Economic development follows certain economic laws and depends on the conditions available. However, it is even more important to bring out people's initiative. So I do hope that private entrepreneurs will carry forward the entrepreneurial spirit and strengthen confidence as they start their new journey. Talking about this, I remember that when Zhejiang Province and Jiangsu Province were developing the private sector and

township enterprises, the local entrepreneurs cultivated a strong pioneering spirit. To reach their goals, they were willing to explore all paths, go through all troubles, try all means and endure all hardships. Although the models and forms of entrepreneurship are vastly different today, this kind of pioneering spirit of clearing obstacles and blazing new trails will always be needed. Government officials at all levels must sincerely care for and support the development of private enterprises, build clean and cordial relations with private entrepreneurs and take the lead in promoting a culture of respect for pioneers and entrepreneurs. I am confident that in the new era and on their new journey, our private entrepreneurs will continue to write their exciting entrepreneurship stories.

The Paper: The netizens are all following closely issues concerning their livelihood. This year, the employment situation remains serious in China. What steps will the government take to stabilize employment? Last year, China's population experienced negative growth for the first time in decades. Does that mean China's demographic dividend is disappearing and will the government introduce the policy of postponed retirement this year?

Premier Li: I'm happy to answer questions raised by the netizens. When I have time, I also go online quite a lot to see what the netizens are thinking and what suggestions they have for the work of the government.

You actually asked three questions. The first question is on employment. Employment is the cornerstone of people's livelihood. Ultimately, the solution to job creation lies in economic growth. As for the specific steps going forward, we will continue to pursue the employment-first strategy. We will increase government support in terms of employment services and technical training. We will take multiple steps to stabilize and expand employment. We will support and regulate the development of new forms of employment. This year, we expect to see 11.58 million college graduates entering the

workforce. This large number certainly adds pressure to employment, but if we look at it from a development perspective, these young people can inject energy and vitality into our society. Going forward, we will further expand channels of employment. In particular, we will help young people realize their personal value through hard work.

Your second question concerns population growth. With negative population growth in China, some people are worried that China's demographic dividend may be disappearing. But I don't think it is that simple. When assessing demographic dividend, we should look at not just the quantity but also the quality of population. We should not just look at the sheer size of the population, but also look at the scale of high-caliber workforce. Now we have a close to 900 million working-age population, and every year more than 15 million people join the workforce. A rich supply of human resources remains China's notable strength. More importantly, we have more than 240 million people who have received higher education, and the average length of education received by new entrants into the workforce has increased to 14 years. Therefore, China's demographic dividend has not disappeared, and our talent dividend is in the making. The driving force for China's development remains strong. That said, we will conduct careful study on the problems that may be brought by the changes in population and respond with appropriate steps.

Your third question concerns the policy of postponed retirement. We will conduct careful studies and thorough analysis to roll out the policy prudently in due course.

Narodnoe Slovo of Uzbekistan: China kept strict COVID measures in place for over two years. As some people in the world have questioned, were those measures truly necessary? And what preparation has China made for a potential new wave of COVID?

Premier Li: For over three years, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people have made united

efforts in fighting COVID-19, and achieved a major and decisive victory in the battle against the disease.

For the past three years, we have always put the people and life above everything else. We have adopted a well-conceived and targeted approach, and adjusted and improved our response measures in light of changing conditions. At the beginning of the pandemic when the virus was highly pathogenic, we resolutely introduced containment measures for class-A infectious diseases. Such efforts helped protect people's life and health and won us valuable time for the R&D of vaccines and medicines, and for the rolling out of vaccination. At a later stage when the virus became less pathogenic and with the increase in China's capacity for pandemic control, we improved and adjusted our response measures, made the transition in the response phase in due course, and started to implement measures designed for class-B infectious diseases.

China is a country with a large population and unbalanced development. Yet it only took us less than two months to achieve a smooth transition in COVID response phase and normal economic and social order was restored in a relatively short span of time. This is indeed a remarkable achievement. What has happened proves that China's COVID strategies and measures are completely right and our COVID response has been highly effective.

Humanity's battle against the virus is a long-term and historical process. Currently, the risk of virus transmission still exists, so we will make timely assessment of the evolving situation, build up our capacity for early warning and forecast, and make contingency plans for different kinds of scenarios. We will also strengthen the medical and health service systems and speed up the development of new vaccines and drugs. We have also been engaged in coordination and cooperation with the international community to jointly protect the health and well-being of humanity.

United Daily News Group from Taiwan: The mainland says it always cares about,



respects and promotes the well-being of compatriots in Taiwan. With the adjustment and improvement of COVID response measures on the mainland, people on both sides of the Strait look forward to the early restoration of normal exchanges. What measures will the mainland take to promote the economic and cultural exchanges and personnel travel across the Strait?

Premier Li: Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are members of one and the same family. We share an unbreakable bond of blood and kinship. We will continue to promote economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation across the Taiwan Strait on the basis of the one-China principle and the 1992 Consensus. We also encourage more Taiwan compatriots and businesses to come to the mainland. We hope they will not just be willing to come to the mainland, but also be able to integrate into the local communities and achieve better development.

The early restoration of normal exchanges and regular cooperation in various fields between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait is our shared aspiration, and requires our joint efforts.

People's Daily: In building a modern socialist country in all respects, the most arduous and complex task is still in the rural

areas. What plan does this government have in promoting rural revitalization and what measures will be taken to ensure China's food security?

Premier Li: China is a big country in agriculture. We still have close to 500 million permanent rural residents. Without the modernization of the rural sector and agriculture, socialist modernization would not be complete.

During the Central Rural Work Conference held late last year, General Secretary Xi Jinping made comprehensive instructions on building a strong agriculture, advancing work relating to agriculture, rural development and farmers, and promoting rural revitalization. Our job is to fully deliver on the various tasks in accordance with General Secretary Xi Jinping's instructions.

In promoting rural revitalization, we will focus on the following three keywords in our work ahead. The first keyword is comprehensive. Rural revitalization is not just about economic growth. In my view, it is also important to fully bring out the economic, ecological, social and cultural value of the countryside. The second keyword is distinctive features. China is a vast country. Cultures and customs vary from village to village, even though they are just miles apart. Different



localities must develop their countryside based on local conditions. It is important to cultivate distinctive local features, protect and preserve the local and rural cultures, and avoid a situation where all villages look the same. The third keyword is reform. We need to deepen reform of the rural sector to provide drivers for rural revitalization. Farmers are the principal actors in rural revitalization. We need to fully bring out their initiative and let them take part in reforming the rural sector and better share in the benefits of reform and development.

You also asked a question about food security. The total grain output in China has stayed above 650 million metric tons for eight years in a row. On the whole, food security is well guaranteed in this country. Going forward, we will further increase our grain production capacity by focusing on two key factors, namely arable land and seeds. Here I want to let our farmer friends know that the government's policy in support of grain production will only increase, not decrease. We encourage our farmers to produce more grain so as to make sure that the rice bowl of the over 1.4 billion Chinese people will always be firmly held in our own hands.

China Arab TV: The world is witnessing more geopolitical frictions and tides of deglobalization. Meanwhile, China-US relations remain under serious strain. Although China has been reassuring the world of its commitment to reform and opening-up, foreign businesses remain worried and some are considering relocation. Will China adjust its opening-up policy? How do you see the current China-US ties? And what are the prospects that the relations might improve?

Premier Li: This year marks the 45th anniversary of the launch of reform and opening-up in China. Reform and opening-up have enabled China to develop itself and also made an impact on the whole world. From what I learned, most foreign companies are still optimistic about their development prospects in China. Last year, China's utilized foreign investment totaled over US\$189 billion,

which is again a record high, and almost US\$50 billion higher than that of three years ago. This demonstrates that China remains a popular destination for global investment.

Opening-up is a basic state policy for China. No matter how the external situation may evolve, we will stay firmly committed to pursuing this policy. Here I want to mention in particular the China International Import Expo (CIIE). The CIIE is a major step taken by China to open its market to and share its development opportunities with the world. The CIIE has been held uninterruptedly for five years. Even during the pandemic, it was still held as scheduled. Last year there were over 2,800 enterprises from 127 countries and regions attending the Expo. The story of the CIIE proves that an open, big Chinese market promises big opportunities for companies from around the world.

This year we will further expand opening-up in alignment with high-standard international trade rules. China will only open itself wider to the world. We will provide a better environment and better services to all. An open China welcomes investors from all over the world.

As for the specific issues concerning China-US relations, Foreign Minister Qin Gang already elaborated on China's position during the press conference a few days ago. So I will not go into details. But I want to stress that it is important for us to translate the important consensus reached between President Xi Jinping and President Biden during their meeting last November into actual policies and concrete actions.

I know that in recent years, some in the US have been trumpeting the idea of decoupling from China. And sometimes it could become quite a hot topic on the media. But I wonder how many people can truly benefit from this kind of hype? According to Chinese statistics, last year two-way trade between China and the US reached nearly US\$760 billion, which again set a new record in history. China and the US are closely intertwined economically. We have



both benefited from the other's development. For most part of last year, I was working in Shanghai. I had a lot of opportunities to talk with the senior managers of multinational corporations, including many American companies. They all told me that they were optimistic about the future of Shanghai and China, and wished to achieve win-win results through cooperation. All this demonstrates that China and the US can and must cooperate and there are a lot that the two countries can achieve by working together. Encirclement and suppression is in no one's interest.

Xinhua News Agency: Mr. Premier, the new government faces an arduous and complex task, and also high expectations from the people. This has raised new requirements on the governing capacity and the conduct of the government. What plan does the new government have in terms of strengthening government-building?

Premier Li: The new mission and new task have raised new and higher requirements on us. We will take the new round of state institutional reform as an opportunity to strengthen government-building. We will further transform government functions, make the government's work more efficient and improve the conduct of the government. Going forward, we will focus on the following four priorities:

First, we will promote the practice of research and studies. The Party Central Committee has already made clear requirements on that, and the State Council must take the lead in meeting these requirements. I have worked in local governments for a long time. My experience is that when you sit in the office, you see lots of problems. But when you reach out to the people, you see all kinds of solutions. After all, the brightest minds are among the people. We will encourage government officials at all levels to engage more with local communities to know about what the people need and seek their opinions on the work of the government. They need to learn from the people and help

the people solve their problems. In particular, young people working in government ministries should reach out to the people, keep people's needs and interests close to their heart, and be down to earth in their work.

The second priority is to promote government administration in accordance with law. The government must act within the confines of the law, and all administrative conducts must be based on solid legal grounds. We will continue to promote the building of a law-based government, and public servants need to enhance the capacity for applying the method and mentality of the rule of law in solving real problems.

The third priority is to explore innovative ways in performing our duties. Government departments at all levels and civil servants must be conscious of their duty to serve the people and promote the country's development. In particular, when exercising approval and management responsibilities, the relevant government departments should not just slam on the brake, but also hit on the accelerator. They should not just set up roadblocks, but also put up road signs. They should make more value judgment on whether something should be done, instead of just making a purely technical judgment on whether something can be done. We are firmly opposed to pointless formality and bureaucratism in all forms, and we must be creative in performing our duties.

The fourth priority is to uphold the principle of integrity. We will apply stringent standards and measures in building a clean government, and take a zero-tolerance attitude to all acts of corruption. All government officials must subject themselves to supervision, and truly meet the requirements of being loyal, upright and responsible.

The Press Conference was held at the Golden Hall on the third floor of the Great Hall of the People. It lasted for about 80 minutes. Around 500 Chinese and foreign journalists attended the event. ■

China's National Legislature Unveils New Cabinet Lineup

China's national legislature decided on the new lineup of the State Council, or the cabinet, at its annual session on March 12.

Upon nomination by Premier Li Qiang, vice premiers, state councilors, ministers, governor of the central bank, auditor-general, and secretary-general of the State Council were endorsed by lawmakers at the fifth plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).

Chinese President Xi Jinping signed a presidential order to appoint these officials.

Lawmakers also approved by voting chairpersons, vice chairpersons and members of eight special committees of the 14th NPC at the meeting.

The vice premiers, state councilors and secretary-general of the State Council pledged allegiance to the Constitution. ■

List of key officials of China's State Council scan QR code



Vice premiers, state councilors and secretary-general of the State Council pledge allegiance to the Constitution at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, March 12, 2023. Nominated by Premier Li Qiang, Ding Xuexiang, He Lifeng, Zhang Guoqing and Liu Guozhong were endorsed as vice premiers, while Li Shangfu, Wang Xiaohong, Wu Zhenglong, Shen Yiqin and Qin Gang were endorsed as state councilors and Wu Zhenglong was endorsed as secretary-general of the State Council at the fifth plenary meeting of the first session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC).



Why does China's “Two Sessions” Matter To The World?

An American, who has been living in China for decades, shares his view that the “Two Sessions” works as a platform that facilitates the resolution of practical problems faced by ordinary Chinese. He also argues that despite the twists and turns in China-US bilateral relations, there is still a need for cooperation between the two countries.



It is China's annual “two sessions” time again. In the following week or so, for anyone interested in observing and understanding China, the political event is something they don't want to miss.

I am an American who has been living in China for four decades. From my point of view, the “two sessions” is an important

window to learn about China's current development, understand China's political system and forecast its future path. During this period, foreigners can find out what hot topics are being discussed on the ground, which issues concern Chinese leaders the most, what development objectives have been set, how China interacts with other countries, etc.

The “two sessions” refers to the annual sessions of China’s National People’s Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference. They are known as the country’s top legislature and national political advisory body, respectively.

A Platform Solving Practical Problems

The “two sessions” is a platform on which different regions and groups voice their opinions and reach a consensus. Lawmakers submit motions and suggestions, while political advisors offer proposals and insights.

The origins of many significant laws, regulations and policies that concern various sectors and groups -- such as those in the areas from environmental protection to poverty alleviation, from education to health care, from urban issues to rural issues -- were in the motions and proposals handed by lawmakers and political advisors to the “two sessions.” The “two sessions” also works as a platform that facilitates the resolution of practical problems faced by ordinary Chinese, such as building roads in the countryside, easing extracurricular burdens on students, and protecting the rights of deliverymen, among others.

Decoupling from China Comes At a Great Cost

China is the world’s second largest economy after the United States. To some extent, to observe China’s “two sessions” is actually to observe Chinese economy. One of the major tasks of the “two sessions” is to map out China’s annual economic development, set the growth target, and announce macroeconomic policies. And a document called the government work report gives answers to all of them.

Although the prospects for the global economy may not look bright this year, China has expressed its confidence by saying that the country’s economy will “expect an upturn on the whole, and there is a high probability that the growth rate will hit its normal level.” Many

of my foreign friends, including those living in the United States, are closely watching what economic target the Chinese government will set for 2023, and what policies and measures will be taken accordingly.

The Chinese economy has grown so titanic and so intertwined with the rest of the world that we can’t talk about the prospects of the world economy without talking about China. I’ve heard some Americans argue for decoupling from the Chinese economy, but I think it will come at a great cost. The fact is that China is the world’s most promising market, with a middle-income population of over 400 million. Some agencies predicted that this middle-income group will surpass 800 million in the next 15 years, which is definitely an astonishing figure.

Recently I noticed that the IMF lifted its forecast of China’s economic growth rate for 2023 to 5.2 percent. IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said it is highly likely that China’s development will be the most important factor in driving global growth in 2023. You would agree with this point if you have seen Beijing’s packed restaurants, shopping malls and cinemas.

Chinese Modernization Matters To World

The 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the country’s ruling political party, was convened in October last year. The key congress stressed “to advance the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization.” As this year marks the first year of this new journey, the new measures that will be unveiled at the “two sessions” not only matter to China, but to other countries as well.

I am also attracted to topics on China’s rural areas. I have been to China’s countryside many times. After China announced that it eliminated absolute poverty in 2021, I am eager to find out what on earth has happened in the countryside and how it will get better in the future. That is, how will China push forward its rural

revitalization? In the past decades, especially in the past ten years, great transformations have happened in China's rural areas, which may shed light on the path of narrowing the rich-poor gap for other countries.

After living in China for such a long time, one thing that I can't ignore is the bluer sky and clearer water. Green development is transforming China. China has been striving to develop new energy industries such as photovoltaics and wind energy after it announced ambitious plans to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Since China has become a world leader in tackling climate change, its future efforts to support new energy development are without doubt under the world's spotlight.

U.S.-China Cooperation Indispensable in Many Sectors

In fact, any changes that happen in China will affect other countries directly or indirectly. It is no exaggeration to say that for many American multinational corporations, they have to

take Chinese consumers and policies into consideration before making any big decisions. And the "two sessions" is a key opportunity to find out valuable information.

During the "two sessions," Foreign Minister Qin Gang, former ambassador of China to the United States, will answer questions from the media. U.S.-China relations are no doubt the most important bilateral relationship in the current world, and one of the topics that I personally care most about. I am eager to see how China's foreign minister will describe this relationship.

To me, and I believe it's true to many Americans as well, if the two leading countries were to lock themselves in confrontation and conflict, it would be a disaster for the world. I believe despite the twists and turns that happened in their bilateral relations in the past several years, there is still a need for cooperation. After all, people of the two countries share the same vision, which is a safe and prosperous world, and a better future for our children. ■



China's Economic Rebound Sparks Renewed Spirit of Confidence and Hope

The annual “Two Sessions” ignited a sense of excitement and optimism for China’s future as the country announced an impressive GDP growth target of around 5 percent in 2023, and vowed to create around 12 million urban jobs and keep inflation at around 3 percent.

As the wheels of life and labor spin back into motion at an accelerated pace, China’s economy is experiencing a splendid resurgence at the outset of the year.

This year, in particular, is of immense significance for the world’s second-largest economy as it lays the groundwork for its

future trajectory after the country achieved a decisive victory over COVID-19.

Consequently, the annual “two sessions” -- or Lianghui -- which commenced over the weekend, ignited a palpable sense of excitement and optimism for the country’s future, as a series of development targets for



Visitors learn about bamboo and wood products at the 2023 China Cross-border E-commerce Trade Fair in Fuzhou, southeast China’s Fujian Province, March 18, 2023.

2023 were announced in a government work report.

In a flourish of economic vitality, China has set an impressive gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of around 5 percent in 2023, and vowed to create around 12 million urban jobs and keep inflation at around 3 percent.

Human Stories Behind Economic Resurgence

From the captivating visuals on its streets to the promising financial projections and growth outlook, China has undergone a remarkable transformation since the country optimized its COVID-19 response. In fact, I had already sensed the rapid recovery of China's economy in advance.

The memories of December 2022 are still vivid in my mind as I made my way toward the Beijing Capital International Airport. I couldn't help but notice that the streets were almost vacant. The country was experiencing a sudden and massive spike in COVID-19 infections, and it seemed as though people had voluntarily chosen to remain indoors, despite the removal of most COVID-19 control measures.

Fast-forward to February 2023, as I returned to Beijing after a blissful holiday, the roads were now bustling with the sounds and sights of people going about their daily lives, and the air was thick with the heady scent of possibility.

Beijing I am Familiar With!

China's proposed annual growth target is more than just a figure; it encompasses heartfelt human stories. The owner of an eatery situated close to my home expressed her enthusiasm about reopening under optimized COVID-19 control.

"I had been eagerly looking forward to welcoming my customers again," she exclaimed. "I've missed them so much!"

Another entrepreneur friend of mine, a young man who runs his own tech company, was thrilled at the prospect of being able to resume in-person meetings with clients

and investors. "It's so much easier to build relationships when you can meet face-to-face," he told me when we recently met over coffee. "I'm excited to be able to get back out there and make things happen."

Global institutions have heightened their projections for China's economic revival. In January, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) increased its estimate for China's economic growth this year to 5.2 percent, up 0.8 percentage points from last October. The IMF cited China and India as the main drivers of global economic growth this year, a prospect that brings me great joy. Meanwhile, Moody's, an international credit rating agency, anticipates that China's economic resurgence may exceed expectations in the near term.

Across China, small businesses and entrepreneurs are reporting a surge in demand for their products and services, as consumers eager to make up for lost time are once again venturing out into the streets.

China holds a prominent position in the global economy as a major manufacturing hub and a vast consumer market. With a population of 1.4 billion, the country boasts over 400 million middle-income earners. Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, consumption had been a significant contributor to the country's GDP.

The government work report emphasized the need to give priority to the recovery and expansion of consumption. Other key priorities include accelerating the modernization of the industrial system, deepening the reform of state-owned enterprises while giving the private sector and private businesses support, and intensifying efforts to attract and utilize foreign investment.

Bolstering Employment

China's economic recovery has continued to gather momentum, with its growth-focused policy pragmatism reviving job confidence.

Due to various factors such as the severe impact of the pandemic, high unemployment rates have emerged as one of the most pressing issues in numerous countries, including my home country of India. ■

However, it is quite evident that China has remained committed to generating employment opportunities despite the headwinds.

As the country emerges from the pandemic, it will implement the employment-first policy and place a higher priority on the employment of young people, particularly college graduates, according to the government work report.

China's job seekers are reveling in the country's economic resurgence and reopening. With a visible smile on her face and a glimmer in her eyes, a recent graduate described how she secured a highly sought-after job at a multinational corporation.

"The past year has been challenging, with uncertainty and anxiety looming over our heads," she said. "But with the country's remarkable handling of the pandemic and the swift economic recovery, things are looking up. Companies are hiring again, and the competition is fierce, but I remained hopeful."

Her story is not unique. As one strolls through the bustling streets of Beijing, it's impossible to miss the billboards that boldly advertise job vacancies and the recruitment booths that dot public places, reigniting hope and optimism among job seekers.

China's economic growth rate dropped to 3 percent last year, showing a slight deceleration, but the country's underlying economic health remains robust.

Notably, one of the highlights is stable prices. While global inflation has surged to its highest level in over 40 years, China's Consumer Price Index (CPI) only rose by 2 percent in the context of 8 percent and above in the United States and the eurozone.

This year, China's CPI increase target is 3 percent. This goal reflects the country's commitment to maintaining low inflation, fostering a stable environment for economic growth, and safeguarding the well-being of its people.

High inflation has adversely affected the purchasing power of ordinary people in several countries, such as the United States, and in Europe. Nonetheless, in Beijing, the cost

of my daily expenses has remained relatively stable over the past few years. For instance, the sandwich I have for breakfast every day still costs around 4 U.S. dollars, excluding delivery.

China's Economic Recovery Whips Up Hope Globally

Meanwhile, foreign businesses are setting their sights on China once again. Confidence is high and expansion plans are being made.

The resurgence of the Chinese economy has garnered widespread global attention, igniting a fervor among international investors.

The foreign direct investment, in actual use, expanded 14.5 percent year on year to 127.69 billion yuan in January, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Anecdotal evidence abounds of companies eager to take advantage of China's vast and growing economy. An article on the website of the British "Daily Telegraph" stated that the Chinese market is "one of the most attractive investment opportunities this year."

According to Yin Zheng, executive vice president of Schneider Electric's China & East Asia Operations, China is not only a huge market but also a driving force for development and a source of innovation.

Personal sentiments are similarly positive. Many executives and business owners express a sense of optimism, knowing that they can now move forward with their plans in China.

One executive spoke of his excitement at the prospect of reopening the company's office in Shanghai. "We've been waiting for this moment for a long time," he told me. "We're ready to hit the ground running."

Whether it's a renewed focus on expanding into new markets, or simply the joy of being able to reconnect with colleagues and partners, there is a feeling that a new era of growth and opportunity has arisen.

As an expat who has made China my home for several years, I'm breathing a sigh of relief and beaming with happiness, wishing to continue the life I have cherished in the country. ■

Understanding What an Open China Means to the World Through “Thinner” Suitcases

An Egyptian living in China for years reveals the mystery of why he returns to China these days with thinner suitcases and why he need not carry cheese, dates and spices from his country.

The ongoing “two sessions” in Beijing hold great significance not only for China’s own development but also for other nations interested in understanding China’s future growth trajectory and global impact.

The “two sessions” refer to the annual sessions of China’s National People’s Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), which are the country’s top legislature and national political advisory body, respectively.

China’s opening-up policy remains one of the most discussed topics at the political event this year. The government work report submitted Sunday to the national legislature for deliberation demonstrates the steady progress and China’s impressive determination on the policy, saying that “We remained committed to opening up wider to the world and expanded international economic and trade cooperation to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes.”

As an Egyptian living in China for years, I have witnessed the country’s wider opening-up pursuit, and I believe an open China is vital to the struggling global economic recovery.

Behind “Thinner” Suitcases

I have friends of different nationalities who share the same feeling that our suitcases are “thinner” these days when returning to China from holidays. Over a decade ago, my family would always stuff my suitcase with cheese, dates, spices and other local specialties before I returned to China.

Now, however, more global products are entering the Chinese market through platforms such as the China International Import Expo (CIIE). With Arab specialties including Egyptian oranges, dates from the United Arab Emirates and essential oils from Syria easily available in Chinese supermarkets, I no longer need to carry these things all the way to China.

According to the government work report, China developed new forms of foreign trade over the past five years and built 152 new integrated pilot zones for cross-border e-commerce. Major trade events such as CIIE, the China Import and Export Fair, the China International Fair for Trade in Services, and the China International Consumer Products Expo have delivered positive results.

Furthermore, China simplified customs clearance procedures and reduced the clearance

time for imports and exports by 67 percent and 92 percent, respectively, bringing about a significant reduction in related compliance costs, the work report added.

Amidst the growing trend of trade protectionism and the so-called “decoupling and severing industrial and supply chains” by some developed countries, China’s efforts toward trade liberalization and facilitation have become increasingly crucial.

With an enormous market of more than 1.4 billion people, China is the world’s largest goods trader, a major trading partner of over 140 countries and regions, and has the world’s second-largest consumer market and import market. There is no doubt that China is a key hub of the global economic cycle, benefiting the entire world with the dividends of its super-sized market.

Strong Magnet For Foreign Investment

“Intensifying efforts to attract and utilize foreign investment,” as stated in the government work report, is one of the key priorities of the Chinese government’s economic work in 2023.

During my over a decade-long experience of living in China, I have seen an increasing number of international companies investing in the country. When enterprises first entered China, most of them just regarded it as the “factory of the world.” But later many of these companies set up research and development centers here to continuously increase the added value of their industrial chains.

In 2022, foreign direct investment in the Chinese mainland, in actual use, expanded 8 percent year on year to 189.13 billion U.S. dollars, reinforcing its status as a magnet for foreign investors.

Among Arab countries, Gulf countries’ investment in China is particularly eye-catching. Saudi Aramco, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Kuwait National Petroleum Company and other energy giants have carried out in-depth investment cooperation

with many Chinese provinces and enterprises. China and Arab countries have adhered to pursuing mutual benefits, promoted trade and investment facilitation, and multiplied the growth of mutual investment and economic and trade cooperation, according to the Saudi Arabian newspaper Alriyadh.

The sovereign wealth funds of Gulf states have long been mainly invested in developed markets in Europe and the United States. In recent years, as China-Arab relations have continued to improve and their economic ties deepened, China’s market and assets are gradually favored by sovereign wealth funds in the Middle East.

In 2018, Abu Dhabi Global Market, an international financial center in Abu Dhabi, opened its first overseas representative office in Beijing.

Ajlan & Bros Holding Group, a leading investment holding company in the Middle East and one of the largest private enterprises of Saudi Arabia in China, has been doing business in China for more than 20 years. With the increasingly close economic and trade exchanges between China and Saudi Arabia, the company has set up four investment offices in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Hong Kong since 2017.

Saudi Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC) has jumped onto the bandwagon of China’s green development. The company announced a carbon-neutral strategy and plans to actively expand investment cooperation in China.

“We need to ‘join hands’ with each other instead of ‘letting go’ of each other’s hands. We need to ‘tear down walls,’ not ‘erect walls.’” I was deeply impressed by these inspiring words by Chinese President Xi Jinping, and I believe China walks its talk.

A sentence in the government work report fully expresses China’s confidence in attracting more foreign investment, saying that with a vast and open market, China is sure to provide even greater business opportunities for foreign companies in China.

More Friends, More Chances

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has attracted more than three-quarters of the world's countries and 32 international organizations.

Over the past decade, Chinese companies have invested 397.9 billion yuan (about 57 billion U.S. dollars) in cooperation zones built in countries along the Belt and Road, creating 421,000 local jobs.

With an enormous market of more than 1.4 billion people, China is the world's largest goods trader, a major trading partner of over 140 countries and regions, and has the world's second-largest consumer market and import market. There is no doubt that China is a key hub of the global economic cycle, benefiting the entire world with the dividends of its super-sized market.

The BRI has made significant contributions to Egypt's modernization process and a notable example is the country's new administrative capital.

A modern city is taking shape in the desert east of Cairo, the capital of Egypt. Constructed by a Chinese company, the Central Business District (CBD) in Egypt's new administrative capital boasts the tallest building in Africa, standing at 385.8 meters.

This achievement is a testament to the growing friendship between Egypt and China. The project is nearing completion within just over four years. According to Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper, "China speed" makes Egypt's dream come true.

From material selection to the application of technologies, the project embodies the concept of green development and can help Cairo effectively deal with air pollution and other "big city diseases."

The CBD in Egypt's new administrative capital has become a popular spot, bustling with visitors. I would go there every time I go back to Egypt.

The outcomes of high-quality BRI development are spread across Africa. I have experienced the Chinese-built Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway. From the station to the trains, I was struck by the modern scene around me. Passengers were enjoying the convenience and efficiency of the self-service ticket vending machines, while the crew provided excellent services.

China's high-level opening-up has been a continuous success, and the BRI has become an international public good and a platform for international cooperation, Karim Adel, head of the Cairo-based Al Adl Center for Economic and Strategic Studies, told Xinhua.

China's other initiatives, especially the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, have also won the support of many countries, Adel added.

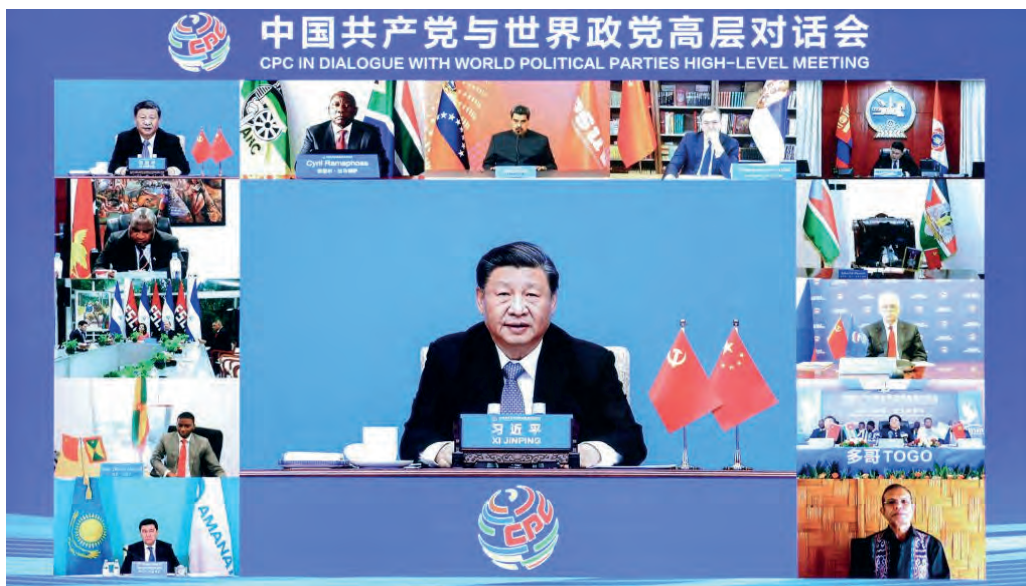
Last year, I had the privilege of participating in the translation and review work of the Arabic version of the fourth volume of "Xi Jinping: The Governance of China." With every word I read, I gained a deeper appreciation for the thoughts of the Chinese leader.

In 2021, Xi said that on the road to the well-being of all humankind, no country or nation should be left behind. All countries and nations are equally entitled to development opportunities and rights to development, Xi said at the Communist Party of China and World Political Parties Summit. His words deeply touched me.

There is an Arabic proverb that goes, "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to walk far, walk together," just like how in China people often say "more friends, more chances."

China is a country committed to high-level opening-up and I firmly believe that its efforts will bring more concrete opportunities to the world. ■

Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernization: Xi to World Political Parties



In his keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting via video link on March 15, 2023, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and President of the People’s Republic of China, outlined his views on people-centric modernization. “The ultimate goal of modernization is people’s free and well-rounded development. For a modernization path to work and work well, it must put the people first,” he said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote address at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting via video link.

The following is the full text of the address:

Leaders of political parties from around the world,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to join all of you for the discussion on “Path Towards Modernization: The Responsibility of Political Parties”.

The history of human development is full of twists and turns. Similarly, the journey of each country to explore the path to modernization

is also arduous. In today's world, multiple challenges and crises are intertwined. The global economic recovery remains sluggish, the development gap is widening, ecological environment is deteriorating, and the Cold War mentality is lingering. Humanity's modernization process has once again reached a crossroads of history.

We must put the people first and ensure modernization is people-centered. The people are the creators of history and are the strongest bedrock and force in advancing modernization. The ultimate goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development.

Polarization or common prosperity? Pure materialistic pursuit or coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement? Draining the pond to catch the fish or creating harmony between man and nature? Zero-sum game or win-win cooperation? Copying other countries' development model or achieving independent development in light of national conditions? What kind of modernization do we need and how can we achieve it? Confronted with these questions, political parties as an important force steering and driving the modernization process are duty bound to provide answers. Here, I wish to share some of my observations.

We must put the people first and ensure modernization is people-centered. The people are the creators of history and are the strongest bedrock and force in advancing modernization. The ultimate goal of modernization is people's free and well-rounded development. For a modernization path to work and work well, it must put the people first. Modernization is not only about indicators and statistics on the paper but more about the delivery of a happy and stable life for the people. With a focus on the people's aspirations for a better life and further progress of civilization, political parties should strive to achieve material abundance, political

integrity, cultural-ethical enrichment, social stability, and pleasant living environments so that modernization will better address the concerns and meet diversified needs of the people. In this way, modernization will promote the sustainable development of humanity by not only increasing the wellbeing of this generation but also protecting the rights and interest of future generations.

We must uphold the principle of independence and explore diversified paths towards modernization. Modernization is not "an exclusive patent" of a small handful of countries, nor is it a single answer question. It cannot be realized by a cookie cutter approach or simple "copy and paste". For any country to achieve modernization, it needs not only to follow the general laws governing the process, but more importantly consider its own national conditions and unique features. It is the people of a country that are in the best position to tell what kind of modernization best suits them. Developing countries have the right and ability to independently explore the modernization path with their distinctive features based on their national realities. We must develop our country and our nation with our own strength, and we must maintain a firm grasp on the future of our country's development and progress. We should respect and support the development paths independently chosen by different peoples to jointly usher in a new prospect for humanity's modernization that is like a garden where a hundred flowers bloom.

We must uphold fundamental principles and break new ground and ensure the continuity of the modernization process. In the face of various new issues, conditions and challenges in the modernization process, political parties should boldly take on responsibilities and excel in their work. We should break the shackles of stale thinking, remove institutional barriers, explore new methods and new approaches, and break new ground in theories and practices to instill unceasing dynamism into the modernization process. We should work together to reform and develop the global

governance system and make the international order more just and equitable as we advance humanity's modernization in an environment of equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all.

We must help others to succeed while seeking our own success and ensure all can enjoy the outcomes of modernization. Humanity lives in a community with a shared future where we rise and fall together. For any country to achieve modernization, it should pursue common development through solidarity and cooperation and follow the principles of joint contribution, shared benefits and win-win outcome. The frontrunners should sincerely support other countries in their development. One will not be seen in a more favourable light after blowing out others' lamp; nor will they go farther by blocking others' paths. We should share opportunities, create a future together and make the pie of humanity's modernization bigger to ensure more people enjoy the outcomes of modernization in a fairer way. We stand firmly opposed to the practice of preserving one's own development privilege by suppressing and containing other countries' endeavor to achieve modernization.

We must forge ahead with enterprise and ensure firm leadership over modernization. Modernization does not fall into our lap automatically. It is the result of hard work with the strong historical initiative. Political parties are the leading and driving force for modernization. Their values, ability to lead and govern, ethos, willpower and character have a direct bearing on the orientation and future of the modernization process. As an ancient Chinese philosopher said, "He who conquers himself is strong." Political parties should integrate party building with national modernization, forge ahead with enterprise and resolve, and excel themselves. In this way, they will have the confidence, determination and capability to respond to the challenges and questions presented by the times, meet people's expectations, and steer the course and marshal strength for the modernization cause.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

Achieving modernization is a dream that the Chinese people have strived to fulfill since modern times. The journey of over 100 years that the Party has traversed to unite and lead the Chinese people in pursuing national rejuvenation is also an exploration of a path towards modernization. Thanks to the unremitting efforts of generation after generation, we have found our own path to modernization.

We must forge ahead with enterprise and ensure firm leadership over modernization. Modernization does not fall into our lap automatically. It is the result of hard work with the strong historical initiative. Political parties are the leading and driving force for modernization.

The 20th National Congress of the CPC has proposed advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. Chinese modernization is one of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity and nature, and of peaceful development. It is rooted in our national conditions and also draws on the experience of other countries. It carries the imprint of history and traditional culture and also contains modern elements. It delivers benefit to the Chinese people and also advances common development of the world. It is a sure path for us to build a stronger nation and realize the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. It is also a path we must take to seek progress for humanity and harmony for the entire world. We will stay committed to the right direction, right theories and the right path. We will not veer off course by changing our nature or abandoning our system. As our own future is closely connected with that of other countries

and peoples, we will strive to provide new opportunities for world development, add new impetus to humanity's exploration of paths towards modernization and make new contributions to the theory and practice of humanity's modernization as we make new progress in Chinese modernization.

The CPC will continue to pursue high-quality development and promote global growth and prosperity. We will accelerate the building of a new development paradigm that promotes high-standard opening up and steady expansion of market access. China's door will only open wider. As we further modernize our industrial system, we will provide the world with more and better products made and created in China, and with a Chinese market of a larger scale and stronger demand.

We will continue to support and help developing countries in their pursuit of faster development, industrialization and modernization and offer Chinese solutions and strength for narrowing the North-South gap and achieving common development. The CPC stands ready to work with political parties of all other countries to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, accelerate the solid implementation of the Global Development Initiative, foster new drivers for global development and build a global community of development.

The CPC will continue to pursue high-quality development and promote global growth and prosperity. We will accelerate the building of a new development paradigm that promotes high-standard opening up and steady expansion of market access. China's door will only open wider.

The CPC will continue to safeguard international fairness and justice and promote world peace and stability. In advancing modernization, China will neither tread the old path of colonization and plunder, nor the crooked path taken by some countries to

seek hegemony once they grow strong. What China pursues is the right course of peaceful development. We seek to settle differences through dialogue and resolve disputes through cooperation. We firmly oppose hegemony and power politics in all their forms. We advocate solidarity and win-win mentality in handling complex and intertwined security challenges to set up a fair and just security architecture that is built and shared by all.

The world does not need a new Cold War. The practice of stoking division and confrontation in the name of democracy is in itself a violation of the spirit of democracy. It will not receive any support. What it brings is only endless harm. A modernized China will strengthen the force for world peace and international justice. No matter what level of development China achieves, it will never seek hegemony or expansion.

The CPC will continue to promote inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning and advance the progress of human civilizations. Around the world, countries and regions have chosen different paths to modernization, which are rooted in their unique and long civilizations.

All civilizations created by human society are splendid. They are where each country's modernization drive draws its strength and where its unique feature comes from. They, transcending time and space, have jointly made important contribution to humanity's modernization process. Chinese modernization, as a new form of human advancement, will draw upon the merits of other civilizations and make the garden of world civilizations more vibrant.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Friends,

A single flower does not make spring, while one hundred flowers in full blossom bring spring to the garden. As the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's

modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish. Here, I wish to propose the Global Civilization Initiative.

The CPC will continue to safeguard international fairness and justice and promote world peace and stability. In advancing modernization, China will neither tread the old path of colonization and plunder, nor the crooked path taken by some countries to seek hegemony once they grow strong. What China pursues is the right course of peaceful development.

We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.

We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples.

Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations.

We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

The CPC is committed to strengthening exchanges and cooperation with other political parties to pursue the just cause together. We are ready to deepen interactions with political parties and organizations in other countries to expand the convergence of ideas and interests. Let us leverage the strength of a new type of party-to-party relations for the building of a new type of international relations and expand global partnerships by fostering stronger partners with world political parties.

The CPC stands ready to share governance experience with political parties and organizations of other countries so that together we can make big strides on the path to modernization toward the goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind.

We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together we can make the garden of world civilizations colorful and vibrant.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

There are bound to be setbacks on humanity's journey to modernization, but the future is bright. The CPC is willing to work with all of you to ensure that different modernization drives form a mighty force driving prosperity and progress of the world and forge ahead nonstop in the long river of history!

Thank you. ■

Wang Yi Chairs Closing Meeting of Talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Beijing

Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi lauded Iran and Saudi Arabia for taking a historic step on March 10, 2023, in talks chaired by him, in transforming their bilateral ties, which will bring peace and stability in the region.



Wang Yi chaired the closing meeting of the talks between Minister of State and National Security Advisor Dr. Musaad bin Mohammed Al-Aiban of Saudi Arabia and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Admiral Ali Shamkhani of Iran.

On March 10, 2023, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs Wang Yi chaired the closing meeting of the talks between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Beijing. Minister of State and National Security Advisor Dr. Musaad bin Mohammed Al-Aiban of Saudi Arabia and Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council Admiral Ali Shamkhani of Iran were present.

Wang Yi congratulated Saudi Arabia and Iran on taking a historic step and making great achievements in improving bilateral relations. He said that the two sides have reached common understandings on resolving their respective concerns and identified roadmaps and timetables, thus laying a solid foundation for follow-up actions of both sides. The talks in Beijing have turned a new page in Saudi Arabia-Iran relations. China supports both sides in making firm strides as agreed in the agreement to create a bright future with patience and wisdom. As a reliable friend of the two countries, China will continue its constructive role.

Wang Yi said that the improvement of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has paved the way for realizing peace and stability in the Middle East and set a fine example for resolving problems and disagreements between countries through dialogue and consultation. China supports countries in the Middle East in upholding strategic autonomy, strengthening solidarity and cooperation, getting rid of external interference, and really holding the future of the Middle East in their own hands. Noting that Saudi Arabia and Iran stressed their commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, Wang Yi said that the moves conform to the trend of the times and exhibit a strong sense of responsibility.

China supports all developing countries in strengthening solidarity and cooperation and safeguarding common interests. China advocates seeking political settlements of all

problems and disagreements through dialogue, to maintain world peace and stability.

On behalf of their own heads of state, Al-Aiban and Shamkhani extended congratulations on President Xi Jinping's re-election. They spoke highly of China's fruitful major-country diplomacy, thanked China for hosting, supporting and contributing to the success of the talks, and expressed readiness to continue constructive dialogues, follow through on the existing common understandings, and improve their bilateral relations. They stressed that the two countries will abide by the principle of sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, strengthen good-neighborliness and friendship, and jointly maintain enduring stability and security in the region.

Wang Yi said that the improvement of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran has paved the way for realizing peace and stability in the Middle East and set a fine example for resolving problems and disagreements between countries through dialogue and consultation

Saudi Arabia and Iran reached the Beijing agreement on the day. China, Saudi Arabia and Iran signed and issued a joint statement as well announcing that Saudi Arabia and Iran agreed to resume diplomatic relationship. The three parties also stressed that they will make joint efforts to safeguard the basic norms governing international relations and promote international and regional peace and security. With the support of China, Saudi Arabia and Iran held talks in Beijing from March 6 to 10. ■

Joint Trilateral Statement by the People's Republic of China, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic of Iran.
Scan QR code:



Wang Yi: Saudi-Iranian Dialogue in Beijing is a Victory for Peace

Briefing the press on the significance of the Iran-Saudi dialogue, Wang Yi underlined the support of President Xi Jinping for this initiative and said China will continue to play a constructive role in facilitating proper settlement of hot-spot issues around the world.

On March 10, 2023, after presiding over the closing ceremony of a dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Beijing, Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, briefed the press on the significance of the dialogue.

Welcoming the important outcomes of this dialogue and the decision of Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic relations, Wang Yi noted that it is a victory for dialogue and a victory for peace, and that it is a major piece of good news and a clear signal at a time of turbulence in the world.

First, the world is faced with not only the Ukraine issue. There are many other issues affecting peace and people's livelihood that call for international attention and should be properly and promptly handled by the parties concerned.

Second, no matter how complex the issues are or how thorny the challenges may be, equal-footed dialogue on the basis of mutual respect will lead to a mutually acceptable solution.

Third, the Middle East belongs to the people of the region. Its future must be determined by the people of Middle East countries. Countries in the region are expected to carry forward the spirit of independence, strengthen solidarity and

coordination, and join hands to make the Middle East more peaceful, stable and prosperous.

Welcoming the important outcomes of this dialogue and the decision of Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume diplomatic relations, Wang Yi noted that it is a victory for dialogue and a victory for peace, and that it is a major piece of good news and a clear signal at a time of turbulence in the world.

Wang Yi stressed that the Beijing dialogue has been made possible and advanced based on the common understandings reached among the leaders of China, Saudi Arabia and Iran. President Xi Jinping has given unequivocal support for the dialogue from the start. The Beijing dialogue is a robust and successful effort to put the Global Security Initiative into practice. As a good-faith and reliable mediator, China has earnestly fulfilled its duties as the host. In keeping with its responsibility as a major country and the wishes of the countries concerned, China will continue to play a constructive role in facilitating the proper settlement of hot-spot issues around the world. ■

China will always be a Builder of World Peace: Foreign Minister Qin

On 7 March 2023, a press conference was held on the margins of the First Session of the 14th National People's Congress at the Media Center, during which Foreign Minister Qin Gang answered questions from Chinese and foreign media about China's foreign policy and external relations.



arrangements to that end. With the COVID situation turning for the better in China, we're steadily resuming exchanges with the world. We've pressed the "acceleration button", and sounded the clarion call for our diplomacy.

We will follow the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy. In particular,

we will ensure the success of the two major diplomatic events that we will host – the first China-Central Asia Summit and the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which will be the showcase of the distinctive character of China's diplomacy.

We will take it as our mission to defend China's core interests. We firmly oppose any form of hegemonism and power politics. We firmly oppose the Cold War mentality, camp-based confrontation, and acts to contain and hold back other countries' development. We will resolutely safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests.

We will build on our extensive partnerships. We will pursue coordination and sound interactions among major countries, seek friendship and cooperation with other countries, and promote a new type of international relations. China has had a growing network of friends, made more and more new friends, and strengthened ties with old ones.

We will take openness and development as our objective. We will facilitate high-quality development and high-standard opening-

Qin Gang: Friends from the media, good morning. I'm very pleased to meet you. As the world is undergoing major changes unseen in a century, China will continue to pursue the independent foreign policy of peace, and will continue to implement the mutually beneficial strategy of opening-up. China will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order. Now I'm ready to take your questions.

China Central Television: People at home and abroad have great expectations for China's diplomacy in 2023. What will be the priorities and highlights in China's diplomacy, particularly in head-of-state diplomacy? As the new foreign minister, how do you envision China's diplomacy in the years to come?

Qin Gang: We're in the first year of fully implementing the guiding principles set forth by the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. The Congress has outlined top-level plans for China's diplomacy, identified our missions and tasks, and made strategic

up. We will reject “decoupling”, and oppose severing industrial and supply chains and imposing unilateral sanctions. We will uphold an open and inclusive world economy, and will generate new opportunities for the world with our new development.

We will take multilateralism as the way forward. We will promote the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, promote greater democracy in international relations, and make global governance more just and equitable. We will offer more, better Chinese insight and solutions to help meet humanity’s common challenges.

We will take “diplomacy for the people” as our guiding principle. We will always bear in mind the well-being and security of our overseas compatriots, and honor our commitment to serving the people. We will enhance the service for and protection of Chinese citizens and institutions abroad to make their overseas travels and exchanges safer and more convenient.

The world is far from tranquil, being entangled in intertwined turmoils and transformation, the clash between unity and division, and the coexistence of opportunities and challenges. The new journey of China’s diplomacy will be an expedition with glories and dreams, and it will also be a long voyage through stormy seas. The harder the mission, the more glorious its accomplishment. Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, we will put Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy into full practice, follow through on the decisions of the 20th CPC Congress, and uphold our foreign policy goals of safeguarding world peace and promoting common development. We will meet challenges head-on, boldly take on responsibilities, foster an enabling external environment for building a modern socialist country in all respects, and write a new chapter in China’s distinctive major-country diplomacy in the new era.

Rose al-Yūsuf: Many see the Chinese path to modernization as a new path to modernity that will inspire other countries, especially

the developing countries. How do you see the significance of the Chinese path to modernization for the world?

Qin Gang: Indeed as you said, “Chinese modernization” has become a popular phrase in the world. Achieving modernization for a country of more than 1.4 billion people will be an unprecedented feat in human history, one of profound global significance in itself.

Chinese modernization offers solutions to many challenges facing human development. It busts the myth that modernization is westernization; it creates a new form of human advancement; and it provides an important source of inspiration for the world, especially developing countries. As I see it, Chinese modernization has at least five features:

First, independence. The reason why the Chinese path to modernization works is exactly because it is developed in China and rooted in Chinese culture, and fits in well with China’s national conditions. China’s success in development also proves that every country has the right and ability to choose its own path, and to hold its future firmly in its own hands.

Second, putting people first. Chinese modernization is the modernization of common prosperity for all. It is about achieving both material abundance and cultural-ethical enrichment for the people. Modernization should not serve the interests of only a few countries or individuals. It should not make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Nor should it lead to cultural impoverishment, moral degradation or disorder. People around the world should all enjoy the rights to seek development as equals and pursue happiness.

Third, peaceful development. Chinese modernization is not pursued through war, colonization, or plundering. It is dedicated to peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and is committed to harmony between humanity and nature. It is a new path different from Western modernization.

Fourth, openness and inclusiveness. Humanity’s modernization should not be a one-flower show but a hundred flowers in bloom. It is important to respect the right of

every country to pursue a modernization path tailored to its national reality, and encourage exchange and mutual learning, so that all will flourish and prosper together.

Fifth, working hard in unity. China's success proves that acting in disunity like a heap of loose sand will get us nowhere, and that only by striving in unity can we pool strength. We will persevere in carrying out the set blueprint until it becomes reality. Partisan rift, empty talk and frequent policy flip-flop as seen in certain country will only make even the best blueprint an illusion and a castle in the air.

The process of Chinese modernization is a boost to the force for peace, justice and progress in the world. We hope and believe that as more and more countries begin their own journey of modernization, the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind will become true.

TASS: How do you view the future of Russia-China relations? Will it provide a new model for state-to-state relations? Will the Chinese President visit Russia after the NPC and CPPCC Sessions? Is it possible for our two countries to drop the use of the US dollar and the Euro in bilateral trade settlement?

Qin Gang: You mentioned the model for major-country relations. That is a good perspective for observing China-Russia relations. Major countries should figure out what they want with each other – building exclusive blocs, or fostering friendship that is open and sincere. China and Russia have found a path of major-country relations featuring strategic trust and good neighborliness, setting a good example for a new type of international relations.

Some countries who are inclined to view China-Russia relations through the lens of Cold War alliances see nothing but their own image. The China-Russia relationship is based on no-alliance and no-confrontation, and it is not targeted at any third party. It is not a threat to any country, nor is it subject to any interference or discord sown by any third party. With China and Russia working together, the world will have a driving force toward multipolarity and

greater democracy in international relations, and global strategic balance and stability will be better ensured. The more unstable the world becomes, the more imperative it is for China and Russia to steadily advance their relations.

Head-of-state interaction is the compass and anchor of China-Russia relations. Under the strategic guidance of the two presidents, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era will surely grow from strength to strength.

As for the currencies to be used in China-Russia trade, the answer is simple. I would say whichever that are efficient, safe and credible. Currencies should not be trump cards for unilateral sanctions, still less a disguise for bullying or coercion.

People's Daily: The Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) put forward by President Xi Jinping have been welcomed by many countries. What role does China want to play in strengthening and improving global governance? What further steps will it take to this end?

Qin Gang: Amid the changes and confusion, people are wondering what's wrong with our world and what we should do about it. Humanity has come to a new crossroads. Keeping in mind the lessons of history as well as the well-being of the world and all humanity, President Xi Jinping has proposed the right approach to global governance. Through the past ten years in the new era, President Xi Jinping has put forward a host of major initiatives and proposals, including building a community with a shared future for mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative, the common values of humanity, the GDI and the GSI.

The core message of these initiatives is that countries are interdependent, mankind have a shared future, and the international community must get united for cooperation. With solidarity and cooperation, we can defeat COVID, address climate change, tackle the deficit in peace, security, development and governance, and build an open, inclusive, clean

and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.

Yet the path to global governance is far from smooth. An ancient Chinese philosopher observed that “goodwill leads to good governance while enmity, chaos”. Another ancient philosopher stressed that “the rule of selfish interests spells chaos while the rule of law brings good governance”. The moral of these wise sayings is that global governance should be promoted in accordance with the law and the principles of international law enshrined in the UN Charter; equity and justice must be upheld while hegemonism and selfish interests must be rejected; solidarity must be defended while division and confrontation must be abandoned. Developing countries account for more than 80 percent of the global population and more than 70 percent of global economic growth. People in developing countries are entitled to a better life, and developing countries are entitled to greater representation and a louder voice in international affairs.

A just cause should be pursued for the common good. China will keep in mind the interests of the world, take an active part in global governance, and contribute more to world peace and development and to human progress.

NBC: You once wrote, “The future of American and Chinese peoples – indeed, the future of the entire planet – depends on a healthy and stable China-US relationship. Healthy and stable relationship? Is that still possible given the widening conflict of interests on a whole range of issues? Or how do you purpose to make it possible? Besides China’s core interests, have you also considered the core interests of the United States?”

Qin Gang: A recent episode in China-US relations is the unmanned airship incident. It is entirely an accident caused by force majeure, and its facts and nature are crystal clear. Even the United States did not believe it posed a physical threat. However, in violation of the spirit of international law and international customary practices, the United States acted

with a presumption of guilt. It overreacted, abused force, and dramatized the accident, creating a diplomatic crisis that could have been avoided.

An accident can reveal something fundamental. In this case, the US perception and views of China are seriously distorted. It regards China as its primary rival and biggest geopolitical challenge. This is like the first button in a shirt being put wrong. And the result is that the US China policy has entirely deviated from the rational and sound track.

The United States claims that it seeks to “out-compete” China but does not seek conflict. Yet in reality, its so-called “competition” means to contain and suppress China in all respects and get the two countries locked in a zero-sum game. The United States talks a lot about following rules. But imagine two athletes competing in an Olympic race. If one athlete, instead of focusing on giving one’s best, always tries to trip or even injure the other, that is not fair competition, but malicious confrontation and a foul! Its so-called “establishing guardrails” for China-US relations and “not seeking conflict” actually means that China should not respond in words or action when slandered or attacked. That is just impossible! If the United States does not hit the brake but continues to speed down the wrong path, no amount of guardrails can prevent derailing, and there will surely be conflict and confrontation. Who will bear the catastrophic consequences? Such competition is a reckless gamble with the stakes being the fundamental interests of the two peoples and even the future of humanity. Naturally China is firmly opposed to all this. If the United States has the ambition to make itself great again, it should also have a broad mind for the development of other countries. Containment and suppression will not make America great, and it will not stop the rejuvenation of China.

As President Xi Jinping pointed out, whether China and the United States can handle their relationship well bears on the future of the world. Getting the relationship right is not optional, but something we must do and must do well. I have also noted that

more and more people with vision and insight in the United States are deeply worried about the current state of China-US relations, and have been calling for a rational and pragmatic policy toward China.

The American people, just like the Chinese people, are friendly, kind and sincere, and want a better life and a better world. When I was working in the United States, I visited many places. In Los Angeles, workers at the port of Long Beach shared with me how their entire families live off trade with China, stressing that the United States and China should prosper together. Farmers in Iowa told me that they want to produce more food because a great number of people in the world are still living in hunger. Presidents of universities stressed that international exchange is critical for technological advancement, and that technological decoupling is a lose-lose and all-lose. A kid in the Yinghua Academy in Minnesota, the world champion of the “Chinese Bridge” Chinese show for foreign elementary school students, confided in me in fluent Chinese that she is learning the language because she loves China. Every time I think about them, I’m convinced that the China-US relationship should be determined by the common interests and shared responsibilities of the two countries and by the friendship between the Chinese and American peoples, rather than by US domestic politics or the hysterical neo-McCarthyism.

China will continue to follow the principles put forth by President Xi Jinping, namely, mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, to pursue a sound and stable relationship with the United States. We hope the US government will listen to the calls of the two peoples, rid of its strategic anxiety of “threat inflation”, abandon the zero-sum Cold War mentality, and refuse to be hijacked by “political correctness”. We hope that the United States will honor its commitments and work with China to explore the right way to get along with each other to the benefit of both countries and the entire world.

Phoenix Television: Some US think tanks and officials have been hyping up the possibility of a conflict between China and the US over the Taiwan question in the year 2027 or 2025. Some media even say the United States has made up a plan for the “destruction of Taiwan”. How do you see the current situation in the Taiwan Strait? How likely is such a conflict between the two countries in the Taiwan Strait?

Qin Gang: I knew that the Taiwan question would be raised, so I’ve brought a copy of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. Let me first quote two lines from the Preamble of the Constitution – “Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People’s Republic of China. It is the inviolable duty of all Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan, to accomplish the great task of reunifying the motherland.” Resolving the Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese people, and no other country has the right to interfere in it. Some senior US officials have recently asserted that the Taiwan question is not an internal affair of China. We firmly oppose such absurd comments, and we will stay on high alert.

The two sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one common family, which is called China. As brothers and sisters, we will continue to work with the greatest sincerity and utmost efforts to pursue peaceful reunification. Meanwhile, we reserve the option of taking all necessary measures. In fact, China’s Anti-Secession Law has explicitly made this point. In case this Law is violated, we must act in accordance with the Constitution and the Law. No one should ever underestimate the firm resolve, strong will or great capability of the Chinese government and people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Taiwan question is the core of the core interests of China, the bedrock of the political foundation of China-US relations, and the first red line that must not be crossed in China-US relations. The US has unshirkable responsibility for causing the Taiwan question. The reason why China raises this question to the US is to

urge it to stop interfering in China's internal affairs. The Chinese people have every right to ask: Why does the US talk at length about respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity on Ukraine, while disrespecting China's sovereignty and territorial integrity on China's Taiwan question? Why does the US ask China not to provide weapons to Russia, while it keeps selling arms to Taiwan in violation of the August 17 Communiqué? Why does the US keep on professing the maintenance of regional peace and stability, while covertly formulating a "plan for the destruction of Taiwan" ?

Separatism for Taiwan independence is as incompatible with peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait as fire with water. For peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, its real threat is the separatist forces for Taiwan independence, its solid anchor is the one-China principle, and its genuine guardrails are the three China-US joint communiqués. Mishandling of the Taiwan question will shake the very foundation of China-US relations. If the United States truly expects a peaceful Taiwan Strait, it should stop containing China by exploiting the Taiwan question, return to the fundamental of the one-China principle, honor its political commitment to China, and unequivocally oppose and forestall Taiwan independence.

Global Times: The Russia-Ukraine conflict has been going on for over a year. Some in the United States and other Western countries are now urging China not to provide lethal assistance to Russia, and hyping up China's "special responsibility". What is your take on this?

Qin Gang: The Ukraine crisis is a tragedy that could have been avoided. But it has come to where it stands today. There are painful lessons that all parties should truly reflect upon.

The Ukraine crisis has a complex history and reasons. In essence, it is an eruption of the problems built up in the security governance of Europe. China always makes its own judgment independently based on the merits of the issue. Between peace and war, we choose peace. Between dialogue and sanctions, we choose

dialogue. Between lowering the temperature and fanning the flames, we choose the former. China did not create the crisis. It is not a party to the crisis, and has not provided weapons to either side of the conflict. Why on earth the blame, sanctions and threats against China? This is absolutely unacceptable.

Less than two weeks ago, we issued China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis. It offers 12 propositions, including respecting the sovereignty of all countries, abandoning the Cold War mentality, ceasing hostilities, and resuming peace talks. The core stance is to promote talks for peace.

Regrettably however, efforts for peace talks have been repeatedly undermined. There seems to be "an invisible hand" pushing for the protraction and escalation of the conflict and using the Ukraine crisis to serve certain geopolitical agenda.

The Ukraine crisis has come to a critical juncture. Either hostilities stop and peace is restored and the process of political settlement begins, or more fuel is added to the flames and the crisis further expands and spirals out of control. Conflict, sanctions and pressure will not solve the problem. What is needed is calmness, reason and dialogue. The process of peace talks should begin as soon as possible, and the legitimate security concerns of all parties should be respected. This is the right way to achieve durable security in Europe.

Associated Press of Pakistan: This year marks the tenth year of China's Belt and Road Initiative. The United States and the European Union have also come up with their own global infrastructure initiatives. Do you see them as competing initiatives? Some people say the Belt and Road can lead to debt traps. How would you respond to that?

Qin Gang: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a high-quality public good initiated by China, built by the parties involved, and shared by the world. The BRI delivers high-standard, sustainable and livelihood-enhancing outcomes, and is hence widely welcomed. To date, over three quarters of countries around the world and 32 international organizations



have joined this initiative. Ten years after its inception, the BRI has evolved from vision into reality, boosting development in partner countries and bringing real benefits to the people. A decade of efforts have laid down a pathway toward common development, and created an array of national landmarks, livelihood projects, and milestones of cooperation. Over the past decade, the BRI has galvanized nearly US\$1 trillion of investment, established more than 3,000 cooperation projects, created 420,000 local jobs, and helped lift almost 40 million people out of poverty. The China-Laos Railway helps make land-locked Laos a land-linked country. The Puttalam power plant helps light up numerous Sri Lankan homes at night. The Mombasa-Nairobi Railway adds more than two percentage points to local economic growth. Luban workshops help young people in over 20 countries acquire vocational skills. The China-Europe Railway Express has completed 65,000 freight services, serving as a steel camel fleet between Asia and Europe, and a health train delivering medical supplies during the pandemic. China will host the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation this year. Taking this as an opportunity, we will work with all relevant parties for more fruitful outcomes from Belt and Road cooperation.

The BRI is a practical and open initiative guided by the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. Its cooperation is conducted through consultation, and its partnerships are built with friendship and good faith. We welcome

all initiatives that are not ideologically-driven proposed by other countries, and we are happy to see them succeed if they don't carry a geopolitical agenda.

China should be the last one to be accused of the so-called debt trap. Data show that multilateral financial institutions and commercial creditors account for over 80 percent of the sovereign debt of developing countries. They are the biggest source of debt burden on developing countries. Particularly since last year, the unprecedented, rapid interest hikes by the United States have led to capital outflows in many countries and worsened the debt problems in the countries concerned.

China has been making efforts to help the countries in distress, and is the biggest contributor to the G20's Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI). China will continue to participate constructively in the resolution of international debt issues. Meanwhile, we call on other parties to act together and share the burden fairly. When parties sit together and talk things through, there will be more solutions than problems.

NHK: This year marks the 45th anniversary of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty. Now, the difference in the positions of the two countries in the fields of politics, economy and security has become clear. How does the new Chinese government plan to build relations with Japan in the future?

Qin Gang: China and Japan are close neighbors. To foster a China-Japan relationship for the new era, it is important to do the following:

First, honor commitments. Our two countries signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship 45 years ago, codifying the principles and direction for the development of China-Japan relations for the first time. This Treaty, together with the other three political documents between China and Japan, form the political foundation of the bilateral relations. These documents, particularly the important political consensus that the two countries should "be partners, not threats", must be

truly observed. Words must be matched with actions.

Second, learn lessons from history. The immense sufferings imposed by the Japanese militarists on the Chinese nation are still painful today. The Chinese people will not forget this, and the Japanese side must not forget. Forgetting history is a betrayal, and denying a crime is to repeat a crime. China always treats Japan with goodwill and hopes for friendship and good-neighborliness. Yet, should some people from the Japanese side choose a beggarly-neighbor approach rather than pursuing partnership, and even take part in a new Cold War to contain China, the bilateral relations would only suffer new wounds when the old ones are yet to be healed.

Third, preserve the international order. Some leaders in Japan recently have also been talking a lot about “international order”. We need to make clear what order they are talking about. Today’s international order is built on the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War, which cost the lives and blood of 35 million Chinese soldiers and civilians. The Chinese people will never accept any form of historical revisionism that challenges the post-war international order and international justice. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship explicitly opposed hegemonism, and its spirit remains relevant today.

Fourth, promote win-win cooperation. China and Japan are highly complementary and need each other. We should uphold market principles and a free and open spirit, increase cooperation, jointly ensure stable and smooth industrial and supply chains, and inject impetus and vitality into global economic recovery.

One more issue I wish to raise here. The Japanese government has decided to discharge contaminated water of the Fukushima nuclear power plant into the sea. This is not Japan’s private business, but a major issue vital to the marine environment and human health. We urge the Japanese side to properly handle this matter in a responsible manner.

Xinhua News Agency: The United States claims that it will “shape the strategic environment in which China operates”. Its Indo-Pacific Strategy is an important leverage to achieve this. As a result, many countries in the region have felt great pressure. Some media suggested that as the Chinese economy faces growing downward pressure, regional countries have found it difficult to continue to “rely on the United States for security guarantee, and on China for economic development”. What is your view?

Qin Gang: The US Indo-Pacific Strategy, while purportedly aiming at upholding freedom and openness, maintaining security and promoting prosperity in the region, is in fact an attempt to gang up to form exclusive blocs, to provoke confrontation by plotting an Asia-Pacific version of NATO, and to undermine regional integration through decoupling and cutting chains.

The US claim to “shape the strategic environment in which China operates” actually reveals the real purpose of its Indo-Pacific Strategy, that is, to encircle China. Such an attempt will only disrupt the ASEAN-centered, open and inclusive regional cooperation architecture, and undermine the overall and long-term interests of regional countries. It is bound to fail.

I noticed that leaders of a number of regional countries have recently stated that ASEAN should not be a proxy for any party and should stay clear from big power rivalry. As a pacesetter in global development, Asia should be a stage for win-win cooperation rather than a chessboard for geopolitical contest. No Cold War should be reignited, and no Ukraine-style crisis should be repeated in Asia.

As for who to rely on in terms of security and economy, I believe it is necessary to stand together in face of difficulties, jointly pursue security and development, and work together to build a closer community with a shared future in the neighborhood.

Some are concerned about China’s economic outlook. I think that’s quite unnecessary. Some

international institutions have recently revised upward their forecast on China's economic growth this year. Our projected growth target is around five percent, far higher than other major economies. Last year, China's paid-in foreign investment was up by 8 percent, and it remained a top destination for foreign investors. The China Development Forum and the Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference will soon be held, and so will the Summer Davos in Tianjin. I have learned that many foreign business leaders have applied to participate. In the recent exchanges with my counterparts from regional countries, development is what we all hope for the most, and cooperation is more discussed than any other subject. I believe that as China accelerates high-quality development, expands high-standard opening-up and fosters a new development paradigm, it will surely bring new opportunities to all countries in the world, especially to regional countries.

The Paper: Late last year, President Xi Jinping attended the first China-Arab States Summit and the China-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, and paid a state visit to Saudi Arabia. In February this year, China hosted Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi. This shows China is giving more attention to the Middle East. What will be China's priorities in its Middle East policy?

Qin Gang: There are long-standing relations between China and Middle Eastern countries. We are good friends and good partners.

At the first China-Arab States Summit late last year, the two sides agreed to build a China-Arab community with a shared future in the new era. This is a strong boost to our friendship and cooperation. Last month, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi paid a successful visit to China. During the visit, the two sides agreed to deepen the China-Iran comprehensive strategic partnership and take the bilateral relations to new levels.

China supports the strategic autonomy of Middle Eastern countries, and opposes foreign interference in their internal affairs. China will continue to stand for justice and support countries in this region in seeking political



settlement of hotspot issues through dialogue and consultation. China fully respects Middle Eastern countries as the masters of their own affairs. We have no intention to fill a so-called "vacuum". And we will not build exclusive circles. In the Middle East, China will be a facilitator for peace and stability, a cooperative partner for development and prosperity, and an enabler for building strength through unity.

The Straits Times: Some see your appointment as foreign minister as a signal that China is moving away from the so-called "wolf warrior diplomacy" and taking a softer approach with its diplomacy. Is China really pivoting away from what had been viewed as a tough brand of engagement?

Qin Gang: A very interesting question. I recall when I just arrived as Chinese ambassador to the United States, American media exclaimed, "Here comes a Chinese wolf warrior." Now I am back as the foreign minister, the media have stopped calling me that way. I kind of feel at a loss. Truth is, "wolf warrior diplomacy" is a narrative trap. Those who coined the term and set the trap either know little about China and its diplomacy, or have a hidden agenda in disregard of facts.

Confucius said over 2,000 years ago, "One should repay kindness with kindness, and resentment with justice. If resentment is repaid with kindness, with what then should one repay kindness?" In China's diplomacy, there is no shortage of goodwill and kindness. But if faced with jackals or wolves, Chinese diplomats would have no choice but to confront them head-on and protect our motherland.

AFP: Given China's tense relations with the United States in recent months, does

China plan to strengthen its ties with the European Union on political and commercial levels?

Qin Gang: China and Europe are two great civilizations, two big markets and two major forces. Our interactions are an independent choice made by the two sides entirely based on our respective strategic interests. The China-Europe relationship is not targeted at any third party, nor is it subjugated to or controlled by any third party.

No matter how the situation may evolve, China all along sees the European Union as a comprehensive strategic partner and supports European integration. We hope that Europe, with the painful Ukraine crisis in mind, will truly realize strategic autonomy and long-term peace and stability.

We will work with Europe to uphold true multilateralism, and keep to mutual respect and win-win cooperation. We wish to work with Europe to overcome disruptions and challenges, keep deepening the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, and bring more stability, certainty and positive energy to a world of change and disorder.

China Daily: We recently launched a survey to collect questions for the foreign minister. Many young people care a lot about China's international image and voice in international affairs. How can we present to the world a true, multi-dimensional and panoramic picture of China? What role can young people play in making China's voice better heard?

Qin Gang: I'd like to first thank China Daily for conducting this survey. I believe this helps to bring the general public, especially the young people, closer to China's diplomacy. I'd also like to thank our young friends for your interest in and support for China's diplomatic work. This is a good question. I'm very pleased to see that our young people have this ambition and vision. As a Chinese proverb goes, "Everyone has a responsibility for the future of their country." General Secretary Xi Jinping observed that young people are our hope and will shape the future, and that they should demonstrate their youthful vigor in the

building of a community with a shared future for mankind.

China is moving closer to the center of the world stage. We make trending topics and find ourselves in spotlight more often. But we don't have enough microphones, and our voice is not loud enough. Some are still hogging the microphones, and there are quite many noises and jarring notes about China. When it comes to making China's voice heard loud and clear, young Chinese have an important role to play.

First, be confident. Our 5,000-year civilization and our achievements in modernization are the source of such confidence. I hope that young people will foster greater ambition, grit and determination through practice. I hope you will look the world in the eye and have dialogue with the world on an equal footing to share your unique perspectives, make your voices heard, and tell the world who you are.

Second, be enterprising. To realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and build a community with a shared future for mankind, young people should step forward with courage and tenacity. While Western modernization is the prelude to the modernization of humanity, the development and progress of developing countries including China is a symphony. Young Chinese can compose the most exciting and beautiful part of this symphony with your relentless pursuit of dreams.

Third, be open-minded. You need to cultivate a global vision and draw on others' strengths through exchange and mutual learning. You need to see the world with your own eyes and tell the world about China in your own words. In this process, you can be good narrators of China's stories and envoys of Chinese culture.

I hope more young friends will join the diplomatic service, and live youth to the fullest in the times of great opportunities.

Qin Gang: Tomorrow will be the International Women's Day. I wish to send festive greetings to all female NPC deputies, CPPCC National Committee members, journalists and friends. Wish you a happy Women's Day and all the best! The press conference lasted 110 minutes. ■

Enhancing Multilateralism and Promoting Global Development: Qin Gang



In his speech at the G20 meeting of foreign ministers in New Delhi on March 2, 2023, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang exhorted all countries to “practice true multilateralism,” and underlined the need to make global development more inclusive, resilient and beneficial for all.

Qin Gang, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, delivered remarks at the G20 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting Session I in New Delhi on March 2, 2023.

The following is the text of remarks:

Minister Jaishankar,

Dear Colleagues,

Let me thank the government of India and Minister Jaishankar for the thoughtful

arrangements. At the outset, I wish to express, on behalf of the Chinese government, deep mourning over the lost lives in the earthquake in Türkiye and Syria, and sincere sympathies to the bereaved families and the injured.

Colleagues,

The G20 is the premier forum for international economic cooperation. Faced with a volatile international situation and

rising global challenges, the G20 must rise to the occasion, enhance cooperation, and contribute its share to global development and prosperity.

We need to practice true multilateralism, uphold the UN-centered international system and the international order based on international law, and observe the basic norms of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

We need to follow the principles of dialogue on an equal footing and consensus-building through consultation. Global affairs should be handled by all through discussion. No one should engage in power politics or even bloc confrontation.

We need to promote the sound development of globalization, reject unilateralism, protectionism and attempts to decouple or sever supply chains, and ensure the stable and smooth operation of global industrial and supply chains.

We need to make global development more inclusive, resilient and beneficial for all. The Global Development Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping has offered a new option for stepping up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Colleagues,

The outcomes of the Bali Summit must be delivered. We should build on our good work in Bali, and press ahead for greater progress.

First, macro economic policy coordination needs to be enhanced and food and energy security safeguarded.

China has put forth relevant initiatives under the G20. China has suspended more debt service payment than any other G20 member, and participated in the debt treatment under the Common Framework.

We hope that multilateral financial institutions and commercial creditors will be actively involved in the debt treatment of developing countries.

Second, global economic governance needs to be improved. It is important to complete the 16th General Quota Review of the International Monetary Fund as scheduled, and conduct the

shareholding review of the World Bank. China supports the African Union in joining the G20, and looks forward to an early decision by the G20.

Third, international development cooperation needs to be bolstered. We need to support the SDG Summit of the United Nations, tackle climate challenge, and act on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The consensus of the Bali Summit on preventing illegal cross-border traffic of waste must be earnestly implemented.

Global development and prosperity cannot be achieved without a peaceful and stable international environment.

With this in mind, China has put forward the Global Security Initiative, and issued the position paper on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. China will always stand on the side of peace, actively promote peace talks, and play a constructive role.

We need to make global development more inclusive, resilient and beneficial for all. The Global Development Initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping has offered a new option for stepping up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Colleagues,

Last October, the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China made the decision to pursue a Chinese path to modernization.

The Chinese modernization is rooted in China's realities and in keeping with the global trend. This modernization features peaceful development and harmony between man and nature, and will present new opportunities to the cooperation between China and other countries. China will continue to take an active part in the G20 agenda, and contribute more to promoting world peace and development and building a community with a shared future for mankind. ■

China, India Promise to Improve Bilateral Relations

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang and India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held their first bilateral meeting in New Delhi on March 3, 2023 to discuss future cooperation in various fields, people-to-people exchanges, and normalized management of the border situation.



Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang met with Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar here on Thursday, with both sides vowing to improve bilateral ties.

The duo held the meeting on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G20) Foreign Ministers' Meeting held from Wednesday to Thursday.

Qin said during the meeting that as neighboring countries and major emerging economies, China and India have far more common interests than differences.

The development and revitalization of China and India display the strength of developing countries, which will change the future of one-third of the world's population, the future of Asia and even the whole world, Qin noted.

The two sides, said Qin, should view their bilateral relations in the context of the once-in-a-century changes in the world, understand bilateral cooperation from the perspective of their respective national rejuvenation, and be partners on the path to modernization.

He said the two sides should implement the important consensus of the leaders of the two countries, maintain dialogue and properly resolve disputes, and promote the improvement of bilateral relations and the steady moving forward of the relations.

The boundary issue should be put in the proper place in bilateral relations, Qin said, adding that the situation on the borders should be brought under normalized management as soon as possible.

China is willing to speed up the resumption of exchanges and cooperation with India in various fields, resume direct flights at the earliest date and facilitate people-to-people exchanges, said the Chinese foreign minister.

He said China and India have shared interests in many areas including safeguarding the rights and interests of developing countries, promoting South-South cooperation, and addressing global challenges such as climate change.

China supports the Indian side in fulfilling its presidency of the G20 and is ready to strengthen communication and cooperation to safeguard the common interests of developing countries and international equity and justice, so as to inject stability and positive energy into the world, Qin said.

Jaishankar said for his part that India and China are both great ancient civilizations and important partners of each other. Thus the two countries have and can continue to achieve positive results in areas such as economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

The boundary issue should be put in the proper place in bilateral relations, Qin said, adding that the situation on the borders should be brought under normalized management as soon as possible. China is willing to speed up the resumption of exchanges and cooperation with India in various fields, resume direct flights at the earliest date and facilitate people-to-people exchanges, said the Chinese foreign minister.

The Indian side, Jaishankar said, agrees that bilateral relations should be understood and improved from a historical perspective and strategic height, and more cooperation platforms should be established to promote India-China relations along the right track.

Jaishankar said the current situation on the borders is gradually stabilizing, and both sides should work together to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas.

He expressed gratitude for China's support for India's presidency of the G20, and willingness to maintain communication and coordination in multilateral affairs. ■

China, India Hold 26th Meeting of Working Mechanism on Border Affairs



On February 22nd, 2023, H.E. Mr. Hong Liang, Director-General of the Department of Boundary and Ocean Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs China and Dr. Shilpak Ambule, Joint Secretary of the East Asia Division and External Affairs Minister's Office of the Ministry of External Affairs of India co-chaired the 26th Meeting of the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC) on China-India Border Affairs in Beijing. Representatives of government agencies for foreign affairs, national defense and immigration affairs of the two countries attended the meeting.

The two sides agreed to work in the same direction on the basis of previous consensus, speed up to deal with the relevant issues on the western section of the China-India boundary, so as to reach a mutually acceptable solution at an early date.

The two sides reviewed the positive progress of the previous management and control along the China-India border areas, affirmed the achievements made in the disengagement of border troops of the two countries at four locations, including the Galwan Valley, and exchanged in-depth views on the next-phase consultation. The two sides reached consensus as follows:

First, the two sides agreed to actively implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, and promote the further stabilization of the border situation.

Second, the two sides agreed to consolidate the outcomes of negotiation, strictly observe the agreements and protocols signed and relevant consensus reached by the two sides, avoid recurrence of the situation on the ground, and work jointly to safeguard peace and tranquility in the border areas.

Third, the two sides agreed to work in the same direction on the basis of previous consensus, speed up to deal with the relevant issues on the western section of the China-India boundary, so as to reach a mutually acceptable solution at an early date. The two sides discussed other measures to further ease the border situation, and agreed to make efforts in promoting border situation to the phase of normalized management and control.

Fourth, the two sides agreed to maintain close communication through diplomatic and military channels, and hold the 18th round of Corps Commanders Level Meeting at an early date. ■

CDA a.i. of the Chinese Embassy in India Briefs Media

On March 22, 2023, Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of the Chinese Embassy in India Ms. Ma Jia held a media briefing on Two Sessions and China’s economic and social development, Chinese path to modernization, Global Civilization Initiative, Chinese Diplomacy and China-India Relations, etc. Journalists from *Hindustan Times*, *The Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *The Indian Express*, *Mint*, *The Economic Times*, *The Press Trust of India (PTI)*, *Asian News International (ANI)*, *India Writes* as well as *Xinhua News Agency* and *China Media Group (CMG)* attended the briefing. Full transcript of Ms. Ma Jia’s remarks is as follows:



Friends from media,
Good afternoon! Very pleased to welcome all of you to the briefing. From last year’s 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) to this year’s Two Sessions, the Indian media have followed and paid close attention to the initiatives of China’s new leadership, and China’s economic and social

development, as well as its foreign relations. Today I would like to brief you through 4 topics.

Two Sessions and China’s Economic and Social Development

Two Sessions are major political events in China which provide an important window to learn about China.

2023 marks the first year of implementing the guiding principles of the 20th National Congress of the CPC. It is of great significance for the Two Sessions to draw a new blueprint and start a new journey.

From 4th-13th March, the first meetings of the 14th National People’s Congress (NPC) and the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) were held in Beijing. The NPC meetings elected and decided to appoint new members of the government, reviewed and

approved the “Legislative Law of the People’s Republic of China (Draft Amendment)” and the State Council’s Institutional Reform Plan. The “Government Work Report” has been approved, which elaborated on China’s economic and social development in year 2022 as well as expected goals for the year 2023.

In 2022, China’s GDP grows 3% to almost \$18 trillion, holding steady as the world’s second largest economy. A total of 12 million urban jobs were added, with the year-end surveyed urban unemployment rate falling to 5.5%. The consumer price index (CPI) rose by 2%. China’s total volume of trade in goods exceeded \$5.8 trillion, registering an annual growth rate of 8.6%. It has thus been the top global trader for many years running. China is now both a major destination for foreign investment and a leading global outbound investor. The deficit-to-GDP ratio was kept at 2.8%. Fruitful gains were made in scientific and technological innovation. As spending on R&D (Research and Development) increased from 2.1% to over 2.5% of GDP. China’s global ranking of the National Innovation Index has risen from 22nd in 2017 to 11th in 2022. We have made significant strides in building a Beautiful China. Energy consumption per unit of GDP drops and carbon dioxide emissions fall continuously, and forest coverage exceeds 24%.

In 2023, the expected goal is to achieve a GDP growth of about 5%. About 12 million new urban jobs will be created, and the surveyed urban unemployment rate will be about 5.5%; CPI about 3%; residents’ income growth will be basically in sync with economic growth; import and export will be stable and quality will be improved, and international balance of payments will be basically balanced; food production remains above 650 million tons; energy consumption per unit of GDP and emissions of major pollutants continue to decline, and the quality of the ecological environment will improve steadily.

With China’s large economic volume and high base, coupled with challenges such as

instability, uncertainty and unpredictable factors in the world economic situation, it will not be easy to achieve these expected targets. We will make full use of the advantages, such as super-sized market, a well-functioning industrial system, rich supply of human resources and a strong development foundation, and will keep to the general principles of prioritizing stability and seeking progress while maintaining stability, pushing for a turnaround in overall economic performance and making new progress in high-quality development. In practice, in the first three months of the year, China’s economy has stabilized and rebounded, and some international organizations have raised their expectations for China’s economic growth this year. We are full of confidence in China’s economic prospects.

Chinese Path to Modernization

Chinese path to modernization was first proposed at the 20th National Congress of the CPC. From the 20th National Congress to the Two Sessions, the goals and tasks of comprehensively promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through Chinese path to modernization have become clearer, and the implementation path has become more definite.

The Chinese path to modernization shares common characteristics with other modernized countries, more importantly, it bears unique features specific to our own national context. It can be briefly summarized in five features: it is the modernization of a huge population. It is the modernization of common prosperity for all. It is the modernization of coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement. It is the modernization of harmony between humanity and nature, and it is the modernization of peaceful development.

Achieving modernization for a country of more than 1.4 billion people will be an unprecedented feat in human history, one of profound global significance in itself. China has completed in a few decades the industrialization

process that western developed countries have taken hundreds of years to complete. The total economic volume has jumped to the second place in the world, the scale of manufacturing industry, foreign exchange reserves, and the total trade in goods ranks the first in the world. Economic growth has remained at 6.6% for 10 consecutive years, contributing to an average of over 30% of world economic growth. China's 770 million rural poor people have been lifted out of poverty and achieved the poverty reduction target of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 10 years ahead of schedule. Chinese modernization creates a new form of human advancement, and demonstrated 5 traits:

Independence. Every country has the right and ability to choose its own path, and to hold its future firmly in its own hands. Putting people first. People around the world should all enjoy the rights to seek development as equals and pursue happiness. Peaceful development. Chinese modernization is a new path different from Western modernization. It is not pursued through war, colonization, or plundering. It is dedicated to peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit, and is committed to harmony between humanity and nature. Openness and inclusiveness. It is important to respect the right of every country to pursue a modernization path tailored to its national reality, and encourage exchange and mutual learning. Working hard in unity. Partisan rift, empty talk and frequent policy flip-flop goes nowhere. We have been carrying out the set blueprint until it becomes reality.

The process of Chinese modernization is a boost to the force for peace, justice and progress in the world. We hope and believe that as more and more countries begin their own journey of modernization, the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind will become true.

Global Civilization Initiative

After the Global Development Initiative(GDI) proposed in September 2021 and the Global

Security Initiative(GSI) in April 2022, President Xi Jinping further proposed the Global Civilization Initiative(GCI) on 15th March 2023 when he delivered a keynote speech in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting held in Beijing.

The background of the initiative is that we have to answer the question as: In the long river of history, every civilization has its ups and downs, and civilization integrated and confronted with each other. As we human society develop to this stage, is it still inevitable that differences will lead to confrontation and war? Now the modernization process has once again reached a crossroads of history. Polarization or common prosperity? Pure materialistic pursuit or coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement? Draining the pond to catch the fish or creating harmony between man and nature? Zero-sum game or win-win cooperation? Copying other countries' development model or achieving independent development in light of national conditions? What kind of modernization do we need and how can we achieve it?

The GCI proposed: "We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority". "We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy, and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation". "We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures".

"We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, jointly advance the progress of human civilizations". The GCI has received active support and response from leaders of

more than 500 political parties and political organizations from over 150 countries.

From the GDI, the GSI to the GCI, China shows the responsibility to face the common challenges and its willingness to contribute China's solutions to advancing global modernization and progress of human civilizations.

Chinese Diplomacy and China-India Relations

As to China's foreign policy under the new leadership, China will continue to pursue the independent foreign policy of peace, and will continue to implement the mutually beneficial strategy of opening up. China will always be a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, a defender of the international order, and a promoter of progress of human civilizations.

As two neighboring ancient civilizations and the two largest developing countries and representatives of emerging economies with a combined population of 2.8 billion, both China and India are committed to national development and rejuvenation, stick to the general direction of multilateralism and firmly defend the rights and interests of developing countries. China and India share the same or similar positions on many regional and international issues, and have extensive common interests in South-South cooperation, development and poverty reduction, climate change, energy security, etc. President Xi Jinping has put forward promoting the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. India advocates "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakum" (the world being one family) as well. We could draw strength from our ancient civilizations, and share oriental wisdom with the world, so as to jointly maintain stability of the international and regional order. In a world intertwined with changes and chaos, China and India could speak out loud for more institutional rights of developing countries. China and India working together will bear on the future of Asia and beyond. Both sides should

follow the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries that "China and India are not threats to each other, but an opportunity for each other's development", and "be cooperation partners to each other instead of being competitive rivals". The Chinese side has always viewed and handled China-India relations from a strategic and long-term perspective. Although the relationship faces some difficulties, China's position has never wavered and we have been committed to pushing it back on the track of healthy and steady development.

Since last year, China-India relations have caught positive momentum. President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi commonly attended 3 Summit meetings and exchanged greetings on the sidelines of the G20 Bali Summit. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar 3 times in Year 2022. Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Qin Gang, during his visit to India to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a bilateral meeting with Minister S. Jaishankar and had an in-depth exchange of views on bilateral relations and multilateral cooperation. The current border situation is overall stable. The two sides continue to maintain communication via diplomatic and military channels, promoting the transition of the border situation to normalized management and control at an earliest date. China and India's bilateral trade continues to grow. People-to-people exchanges begin to resume.

China supports India in fulfilling its responsibilities as the presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the G20, willing to strengthen communication and cooperation, safeguard the common interests of developing countries and international fairness and justice. We believe that China and India could find a way for neighboring major countries to live in peace and develop together, so as to realize the "Asian Century". ■

China, India and the Promise of the Power of Two

By Ms. Ma Jia, Chargé d'Affaires a.i.
of the Chinese Embassy in India



Chinese President Xi Jinping and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mahabalipuram.

The year 2023 marks a high point in India's diplomacy, with its presidency of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the G-20. The focus is also on China which held "two sessions" recently: the annual sessions of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Here are some insights into China's development. China is advancing the modernisation on all fronts. Here, the path to modernisation is based on

China's practices with a focus on high-quality development. It means the modernisation of a huge population, where there is common prosperity for all, material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between humanity and nature, and peaceful development. This will spell new opportunities to all countries in the world, especially neighbouring countries.

As two neighbouring and ancient civilisations, with a combined population of 2.8 billion, China and India are representatives of developing countries and emerging

economies. India and China are both in the process of national rejuvenation and a crucial period of modernisation where challenges need to be overcome and problems need to be solved. China and India have far more common interests than differences.

China's Focus Areas

The development of China in recent years can be summarised in four points.

The first is “steady growth”. In 2022, China's economy grew by 3% with a total of 12.06 million urban jobs added. China's GDP increased to 121 trillion yuan (approximately \$18 trillion), registering an annual growth rate of 5.2% over the past five years and an annual growth of 6.2% over the past decade with GDP increasing by nearly 70 trillion yuan. China's economic strength is steadily reaching new heights.

The second is “people's well-being”. As a result of continued efforts of the past eight years, China has historically resolved absolute poverty, with the alleviation of close to 100 million rural residents from poverty.

Over 70% of the government's expenditure went toward ensuring people's well-being. Basic old age insurance covers 1.05 billion people, an increase of 140 million. Living standards continue to witness new improvements.

The third is “opening up”. In 2022, China's total volume of trade in goods exceeded 40 trillion yuan, registering an annual growth rate of 8.6%. China's actual use of foreign capital was up by 8% and the country remained one of the top destinations for foreign investors. The overall tariff level continues to fall, from 9.8% to 7.4%. China's doors to the outside world are opening even wider.

The fourth is “win-win cooperation”. In the period 2013-2021, China's contribution to global economic growth averaged 38.6%, higher than that of G7 countries combined (25.7%). Ever since the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, proposed the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in a speech at the United

Nations General Assembly in 2021, more than 100 countries have expressed their support and over 60 countries have joined the Group of Friends of the GDI.

On Trade

China and India are important trading partners, with bilateral trade volume reaching \$135.984 billion in 2022. Though there is a trade deficit, India's import of equipment and materials from China does reduce the overall cost of “Made-in-India” products, benefits Indian downstream industries and consumers, enhances the competitiveness of Indian exports, and in turn facilitates India's integration into global industrial and supply chains.

The Chinese market is open to India, and the Chinese side is happy to see more high-quality Indian goods, cultural and other products entering the Chinese market. Investments by Chinese enterprises have created a large number of jobs for the Indian people and contributed to India's economic development. We hope that the Indian side could provide a fair, just and non-discriminatory business environment for Chinese companies with their investment and operations in India.

Facilitating an ‘Asian Century’

In his recent meeting with India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang said that the development and revitalisation of China and India embody a boost to the force of developing countries; it is one that will change the destiny of a third of the world's population and having bearing on the future of Asia and beyond. This echoes what Mr. Jaishankar had expressed in 2022 – that the Asian Century will happen when China and India come together.

China is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with India, be a partner on the path to modernisation, safeguard the respective legitimate rights and the common interests of developing countries, and make contributions to peace and stability in the region and beyond. ■



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