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BUILDING AN OPEN, INCLUSIVE AND INTERCONNECTED WORLD FOR COMMON DEVELOPMENT



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A volunteer for legal education in Shanwan Garden community of Yangzhou in east China's Jiangsu Province explains the Constitution to students, on December 4. Meng Delong



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COVER: President Xi Jinping attends the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and delivers a keynote speech at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on October 18. *Wang Ye*



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Building an open, inclusive and interconnected world for common development

Keynote Speech by H.E. Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
at the Opening Ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation

October 18, 2023



President Xi Jinping attends the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and delivers a keynote speech at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on October 18. *Wang Ye*

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government,
Heads of International Organizations,
Representatives of Various Countries,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Today, we are meeting here for the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (BRF). On behalf of the Chinese government and Chinese people and in my own name, I wish to extend a very warm welcome to you all!

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) I proposed. The BRI, drawing inspiration from the ancient Silk Road and focusing on enhancing connectivity, aims to enhance policy, infrastructure, trade, financial and people-to-people connectivity, inject new impetus into the global economy, create new opportunities for global development and build a new platform for international economic cooperation.

Over these 10 years, we have stayed committed to this founding mission. Thanks to our joint efforts, Belt and Road international cooperation has gotten off the ground, grown rapidly and produced fruitful outcomes.

Belt and Road cooperation has extended from the Eurasian continent to Africa and Latin America. More than 150 countries and over 30 international organizations have signed Belt and Road cooperation documents. We have held two sessions of the BRF before, and have established over 20 specialized multilateral cooperation platforms under the BRI.

Belt and Road cooperation has progressed from “sketching the outline” to “filling in the details,” and blueprints have been turned into real projects. A large number of signature projects and “small yet smart” people-centered programs have been launched.

Belt and Road cooperation has expanded from physical connectivity to institutional connectivity. Important guiding principles for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation have been laid down, which include the principle of “planning together, building together and benefiting together,” the philosophy of open, green and clean cooperation, and the goal of pursuing high-standard, people-centered and sustainable cooperation.

Over these 10 years, we have endeavored to build a global network of connectivity consisting of economic corridors, international transportation routes and information highway as well as railways, roads, airports, ports, pipelines and power grids. Covering the land, the ocean, the sky and the Internet, this network has boosted the flow of goods, capital, technologies and human resources among countries involved and injected fresh vitality into the millennia-old Silk Road in the new era.

Trains speeding along rail tracks, automobiles running on roads, flights connecting different countries, cargo ships breaking waves, and e-commerce bringing so much convenience to people—they have all become symbols of international trade in the new era, just like camel caravans and sailing ships were for the past age.

Hydro-, wind- and solar-energy based power plants, oil and gas pipelines, and the increasingly smart and interconnected power transmission networks are removing the development bottleneck caused by energy shortage and fulfilling

the dream of developing countries to achieve green and low-carbon development. These energy projects have become the oasis and lighthouse for sustainable development in the new era.

Brand new airports and harbors, smooth roads, and newly built industrial parks for business cooperation have created new economic corridors and new growth drivers, and have become the trading routes and staging posts of the new era.

Rich and colorful cultural years, art festivals, expos and exhibitions, Luban Workshops, people-to-people exchange programs like the Silk Road Community Building Initiative and the Brightness Action program, and deepening exchanges between non-governmental organizations, think tanks, media organizations and the youth—all these flourishing activities have composed a symphony of friendship in the new era.

When COVID-19 struck, the Belt and Road became a life-saving road. China provided more than 10 billion masks and 2.3 billion doses of vaccines to other countries and jointly produced vaccines with over 20 countries, making a special contribution to BRI partners’ efforts in fighting COVID-19. And China also received valuable support from more than 70 countries when it was hit hard by the pandemic.

Belt and Road cooperation is based on the principle of “planning together, building together, and benefiting together.”

Belt and Road cooperation has progressed from “sketching the outline” to “filling in the details,” and blueprints have been turned into real projects.

er.” It transcends differences between civilizations, cultures, social systems, and stages of development. It has opened up a new path for exchanges among countries, and established a new framework for international cooperation. Indeed, the BRI represents humanity’s joint pursuit of development for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Friends,

Our achievements in the past decade are truly remarkable, and there is so much we can draw from them.

We have learned that humanity is a community with a shared future. China can only do well when the world is doing well. When China does well, the world will get even better. Through Belt and Road cooperation, China is opening its door even wider to the world, with its inland regions turning from “fullbacks” into “forwards,” and coastal regions scaling new heights in their opening up. China’s market has become even more closely integrated with the global market. China has become a main trading partner of more than 140 countries and territories and a primary source of investment for more countries. Both Chinese investment overseas and foreign investment in China have boosted friendship, cooperation, confidence and hope.

Belt and Road cooperation is based on the belief that flame runs high when everyone adds wood to the fire and that mutual support can get us far.

We have learned that win-win cooperation is the sure way to success in launching major initiatives that benefit all. When countries embrace cooperation and act in concert, a deep chasm can be turned into a thoroughfare, land-locked countries can become land-linked and a place of underdevelopment can be transformed into a land of prosperity. Countries taking the lead in economic development should give a hand to their partners who are yet to catch up. We should all treat each other as friends and partners, respect and support each other, and help each other succeed. As the saying goes, when you give roses to others, their fragrance lingers on your hand. In other words, helping others is also helping oneself. Viewing others' development as a threat or taking economic interdependence as a risk will not make one's own life better or speed up one's development.

We have learned that the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit is the most important source of strength for Belt and Road cooperation. I once said that the pioneers of the ancient silk routes won their place in history not as conquerors with warships, guns, horses or swords. Rather, they are remembered as friendly emissaries leading camel caravans and sailing ships loaded with goods. Belt and Road cooperation is based on the belief that flame runs high when everyone adds wood to the fire and that mutual support can get us far. Such cooperation seeks to deliver a good life not only to people of just one country, but to people in other countries as well. It promotes connectivity, mutual benefit, common development, cooperation and win-win outcomes. Ideological confrontation, geopolitical rivalry and bloc politics are not a choice for us. What we stand against are unilateral sanctions, economic coercion and decoupling, and supply chain disruption.

What has been achieved in the past 10 years demonstrates that Belt and Road cooperation is on the right side of history. It represents the advancing of our times, and it is the right path forward. We need to remain clear-eyed and undisturbed in a volatile world, and we need to be keenly aware of our responsibility for history, for the people and for the world. We should jointly address various global risks and challenges, and deliver a bright future of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

Changes of the world, our times and historical significance are unfolding like never before. China is endeavoring to build itself into a stronger country and rejuvenate the Chinese nation on all fronts by pursuing Chinese modernization. The modernization we are pursuing is not for China alone, but for all developing countries through our joint efforts. Global



modernization should be pursued to enhance peaceful development and mutually beneficial cooperation, and bring prosperity to all. On our way forward, we will encounter both headwinds and tailwinds. We need to stay focused on our goal, take results-oriented actions, persevere and keep moving forward until our goal is met. China will work with all parties involved to deepen Belt and Road partnerships of cooperation, usher this cooperation into a new stage of high-quality development and make relentless efforts to achieve modernization for all countries.

Now, I wish to announce eight major steps China will take to support our joint pursuit of high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

First, building a multidimensional Belt and Road connec-



President Xi Jinping poses for a group photo with distinguished guests attending the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on October 18. Xi attended the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and delivered a keynote speech on October 18. *Shen Hong*

tivity network. China will speed up high-quality development of the China-Europe Railway Express, participate in the trans-Caspian international transportation corridor, host the China-Europe Railway Express Cooperation Forum, and make joint efforts to build a new logistics corridor across the Eurasian continent linked by direct railway and road transportation. We will vigorously integrate ports, shipping and trading services under the “Maritime Silk Road,” and accelerate the building of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and the Air Silk Road.

Second, supporting an open world economy. China will establish pilot zones for Silk Road e-commerce cooperation, enter into free trade agreements and investment protection treaties with more countries. We will remove all restrictions

on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector. In light of international high-standard economic and trade rules, we will further advance high-standard opening up in cross-border service trade and investment, expand market access for digital and other products, and deepen reform in areas including state-owned enterprises, the digital economy, intellectual property and government procurement. China will hold the Global Digital Trade Expo annually. In the next five years (2024-2028), China’s total trade in goods and services is expected to exceed USD 32 trillion and USD 5 trillion, respectively.

Third, carrying out practical cooperation. China will promote both signature projects and “small yet smart” livelihood programs. The China Development Bank and the Export-Im-

port Bank of China will each set up an RMB 350 billion financing window. An additional RMB 80 billion will be injected into the Silk Road Fund. Together, they will support BRI projects on the basis of market and business operation. Cooperation agreements worth USD 97.2 billion have been concluded at the CEO Conference held during this forum. China will carry out 1,000 small-scale livelihood assistance projects and enhance vocational education cooperation through Luban Workshops and other initiatives. We will also step up joint efforts to ensure the safety of BRI projects and personnel.

Fourth, promoting green development. China will continue to deepen cooperation in areas such as green infrastructure, green energy and green transportation, and step up support for the BRI International Green Development Coalition. China will continue to hold the BRI Green Innovation Conference and establish dialogue and exchange mechanisms for the solar industry and a network of experts on green and low-carbon development. China will implement the Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road and provide 100,000 training opportunities for partner countries by 2030.

Fifth, advancing scientific and technological innovation. China will continue to implement the Belt and Road Science, Technology and Innovation Cooperation Action Plan, hold the first Belt and Road Conference on Science and Technology Exchange, increase the number of joint laboratories built with other parties to 100 in the next five years and support young scientists from other countries to work on short-term programs in China. At this Forum, China will put forward the Global Artificial Intelligence (AI) Governance Initiative. We stand ready to increase exchanges and dialogue with other countries and jointly promote the sound, orderly and secure development of AI in the world.

Sixth, supporting people-to-people exchanges. China will host the Liangzhu Forum to enhance dialogue on civilizations with BRI partner countries. In addition to the Silk Road International League of Theaters, the Silk Road International Arts Festival, the International Alliance of Museums of the

Silk Road, the Silk Road International Alliance of Art Museums and the Silk Road International Library Alliance that have been set up, China has also launched the International Tourism Alliance of Silk Road Cities. And we will continue with the Chinese government scholarship Silk Road Program.

Seventh, promoting integrity-based Belt and Road cooperation. Together with its cooperation partners, China will release the Achievements and Prospects of Belt and Road Integrity Building and the High-Level Principles on Belt and Road Integrity Building, and establish the Integrity and Compliance Evaluation System for Companies Involved in Belt and Road Cooperation. We will also work with international organizations to carry out research and training on promoting integrity in Belt and Road cooperation.

Eighth, strengthening institutional building for international Belt and Road cooperation. China will work with BRI partner countries to strengthen the building of multilateral cooperation platforms covering energy, taxation, finance, green development, disaster reduction, anti-corruption, think tank, media, culture and other fields. China will continue to host the BRF and establish a secretariat for the forum.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

The past decade has been a journey of dedicated cooperation and fruitful outcomes. Belt and Road cooperation was proposed by China, but its benefits and opportunities are for the world to share. Let us meet the expectations of the people, assume responsibilities entrusted to us by history, closely follow the trend of the times and press ahead with energy and enterprise. Let us deepen Belt and Road international cooperation, and bring Belt and Road cooperation to a new stage of higher-quality and higher-level development. Let us advance modernization of all countries, build an open, inclusive and interconnected world for common development, and jointly build a community with a shared future for humanity.

I wish the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation a full success!

Thank you. (Xinhua) ■



President Xi Jinping attends the opening ceremony of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation and delivers a keynote speech at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on October 18. Yue Yuewei



President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden take a walk after their talks at Filoli Estate in the U.S. state of California, on November 15. *Li Xueren*

Xi, Biden talk on strategic issues critical to China-U.S. relations, world

Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden had a candid and in-depth exchange of views on strategic and overarching issues critical to the direction of China-U.S. relations and on major issues affecting world peace and development on November 15, 2023.

The meeting was held at Filoli Estate approximately 40 km south of San Francisco, California. Biden received Xi warmly when he arrived at the country house.

Noting that the world today is undergoing profound changes unseen in a century, Xi said there are two options for China and the United States—one is to enhance solidarity and cooperation, join hands to meet global challenges, and pro-

mote global security and prosperity; and the other is to cling to the zero-sum mentality, provoke rivalry and confrontation, and drive the world toward turmoil and division.

The two choices point to two different directions that will decide the future of humanity and planet Earth, he said, adding that the China-U.S. relationship, which is the world's most important bilateral relationship, should be perceived and envisioned in this broad context.

For China and the United States, turning their back on each other is not an option, Xi noted, stressing it is unrealistic for one side to remodel the other, and adding that conflict and confrontation has unbearable consequences for both sides.

Major-country competition cannot solve the problems facing China and the United States, or the world, he continued, noting that the world is big enough to accommodate both countries, while one country's success is an opportunity for the other.

Xi elaborated on the essential features of Chinese modernization and its significance, China's development prospects and its strategic intention, pointing out that the country's development is driven by its inherent logic and dynamics.

Noting China is promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through Chinese modernization, Xi stressed that the country will not take the old path of colonization and plunder, or the wrong path of seeking hegemony with growing strength, saying it does not export its ideology nor has a plan to surpass or unseat the United States. Likewise, the United States should not scheme to suppress and contain China, he added.

The Chinese president highlighted that mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation are key lessons from 50 years of China-U.S. relations and historical conflicts between major countries. He emphasized that these principles should guide the two countries' joint efforts moving forward.

In San Francisco, China and the United States should assume a new vision and build together five pillars for China-U.S. relations, he noted, pointing out the two countries should jointly develop a right view.

China is consistently committed to having a stable, healthy and sustainable relationship with the United States, and China has interests that must be safeguarded, principles that must be upheld, and red lines that must not be crossed, Xi said, expressing hope that the two countries could be partners that respect each other and coexist in peace.

China and the United States should manage disagreements effectively, Xi said. Disagreements should not be a chasm that keeps the two countries apart, he stressed, adding that instead, the two sides should look for ways to build bridges to help them walk toward each other.

It is important that they appreciate each other's principles and red lines, and refrain from flip-flopping, being provocative and crossing the lines, said the Chinese president.

The two countries should have more communication, more dialogues and more consultations, and calmly handle their differences and accidents, Xi added.

China and the United States should jointly advance mutually beneficial cooperation, Xi said. The two countries have broad common interests in a wide range of areas, including traditional areas such as the economy, trade and agriculture, as well as emerging areas such as climate change and artificial intelligence, he said.

Under current circumstances, the common interests of the two countries have not decreased, but increased, Xi said.

It is important to fully utilize the restored and new mechanisms in foreign policy, economy, finance, commerce, agriculture and other fields, and carry out cooperation in areas like counternarcotics, judicial and law enforcement issues, AI, and science and technology, he added.

Xi also called on China and the United States to jointly shoulder responsibilities as major countries. The problems facing human society cannot be solved without cooperation between major countries, Xi said.



President Xi Jinping meets with U.S. President Joe Biden at Filoli Estate in the U.S. state of California, on November 15. Rao Aimin

The two sides should keep their initiatives open to each other, or coordinate and connect them for synergy, to benefit the world.

China and the United States should lead by example, step up coordination and cooperation on international and regional issues, and provide more public goods for the world, he said.

The two sides should keep their initiatives open to each other, or coordinate and connect them for synergy, to benefit the world, Xi added.

The Chinese president also urged the two countries to jointly promote people-to-people exchanges. The two sides should increase flights, advance tourism cooperation, expand subnational exchanges, strengthen educational cooperation and cooperation on issues related to people with disabilities, reduce negative factors that hinder people-to-people exchanges, and encourage and support greater interactions and communication between their people, so as to consolidate the foundation for the healthy development of China-U.S. relations, Xi said.



Xi also elaborated on China's principled position on the Taiwan question. He pointed out that the Taiwan question remains the most important and sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations. China takes seriously the positive statements made by the United States during the Bali meeting, he said, adding that the U.S. side should take real actions to honor its commitment of not supporting "Taiwan independence," stop arming Taiwan and support China's peaceful reunification. China will realize reunification, which is unstoppable, Xi stressed.

He also pointed out that U.S. actions against China regarding export control, investment screening and unilateral sanctions seriously undermine China's legitimate interests. Noting that its development is driven by innovation, he said that stifling China's technological progress is nothing but a move to contain China's high-quality development and deprive the Chinese people of their right to development.

China's development and growth, driven by its own inherent logic, will not be stopped by external forces, Xi continued, saying that he hoped the U.S. side will take China's concerns seriously and adopt tangible steps to lift its unilateral sanctions, so as to provide an equal, fair and nondiscriminatory environment for Chinese businesses.

Noting that the U.S.-China relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world, Biden said that a U.S.-China conflict is not inevitable, adding that a stable and developing China serves the interests of the United States

and the world, while China's economic growth is beneficial to both the United States and the world.

Reaffirming the five commitments he made at the Bali summit, Biden said that the United States does not seek a new Cold War, does not seek to change China's system, does not seek to revitalize alliances against China, does not support "Taiwan independence" and has no intention to have a conflict with China.

The United States and China are economically interdependent, he said, adding that the United States is glad to see China's development and prosperity, and has no intention to halt China's economic development or contain China, nor to seek "decoupling" from China. The United States adheres to the one-China policy, he noted.

The two presidents acknowledged the efforts of their respective teams to discuss the development of principles related to China-U.S. relations since their meeting in Bali.

They stressed the importance of all countries treating each other with respect, finding a way to live alongside each other peacefully, maintaining open lines of communication, preventing conflict, upholding the UN Charter, cooperating in areas of shared interest and responsibly managing competitive aspects of the relationship. The leaders welcomed continued discussions in this regard.

The two presidents agreed to promote and strengthen bilateral dialogue and cooperation in such areas as China-U.S. government talks on AI and the establishment of a working group on counternarcotics cooperation. They agreed to resume, on the basis of equality and respect, high-level communication between the two militaries, the China-U.S. Defense Policy Coordination Talks and the China-U.S. Military Maritime Consultative Agreement meetings, and to conduct telephone conversations between theater commanders.

They also agreed to work toward a significant further increase in scheduled passenger flights early next year, and expand various bilateral exchanges in education, overseas students, youth, culture, sports and business communities.

The two leaders underscored the importance of working together to accelerate efforts to tackle the climate crisis in this critical decade. They welcomed recent positive discussions between their respective special envoys for climate, including on national actions to reduce emissions in the 2020s, common approaches toward a successful COP28 and operationalization of the Working Group on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s to accelerate concrete climate actions.

After the talks, Biden hosted a luncheon for Xi. The two heads of state exchanged views on international and regional issues of common concern, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Biden also invited Xi to take a walk around the Filoli Estate and escorted Xi to his car to bid farewell.

The meeting was positive, comprehensive and constructive, and has charted the course for improving and developing China-U.S. relations. San Francisco should be a new starting point for stabilizing China-U.S. relations.

The two leaders instructed their teams to build on the understandings reached in Bali, and follow up in a timely manner and implement the new vision agreed upon in San Francisco. They also agreed to maintain regular contact.

Senior Chinese officials Cai Qi and Wang Yi attended the above events. (Xinhua) ■



President Xi Jinping delivers a speech titled “Staying True to APEC Founding Mission and Enhancing Unity and Cooperation to Jointly Promote High-Quality Growth in the Asia-Pacific” at the 30th Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders’ Meeting in San Francisco, the United States, on November 17. *Li Xueren*

Staying true to APEC founding mission and enhancing unity and cooperation to jointly promote high-quality growth in the Asia-Pacific

Remarks by H.E. Xi Jinping
President of the People’s Republic of China
At the 30th APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting
San Francisco, November 17, 2023

The Honorable President Joe Biden,
Colleagues,

It is my great pleasure to meet you all in beautiful San Francisco. This APEC economic leaders' meeting, the 30th of its kind, holds special significance. I wish to thank President Biden and the U.S. government for the thoughtful arrangements for this meeting.

Since the establishment of the economic leaders' regular meeting mechanism, APEC has always stood at the global forefront of openness and development. It has played a robust role in promoting Asia-Pacific trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, economic growth and technological progress, and the flow of goods and people. It has helped create the "Asia-Pacific miracle" that has staggered the world.

In the world today, changes on a scale unseen in a century are unfolding at an accelerated pace. The world economy faces multiple risks and challenges. The Asia-Pacific region, which is an engine of global growth, thus has greater responsibility in these times. We, the leaders of Asia-Pacific economies, must think very hard as to what kind of Asia-Pacific region we should have by the middle of this century, what we should do to usher in another "golden 30 years" for the region and how we can bring out the best of APEC in this process.

An ancient Chinese sage said, "For a righteous cause, I shall press forward, undaunted by thousands standing in my way." In the same spirit, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to APEC's founding mission. We must respond to the calls of our times responsibly and meet global challenges together. We must fully deliver on the Putrajaya Vision of building an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community for the prosperity of all our people and future generations. To this end, I wish to propose the following.

First, staying committed to innovation-driven development. Innovation is a strong driver of development. We should follow the trends of scientific and technological advancement, proactively promote more exchanges and cooperation in science and technology, and work together for an open, fair, equitable and non-discriminatory environment for scientific and technological progress. We should accelerate digital transformation, narrow the digital divide, redouble our efforts to implement the APEC Internet and Digital Economy Roadmap, support the application of big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, quantum computing and other new technologies, and create new momentum and new drivers of growth in the Asia-Pacific region.

China remains committed to its strategy for driving growth and development through innovation. China is advancing both its digital industry and the digital transformation of traditional industries. China has put forward a number of initiatives for promoting growth and development in the region through digital empowerment, such as digital technology-driven rural development, corporate digital identity and transition to a green and low-carbon economy through the application of digital technologies.

Second, staying committed to openness in development. As manifested by the Asia-Pacific experience, an economy thrives in openness and withers in seclusion. We must promote free and open trade and investment, support and

strengthen the WTO-centered multilateral trading regime and keep global industrial and supply chains open and stable. We must say no to any attempt to politicize, weaponize or impose security implications on economic and trade issues. We must remain unwavering to promote regional economic integration, accelerate the building of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, fully implement the APEC Connectivity Blueprint and share in the opportunities of open regional development.

The recent third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation that China hosted was a success, injecting fresh impetus into global connectivity and the building of an open world economy. China applies the highest standards in implementing the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement and has taken proactive steps to align its economic and trade rules with the high standards of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economic Partnership Agreement (DEPA) to accelerate the process of its accession to the CPTPP and DEPA. China will work with all relevant parties to write a new chapter in open development.

We must remain steadfast in our commitment to APEC's founding mission. We must respond to the calls of our times responsibly and meet global challenges together.

Third, staying committed to green development. Given the increasingly grave challenges, such as climate change and natural disasters, we must continue to promote harmony between man and nature, accelerate the transition to green and low-carbon development, and see to it that reducing carbon emissions and mitigating pollution operate in parallel with expanding green transition and promoting economic growth. We must deliver on the Bangkok Goals on Bio-Circular-Green (BCG) Economy, making "green" a defining feature of Asia-Pacific growth.

China remains as determined as ever to pursue green development that prioritizes eco-environmental conservation and protection. China is making active, yet prudent, moves toward its goal of carbon peak and carbon neutrality, and is accelerating its transition to green development. China has put forward initiatives for cooperation between APEC member economies in green agriculture, sustainable city development, green and low-carbon energy transition, and marine pollution control and prevention. All these initiatives aim to build a clean and beautiful Asia-Pacific region.

Fourth, staying committed to inclusive development that delivers benefits to all. Global development now faces severe challenges and the development divide is getting wider. I have said on many occasions that true development is development for all. We must fully implement the UN 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development and put development back on the international agenda as a central priority. We need to develop greater synergy in our development strategies and work together to resolve the global development deficit. China welcomes participation by all parties in the Global Development Initiative to deepen cooperation in poverty reduction, food security, industrialization and development financing, and build a global community of development so that the fruits of modernization are shared by people across the world. China will continue to support APEC in its economic and technical cooperation, and work together with other member economies to make the “cake” of Asia-Pacific development bigger.

Colleagues,

China is advancing the noble cause of building a great country and national rejuvenation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernization. China will remain committed to the path of peaceful development. The ultimate goal of China's development is to better our people's lives, not to unseat anyone. As we celebrate 45 years of our reform and opening up this year, we will continue to pursue high-quality development and high-standard opening up. Chinese modernization will bring the world more and greater opportunities for the modernization of all countries. I am ready to work with you for new success in Asia-Pacific cooperation and for another “golden 30 years” of the region.

Thank you. (Xinhua) ■



This photo taken on October 29 shows the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California, the United States. The 30th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting was held in San Francisco on November 17. *Li Jianguo*



Chinese President Xi Jinping called on China and the European Union (EU) to be partners for mutually beneficial cooperation, strengthen two-way political trust, build strategic consensus, cement the bonds of shared interest, steer clear of various kinds of interference, and step up dialogue and cooperation for the good of our people.

Xi made the remarks on December 7, 2023, after meeting with President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who were in China for the 24th China-EU Summit at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse.

While welcoming Michel and von der Leyen to China, Xi noted that since the end of 2022, the two presidents have each made a visit to China, while the China-EU high-level dialogues in the strategic, economic and trade, green and dig-



President Xi Jinping meets with President of the European Council Charles Michel and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who are in China for the 24th China-EU Summit, at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, capital of China, on December 7. *Huang Jingwen*

ital fields have produced rich outcomes.

Noting that the China-EU relationship enjoys good momentum toward consolidation and growth, Xi said this serves the interests of both sides and meets the expectations of both peoples. The two sides should work together to sustain the momentum of growth in China-EU relations, he added.

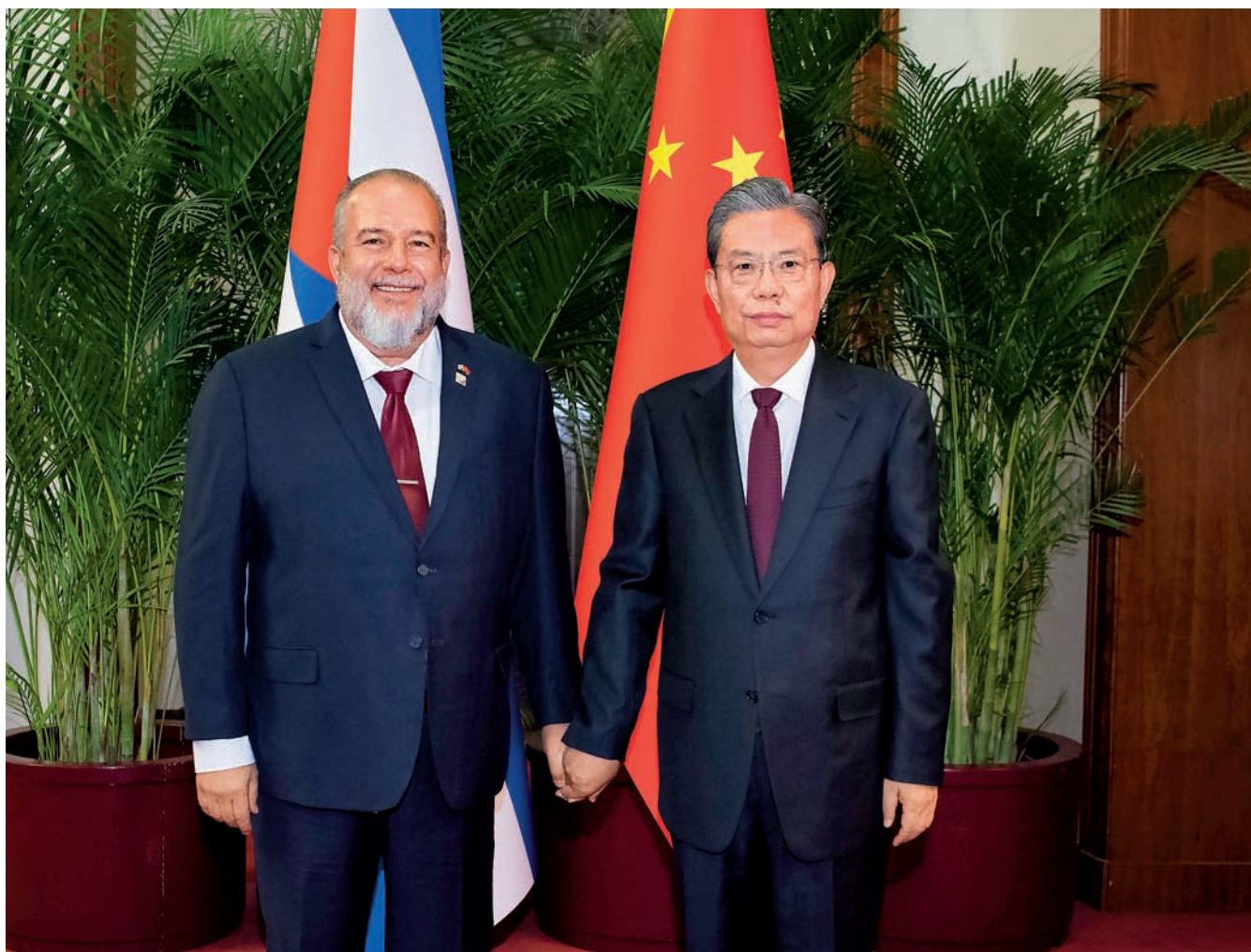
While pointing out that transformations of a scale unseen in a century are unfolding in the world today, Xi said China and Europe are two major forces advancing multipolarity, two major markets in support of globalization and two major civilizations championing diversity.

Xi said the relationship between China and Europe is essential to global peace, stability and prosperity. It is incumbent on both sides to provide greater stability for the world, stronger impetus for development and more inspiration and

support for global governance.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership, said Xi, adding that at this new starting point of China-EU relations, both sides need to take stock of history, navigate the trend of the world, act with wisdom and a sense of responsibility, and uphold the comprehensive strategic partnership.

“China and the EU should be partners for mutually beneficial cooperation,” Xi said. He called on both sides to continually strengthen two-way political trust, build strategic consensus and cement the bonds of shared interest. The two sides should steer clear of various kinds of interference, step up dialogue and cooperation for the good of the peoples and join hands to tackle global challenges and promote stability and prosperity around the world, he added. (Xinhua) ■



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz in Beijing, capital of China, on November 6. *Li Tao*

Zhao Leji meets Cuban and Australian PMs

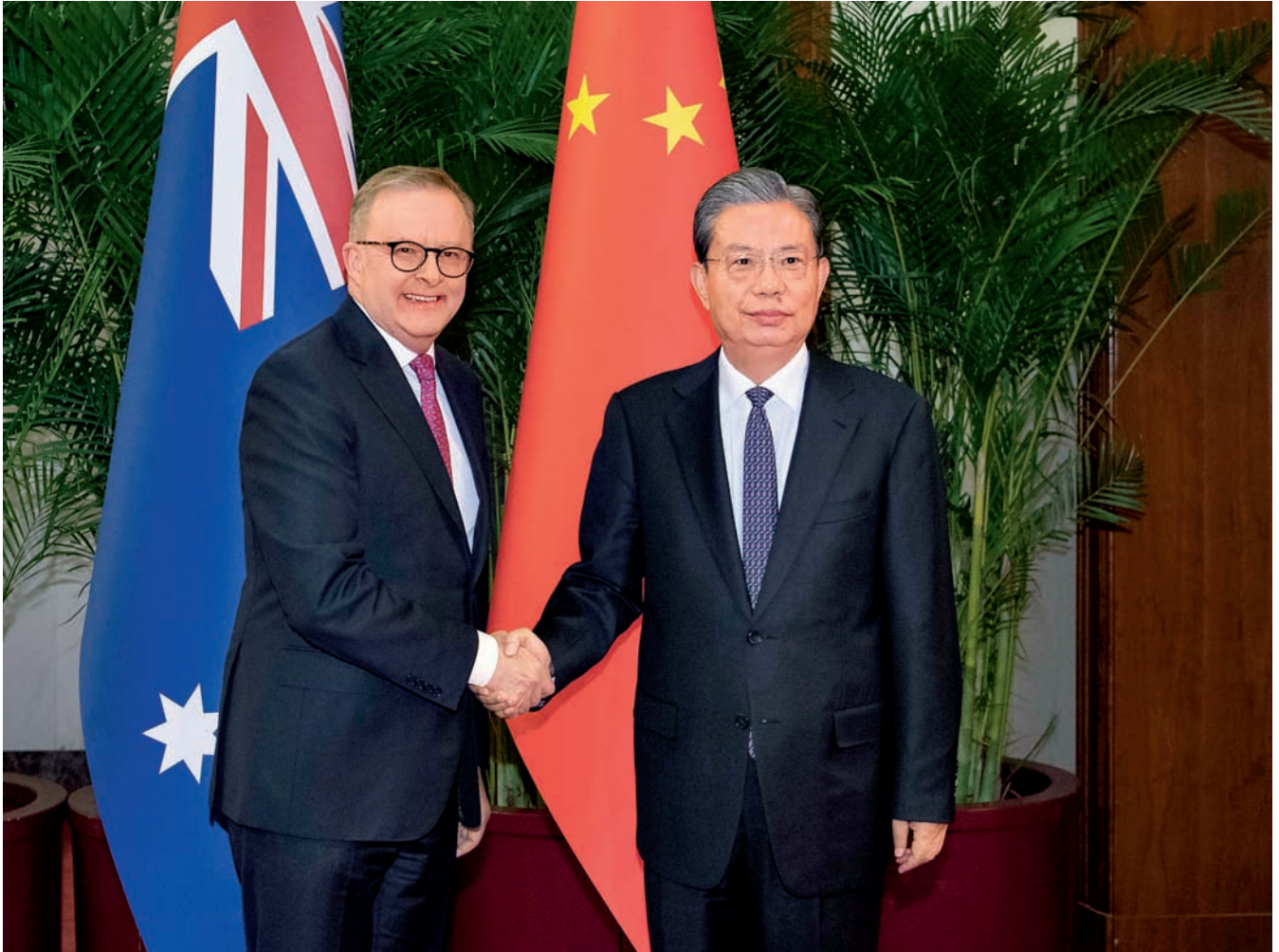
China's top legislator Zhao Leji met with Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Beijing on November 6, 2023.

In the meeting with Marrero, Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said no matter how the international situation changes, China's policy of long-term friendship with Cuba will not change.

China will continue to deepen political mutual trust and

strategic coordination with Cuba, jointly build a high-quality Belt and Road and enhance the exchange of modernization experience, Zhao said.

The NPC of China is willing to work with Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power to strengthen exchanges and cooperation at all levels to provide legal protection for pragmatic cooperation in various fields, tighten the emotional bonds to deepen the friendship between the two peoples and push the relations between the two parties and two countries to a



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Beijing, capital of China, on November 6. *Li Tao*

The NPC is willing to strengthen high-level exchanges with the Australian Parliament, exchange experience on legislation and supervision.

higher level, Zhao said.

Marrero said Cuba attaches great importance to the exchanges and cooperation between the top legislatures of the two countries, firmly adheres to the one-China principle, and hopes to learn from China's successful experience, strengthen exchanges in governance, firmly support one another and constantly consolidate and deepen the special friendly relations between the two countries.

In the meeting with Albanese, Zhao noted that the sound and steady development of China-Australia relations serves

the fundamental interests of the two peoples and is conducive to peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and the world at large.

Zhao called on the two sides to stick to the original intention of establishing diplomatic ties, focus on mutually beneficial cooperation, consolidate public support and respect each other's core interests and concerns to promote the steady and long-term growth of the China-Australia comprehensive strategic partnership.

The NPC is willing to strengthen high-level exchanges with the Australian Parliament, exchange experience on legislation and supervision, provide legal guarantee for practical cooperation in various fields, provide strong support for anti-corruption and law enforcement cooperation between the two countries, and contribute to friendly exchanges between the two peoples.

Albanese said Australia is willing to adhere to seeking mutual respect, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence with China, strengthen contact, dialogue and people-to-people exchanges, and expand pragmatic cooperation in various fields. (Xinhua) ■



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, holds talks with chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, on November 21. *Pang Xinglei*

Zhao Leji holds talks with chairman of Russian State Duma

China's top legislator Zhao Leji held talks with chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin on November 21, 2023, in Beijing, calling for enhanced exchanges between the legislative bodies of the two countries.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said that under the strategic guidance of the two countries' top leaders, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the

No matter how the international situation changes, China and Russia should work together to consolidate and develop comprehensive strategic coordination.

new era has maintained the correct progressive direction. Mutual political trust has been continuously consolidated, practical cooperation has been carried out vigorously, and people-to-people and subnational exchanges have been continuously deepened, setting an example of a new model of major-country relations.

Zhao said that no matter how the international situation changes, China and Russia should work together to consolidate and develop comprehensive strategic coordination, bring constant benefits to the two peoples, and safeguard international fairness and justice.

The two sides should continue to promote synergy between Belt and Road cooperation and the Eurasian Economic Union, achieve more practical cooperation outcomes and promote cooperation in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and other mechanisms, he said.

Zhao said the China-Russia committee for parliamentary cooperation is a solid and effective platform for enhancing mutual political trust, promoting practical cooperation and carrying forward the friendship between the two peoples.

The NPC of China is willing to work with the Russian

Federation Council to implement the important consensus reached by the two heads of state, strengthen exchanges further and promote the development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era, Zhao said.

“We are willing to make use of exchange mechanisms, special committees, bilateral friendship groups and other platforms to carry out in-depth exchanges and cooperation at various levels and in various fields, and strengthen the exchange of foreign-related legislative experience,” he added.

Volodin said that Russia firmly upholds the one-China principle, and that all parties and groups of the Russian State Duma support the continuous development of friendly relations with China.

The Russian State Duma is willing to make joint efforts with the NPC to give play to the positive role of the Russia-China committee for parliamentary cooperation, provide a legal guarantee for the promotion of practical bilateral cooperation and contribute to the development of Russia-China relations, Volodin said. (Xinhua) ■



A freight train passes through the China-Russia border and enters Manzhouli in Hulunbuir, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. VCG

This photo shows a floral decoration for the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation near the China National Convention Center in Beijing, capital of China, on October 17. *Chen Bin*



Zhao Leji meets Vietnamese president, Kazakh president and Thai PM

China's top legislator Zhao Leji met with Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin in Beijing on October 17, 2023.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, noted in the meeting with Thuong that 2023 marks the 15th anniversary of the China-Vietnam comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, while the two countries are working to build a community with a shared future with strategic significance.

The two sides should promote cooperation in key areas and make more achievements, focusing on promoting the synergy between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Two Corridors and One Economic Circle plan, Zhao added.

The NPC will work with Vietnam's National Assembly to further deepen the China-Vietnam comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership, Zhao assured.

Noting that the Vietnam-China relationship has always been a strategic choice and top priority for Vietnam, Thuong said that Vietnam will actively participate in the joint construction of the BRI, strengthen pragmatic cooperation with China in various fields, consolidate political mutual trust and bring Vietnam-China relations to new heights.

In the meeting with Tokayev, Zhao noted that China and Kazakhstan have made concrete progress in jointly pursuing the BRI since it was proposed a decade ago, which brought tangible benefits to the people of the two countries.

The NPC will work with the Kazakh parliament in implementing the consensus reached by the two heads of the state and further synergizing the BRI with the Kazakhstan's Bright Road initiative to contribute to the further development of the China-Kazakhstan permanent comprehensive strategic partnership, Zhao said.

Acknowledging the notable achievements of the BRI over the past decade, Tokayev said that Kazakhstan gives great importance to the development of the Kazakhstan-China permanent comprehensive strategic partnership, and will work with China to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation and bring the bilateral relations to new heights.

In the meeting with Srettha, Zhao noted that China will deepen political mutual trust with Thailand, continue to staunchly support each other on issues concerning respective core interests, work together to build a China-Thailand community with a shared future and take the China-Thailand comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership to new levels.

Zhao added that the NPC will maintain friendly exchanges with the Thai parliament to provide legal support for China-Thailand cooperation and Belt and Road cooperation.

Noting that Thailand greatly values the development of the friendly relationship between the two countries, Srettha said that Thailand will deepen BRI cooperation with China, promote closer people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and continue to increase the wellbeing of the two peoples. (Xinhua) ■

Zhao Leji meets Samoan Legislative Assembly speaker

China's top legislator Zhao Leji met with Papali'i Li'o Taelu Masipa'u, speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Independent State of Samoa, on November 22, 2023.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said Samoa was one of the first Pacific Island countries to establish diplomatic ties with China.

China is willing to strengthen political mutual trust and mutual support, expand mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields, and enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, Zhao said.

Zhao said the NPC of China is ready to work with the Legislative Assembly of the Independent State of Samoa

to give full play to the functions of legislative bodies, and exchange experience in legislation and supervision to contribute to jointly building the Belt and Road and expanding cooperation in various fields.

China stands ready to continue strengthening cooperation with Pacific Island countries for common development, Zhao added.

Papali'i said Samoa adheres firmly to the one-China principle, adding that Samoa has benefited significantly from jointly building the Belt and Road.

He said the legislative assembly is willing to strengthen exchanges with the NPC of China and make unremitting efforts to promote bilateral cooperation. (Xinhua) ■

Xiao Jie attends 2nd China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation

Xiao Jie, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC), attended and addressed the opening ceremony of the Second China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation in Kunming, capital city of southwest China's Yunnan Province, on December 8, 2023.

He noted that the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-30) program shows clear signs of slowing down due to the current complicated and turbulent international situation and a weak global economic recovery.

Keeping up with the trend of the times, China proposed the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, he said.

Facing the common tasks of post-COVID-19 economic recovery and sustainable development, China and countries in the Indian Ocean region are natural partners in promoting blue cooperation, he noted, calling for greater efforts to strengthen communication of ideas, deepen practical cooperation and jointly boost blue development in a bid to advance the building of a maritime community with a shared future.

He also met with heads of delegations of participating countries, including vice president of the Maldives Hussain Mohamed Latheef, on the sidelines of the forum.

Themed "Boosting Sustainable Blue Economy to Build Together a Maritime Community with a Shared Future," the forum was co-hosted by the China International Development Cooperation Agency and the Yunnan provincial government. (NPC) ■



Xiao Jie, vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, attends and addresses the opening ceremony of the Second China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation in Kunming, capital city of southwest China's Yunnan Province, on December 8. *Chen Fei*



He Wei, vice chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, delivers a keynote speech at the Ninth Group of 20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit held in New Delhi, India, on October 13.

He Wei attends 9th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit

He Wei, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, led a delegation to the Ninth Group of 20 (G20) Parliamentary Speakers' Summit held in New Delhi, India, on October 13-14.

In a keynote speech at the gathering, he noted that global development is facing unprecedented challenges. As the main forum for international economic cooperation, the G20 should make global development more inclusive, resilient and beneficial for all, as well as provide greater support to developing countries, he said.

He added that G20 legislative bodies should strengthen communication and exchanges, adhere to the concept of development first, solidarity and cooperation, inclusiveness and openness, and inject new impetus into the cause of global development.

The G20 should make global development more inclusive, resilient and beneficial for all, and provide greater support to developing countries.

China is ready to work with all parties to actively implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and jointly build a better future, he added.

During the meeting, he met with Duarte Pacheco, president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Ashebir Gayo, acting president of the Pan-African Parliament. (NPC) ■



A staff member from the Cheng'an County People's Procuratorate explains the Constitution to students at the Seventh Middle School in Cheng'an County, Handan, north China's Hebei Province, on December 4. *Wang Xiao*

Constitution better upheld

Top legislature streamlines process of reviewing normative documents

By Cao Yin

China's efforts to review normative documents, such as administrative regulations and judicial interpretations, will be strengthened in line with a new decision to ensure that the Constitution is better upheld and implemented.

The 22-article decision, passed on December 29, 2023, by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's top legislature, emphasized the importance of examining whether normative documents are consistent with the Constitution, and it urged more studies on constitutional issues.

Provisions that contradict the Constitution, its principles or its spirit must be corrected in a timely manner, the deci-

sion said, adding that NPC special committees or the NPC Standing Committee's working bodies have the right to require those who create problematic documents to rectify or remove them.

It is the first time that the NPC Standing Committee has streamlined the process of reviewing normative documents, with specifications on what should be examined, through such a legislative decision.

"Improving the review, correction and abolition procedures is to play the supervision role of the NPC Standing Committee, showing our stronger determination to rectify unconstitutional behavior," said Yan Dongfeng, head of the review office of the NPC Standing Committee's Legislative

Affairs Commission.

He said the formulation of the decision was designed to ensure the full implementation of the Constitution as required by the central leadership and the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022.

Zhang Yong, deputy head of the commission, said the decision will promote whole-process people's democracy, advance law-based governance and guarantee compliance with the rule of law.

"It's also a summary of our experience in reviewing documents over the past few years," Zhang said.

In one case given as an example, the commission said practices resulting in the collective punishment of family members of convicted criminals should be abolished, as they were inconsistent with the principles and spirit of the Constitution.

The commission had received requests from some residents for a review of local notices in which a few criminals' spouses, children, parents and close relatives had been subjected to restrictions in accessing education, employment and social insurance.

Flagging the restrictions as collective punishment, the residents called for such practices to be stopped.

The case was included in a recent report released by the commission, which deemed the local notices inconsistent with the Constitution and laws related to education, employment and social insurance.

"So we've urged related departments to abolish the documents," said Shen Chunyao, head of the commission. "Crimi-

nals should be liable and punished for their own misconduct, meaning that others shouldn't be implicated in the penalties. It's a basic principle of rule of law in modern society."

Self-examination should also be encouraged across the country to prevent similar situations, he said.

The decision also expanded the scope of documents deemed to be normative to include those created by economic zones and free trade areas, and said all these documents should be handed over to the NPC Standing Committee for record within 30 days of being made public.

It also urged greater efforts to use information platforms for recording and reviewing documents to make the process digital and easier.

The decision, which took immediate effect, has received thumbs-ups from law professionals.

Zhang Xiang, a law professor at Peking University, said oversight of normative documents had been intensified since the 19th CPC National Congress in 2017, adding that the decision provided a stronger legal basis for it.

Zheng Lei, a law professor at Zhejiang University, said the decision has legal force despite not being a typical law, comparing it to a prelude to subsequent special legislation.

In addition, Qin Qianhong, a law professor at Wuhan University, said that the adoption of the decision was conducive to solving problems in the review of normative documents and was a quick response to meet public demands on advancing law-based governance and correcting unconstitutional actions. (China Daily) ■



A draft decision on improving and strengthening the system of recording and review is submitted to the seventh session of the 14th National People's Congress Standing Committee for review in Beijing, capital of China, on December 25. Xu Lin



VCG

Progress in China's rule of law on foreign affairs

By Li Xiaoyang

Meerzat Omuralieva, a 31-year-old woman from Kyrgyzstan, runs a jewelry business in Yiwu, Zhejiang Province, which is home to the world's largest small commodities market, embracing merchants from all over the world. Omuralieva first began working as a volunteer on the city's mediation committee for disputes relating to foreign trade and transactions when she was in college in Yiwu in 2017. Now, the committee has employed her as a full-time mediator.

As the annual number of overseas businesspeople flowing into Yiwu has regularly exceeded 550,000 in previous years, the demand for mediation on commercial and customs-related disputes has been growing. As early as 2013, the mu-

nicipal government established the mediation committee for international disputes.

Over the past decade, the committee has handled over 1,200 disputes involving people from other countries, and resolved 96 percent of them. Today, it has 13 mediators from 12 countries.

The committee is one example of China's efforts to improve the legal system related to foreign affairs, Huang Jin, head of the Chinese Society of International Law, told Beijing Review. China has seen progress in legislation, law enforcement, the rule of law and the delivery of justice in recent years.

Huang made the remarks at the Fourth Symposium of the

International Communication of China's Rule of Law, held at China University of Political Science and Law in Beijing on November 19, 2023. A blue book compiled by the university on the development of China's rule of law involving foreign affairs was also released during the symposium.

"China has placed increasing importance on the rule of law related to foreign affairs and seeks to play a bigger role in safeguarding it," Huang said.

Notable progress

According to Huang, the formulation of the Law on Foreign State Immunity, the amendment to the Civil Procedure Law and the implementation of the Law on Foreign Relations are major highlights of 2023. As of early November, 299 laws had taken effect in China, including 53 relating to foreign affairs and more than 150 containing foreign-affairs clauses.

To improve laws concerning safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, the Standing Committee of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), China's top legislature, passed the Foreign Relations Law in June, further improving China's tool kit for combating foreign interference and long-arm jurisdiction. The law, which went into effect on July 1, 2023, focuses on facilitating exchange and enhancing communication and cooperation. In its general principles, the law stipulates that China adheres to opening up for mutual benefit.

On September 1, 2023, the Law on Foreign State Immunity was passed by the NPC. The law, which took effect on January 1, 2024, affirms that a foreign state and its property enjoy immunity in China and stipulates exceptional cases under which Chinese courts can exercise jurisdiction, such as commercial disputes and personal injury.

"The law has adjusted China's previous stance of absolute state immunity and authorized courts in China to hear lawsuits against foreign states. It fills in the gap in China's rule of law related to foreign affairs, which is a significant move," Huang said.

According to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the law protects the legitimate rights and interests of concerned parties, which will boost China's high-level opening up and improve the domestic business environment.

China is also furthering the revision of the Arbitration Law. Huang suggested the amendment be aligned with the Model Law on International Commercial Arbitration formulated by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.

According to the blue book, China has cooperated with other countries on law enforcement for maritime security, intellectual property rights (IPR) and anti-monopoly. With the launch of the anti-foreign

sanctions law, export control law and foreign investment law, China will be able to better manage challenges from the complex international landscape, contribute to global peace and improve its international competitiveness.

China has also strengthened its global judiciary partnerships and improved legal services relating to foreign affairs. Since its establishment in late 2019, the Belt and Road International Lawyers Association, a China-initiated international organization focusing on providing legal services, has grown into a platform for legal service cooperation between countries and regions. It has over 2,600 group and individual members from 54 countries and regions.

The association has provided services for major Belt and Road projects, which are built to boost connectivity along and beyond the ancient Silk Road routes, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the China-Thailand Railway and the national power grid in Laos.

China's IPR protection laws and regulations have also further taken effect. Last year, China joined two major treaties of the World Intellectual Property Organization, developing IPR cooperation with over 80 countries and regions.

According to the Intellectual Property Court of the Supreme People's Court of China, which was established in 2019, it has handled over 1,200 cases involving foreign affairs over the past four years, with over 800 concluded. The parties in approximately 4 percent of these cases were both from other countries.

Earlier this year, CIRCUTOR, a Spanish electronic equipment company, found its name copied by a company registered in Shanghai. After CIRCUTOR reported the infringement to the local market regulation bureau in Shanghai, the company that was infringing on the IPR was fined and required to change its name.

China's IPR protection efforts are gaining it more credit.



A foreign guest exchanges with an exhibitor at the 17th China Datang International Hosiery Industry Expo in Zhuji, east China's Zhejiang Province, on August 23. Guo Bin

Over the past decade, entities from more than 110 countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative applied for over 250,000 patents in China, according to the China National Intellectual Property Administration.

More cooperation

In 2020, China's coffee chain Luckin Coffee Inc., which had listed its shares for trading on the Nasdaq stock market in the United States, had its employees revealed accounting fraud, leading to credit doubts about Chinese enterprises listed overseas. The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) worked with its U.S. securities counterparts to audit several Chinese enterprises listed on U.S. stock exchanges, leading to agreements that avoided a massive delisting of the companies. Luckin was later fined 180 million U.S. dollars by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. After a company reshuffle, the brand is now China's top coffee chain.

According to the CSRC, this global auditing cooperation is conducive to building a more predictable international regulatory environment and protecting the lawful rights of global investors. Such cooperation will further the development of a sustainable cooperation mechanism.

As Huang noted, China also needs to improve global cooperation on training professionals to provide better legal services and strengthen enforcement of the rule of law involving foreign affairs. There are still shortcomings in law en-

While ensuring the legitimate rights of overseas businesses operating in China, it also needs to enhance legal support for Chinese enterprises to expand internationally.

forcement on cross-border economic exchanges and trade in China, especially on imports and exports of goods and tariffs.

The blue book said that Chinese authorities need to improve laws and regulations on foreign trade and investment to support the operations of foreign-invested companies and open up the domestic market, and further align with international economic and trade rules.

In early November, the National Development and Reform Commission pledged to revise or repeal laws and regulations inconsistent with China's Foreign Investment Law to improve the business environment.

"China should integrate laws involving domestic and foreign affairs. While ensuring the legitimate rights of overseas businesses operating in China, it also needs to enhance legal support for Chinese enterprises to expand internationally," Huang said. (Beijing Review) ■



Foreign consumers purchase home appliances at Yiwu International Trade City in Yiwu, east China's Zhejiang Province, on December 10. Wu Fengyu



China adopts new law to safeguard food security

China's top legislature adopted a food security law aimed at ensuring the supply of grain and related products on December 29, 2023.

For a country that feeds over 1.4 billion people with only 9 percent of the world's arable land, the enactment of this law is of vital importance.

Despite an overall favorable situation concerning food security, China, with a growing grain demand, faces multifaceted challenges, including limited and low-quality arable land and increasing difficulty in securing stable and higher grain output. Therefore, the law is of vital significance in addressing these issues, according to an explanation for the drafting of the law delivered by Minister of Justice He Rong.

As stipulated in the general provisions of the law, China needs to "ensure absolute security in staple foods and basic self-sufficiency in grains," indicating that the country must ensure that its food supply remains firmly in its own hands.

Irrigation equipment is watering the winter wheat at Wangdianzi Township in Luanzhou, north China's Hebei Province, on November 11. *Yang Shiyao*

The law, passed at a session of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, will take effect on June 1, 2024.

Recognizing the importance of arable land protection, the law provides for determining and maintaining redlines to protect farmland, permanent basic cropland and ecosystems, as well as urban development boundaries.

The state shall restrict the illegal occupation of farmland and the conversion of farmland to other forms of land use, such as forests and grassland, the law reads.

Regarding grain production, the law emphasizes the establishment of a national agricultural germplasm resource bank and the improvement of the national system for cultivating superior crop varieties.

The law calls for promoting mechanized technologies and building capacity for disaster prevention, mitigation, and relief in grain production.

To encourage farmers to grow crops, the law stipulates that the state shall introduce measures to increase the income of these farmers.

China has seen a grain harvest of over 650 million tons for nine consecutive years, with the staple food self-sufficiency rate above 100 percent and the grain self-sufficiency rate above 95 percent.

However, China's grain supply and demand is still characterized by a "tight balance," hence the need to curb food waste to guarantee food security in the country.

The law contains a chapter dedicated to food conservation, laying down requirements for reducing food waste throughout various processes, ranging from grain production to consumption.

The law makes provisions concerning grain reserves, distribution, processing and emergency response.

The food security law, along with existing laws and regulations on land management, seeds, black soil conservation, food waste and others, will cement the foundation of food security in the country.

The new legislation on food security is of great importance to pushing forward Chinese modernization. It lays a solid legal foundation for advancing China's system and capacity for food security governance, said Wang Zhimin, a member of the NPC Standing Committee. (Xinhua)



Sun Youzhong, president of Youzhong Farmers' Special Cooperative in Gongzhuling, northeast China's Jilin Province, checks the corn storage in a granary, on October 19. Zhang Nan



Legal revision improves marine environment protection

By Hou Liqiang

China will ramp up environmental monitoring and impose more penalties for violations as the country strives to enhance marine conservation, according to a revision to the Marine Environment Protection Law.

The draft was passed on October 24, 2023, after it was submitted to the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) for a third reading.

The revision is problem-oriented and targets the principal contradiction and special problems facing marine preservation, according to a media release from the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee.

"It aims to further improve the quality of the marine environment by establishing institutions and improving existing ones," it said.

The revision stresses improving the capacity for marine environmental monitoring and governance with more advanced means and information technologies, stipulating that it is compulsory for governments at different levels and their departments to beef up capacity building in this regard.

Departments of the State Council, China's cabinet, as well as coast guard authorities and governments above coun-



This aerial photo shows staff members working at the eelgrass seedling collecting area of a marine ecological protection and restoration project in Cao-feidian of Tangshan, north China's Hebei Province, on June 25. *Yang Shiyao*



This aerial photo shows staff members working at the eelgrass seedling collecting area of a marine ecological protection and restoration project in Cao-feidian of Tangshan, north China's Hebei Province, on June 25. *Yang Shiyao*



Staff members release fry to the sea at an area of a marine ecological protection and restoration project in Lingang, east China's Shanghai Municipality, on June 8. *Fang Zhe*

Governments above county-level in coastal regions should also set up institutions for both the monitoring and cleaning of marine waste, it notes.

ty-level in coastal regions, should promote comprehensive, coordinated and regular environmental monitoring in the ocean, the revision stipulates.

They should ramp up the sharing of information about marine environment management to improve marine protection capabilities, it adds.

Governments above county-level in coastal regions should set up institutions for both the monitoring and cleaning up of marine waste, it notes.

Public institutions and enterprises for litter control in certain sea areas, according to the revision, are responsible for establishing systems to monitor, intercept, collect, transport and dispose of marine litter, and taking measures to ensure their implementation.

To ratchet up marine radiation monitoring, the national environmental watchdog should hammer out a plan for emergency marine radiation monitoring and coordinate its implementation, the revision stipulates.

The country is poised to improve its survey, monitoring, evaluation and preservation systems for marine biodiversity conservation, as well as protect and restore key corridors for marine organisms.

Those who damage marine ecosystems, such as coral reefs and protected natural marine areas, will have to rectify their violations and take measures to remediate the damage, it rules. They will also be subject to penalties of 1,000 yuan (137 U.S. dollars) to 10,000 yuan (1,370 U.S. dollars) for every square meter of damaged area.

In preparing the draft, the NPC Standing Committee solicited suggestions from the public and NPC deputies, and held symposiums and organized investigation tours to Guangdong and Hainan provinces, said Xin Chunying, an official with the NPC's Constitution and Law Committee.

Passed in 1982, the Marine Environment Protection Law has been revised four times, with the last being in 2017. According to the NPC Standing Committee, the latest revision will come into force on January 1, 2024. (China Daily) ■



Visually impaired students from Chongqing Special Education Center enter the Nanshan Botanical Garden in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, on March 14. *Chu Jiayin*

Democracy at fingertips

With his fingertips tracing the raised dots on a Braille document, Wang Yongcheng, a national legislator from east China's Fujian Province, said, "This is what democracy looks like. It's tangible, visible."

Wang was carefully reading the Braille versions of four replies to the suggestions he raised earlier in 2023, a historic first in the annals of the National People's Congress (NPC), China's national legislature.

Among the nearly 3,000 deputies to the 14th NPC, who commenced their five-year term in 2023, the 56-year-old Wang stands out as the sole individual with visual impairment.

In response to Wang's proposal addressing the licensing

difficulties faced by blind massage therapists and their clinics, the National Health Commission, the China Disabled Persons' Federation and the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine engaged in face-to-face discussions with him last June. Together, they embarked on a collaborative research endeavor to tackle the issue.

Relevant agencies pledged to actively facilitate solutions enabling eligible blind massage therapists to secure stable employment in the medical sector.

Wang's second suggestion focused on providing large-print textbooks for low-vision students enrolled in regular schools. The Ministry of Education embraced this proposal and supported the promotion of large-print textbook publications, starting with the first grade in autumn 2023.

“The entire process embodies democracy at its finest,” he affirmed. “It is characterized by a holistic approach, direct engagement, and considerate and effective actions.”

Wang also advocated for the introduction of preferential policies to enhance the public transportation experience for severely disabled individuals. The railway department responded by establishing special seats, reserving dedicated ticket quotas and implementing service reservations specifically catering to passengers with disabilities.

Regarding Wang’s proposal to bolster research and provide Braille displays for visually impaired students, the China Disabled Persons’ Federation committed to active cooperation with relevant agencies. Their shared objective is to increase research and development funding, foster technological breakthroughs, enhance the construction of an information-accessible environment and facilitate the integration of Braille display devices into schools.

Wang expressed satisfaction with the replies to his four proposals. “The entire process embodies democracy at its finest,” he affirmed. “It is characterized by a holistic approach, direct engagement, and considerate and effective actions.”

During the annual gathering of the national legislature in March, 2023, NPC deputies put forward over 8,300 suggestions, spanning a broad spectrum of areas, including promoting high-quality development, improving people’s wellbeing and addressing issues related to protecting the rights of people with disabilities.

Wang’s proposals were among those presented.

In 1985, at the age of 18, Wang lost his sight in an accident. Undeterred, he embarked on a challenging entrepreneurial journey, acquiring massage skills and conducting non-profit training.

Following his election as a deputy to the 14th NPC, disabled friends from across the country reached out to Wang, sharing their concerns and aspirations.

He delved into each message, conducted thorough investigations and formulated his proposals.

“Having walked in darkness, I deeply appreciate the value of light,” he reflected. “As a member of the blind community, I am more attuned to their aspirations.”

Proposing suggestions is just one aspect of an NPC deputy’s responsibilities. Since his election, Wang’s schedule has been relentlessly packed.

In March, in the Great Hall of the People in central Beijing, he fulfilled his duties as an NPC deputy during the first session of the 14th NPC. He engaged in discussions on state affairs, examined the government work report, scrutinized law bills and participated in the election of China’s state leadership.

In June, upon receiving an invitation to attend a session of the NPC Standing Committee, Wang proposed the compilation and publication of Braille and low-vision versions of textbooks for various educational levels.

His proposal was adopted and incorporated into China’s first dedicated law on constructing a barrier-free environment, which took effect on September 1, 2023.

On November 14, Wang embarked on another journey, this time to south China’s Guangdong Province. There, individuals dedicated to protecting the rights of people with disabilities awaited his arrival, seeking answers and clarifications. He arrived bearing the newly received replies to his proposals, infusing them with renewed confidence and optimism.

“My voice serves as a conduit for the voices of China’s 85 million individuals with disabilities,” Wang said. “The democratic channel functions smoothly and efficiently; I have no reason not to work day and night, and give my full effort.”

Wang has already begun contemplating new research topics. Moving forward, his focus will expand beyond protecting the rights of people with disabilities to encompass broader social issues, such as elderly care. (Xinhua) ■



Deputy to the National People’s Congress (NPC) Wang Yongcheng (2nd L, front), who is visually impaired, attends the opening meeting of the first session of the 14th NPC at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on March 5. Wang Yuguo



A visually impaired person reads Braille books at the reading room of the Yunnan Provincial Library in Kunming, southwest China’s Yunnan Province, on October 15. Chen Xinbo



Cheng Ping, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), edits the suggestions she is preparing to submit during the annual session of the NPC in March 2023.



Cheng Ping (R) provides legal consultation services to a party involved in a case on March 16.

NPC deputy dedicated to safeguarding rights of vulnerable groups

Lawyers must uphold justice and take the realization of legal justice and fairness for the people as their own responsibility. This is the code of conduct that Cheng Ping, a deputy to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC), has held fast to over the past 20 years working as a lawyer in Linyi of the Yimeng area, east China's Shandong Province.

"Nurtured by the Yimeng Spirit, which highlights loyalty to the Party and the people, I have always prioritized the interests of the people and diligently handled every case that involves their vital interests," said Cheng, a legal professional who grew up in the Yimeng area, an old revolutionary base and one of the major strongholds of the Communist Party of China (CPC) during the 1930s and 1940s.

"Making money should not be the only concern of lawyers, they should also think more about how to safeguard the sanctity of the law and deliver justice to the underprivileged," said

Cheng, who started her career as a lawyer in 1997 and is currently the CPC branch chief and director of a local law firm.

Over the past two decades, instead of concentrating solely on those big cases that can easily bring in a high income and reputation, Cheng has devoted a lot of time to serving the general public, especially vulnerable groups. Her sincere and persistent efforts have resulted in fair judgments and much needed economic benefits, as well as close friendship with parties who have received her legal services.

"Fortunately, at the darkest moment of my life, I met Cheng, the thoughtful lawyer. She gave me the hope and strength to go on," said a woman surnamed Li, who was seriously injured and lost her child during a traffic accident. Worse still, her husband filed for a divorce due to her long-term bedridden condition.

Cheng spared no efforts to claim compensation for Li's traffic accident and help her obtain a disability certificate and



Cheng Ping (front row, R) discusses motions with other deputies during the annual session of the National People's Congress in March 2023.

judicial assistance. After three years of hard work, she helped the woman reach a mediation agreement with her ex-husband and preserved her rights to the greatest extent possible.

In another case, after countless negotiations with a local company, Cheng helped a forklift operator receive nearly 100,000 yuan (13,700 U.S. dollars) in severance compensation.

"To be honest, I was about to give up, I couldn't bear to see her working so hard for me," said the forklift operator surnamed Gao, who still is grateful to the lawyer.

Cheng is well aware that only through understanding the lives of ordinary people can one be a good spokesperson for them.

After being elected a deputy to the Shandong Provincial People's Congress in 2013, Cheng established contact offices in nearby villages to raise awareness of the law among villagers and respond to their legal inquiries. She used the venues as research bases to learn about the needs of local people and better play her role as a lawmaker.

Cheng said that over a period of two months in 2014, she visited more than 30 individuals who received legal aid in eight towns to learn about the situation of legal aid for vulnerable groups, and submitted a suggestion on revising the Shandong Provincial Legal Aid Regulations during the annual session of the provincial people's congress that same year.

Based on one of Cheng's suggestions, the Shandong Provincial High People's Court issued a guideline for piloting

"I believe that becoming a lawyer was the most correct life choice I have made," said Cheng, emphasizing her commitment to continue helping people in need with her legal expertise.

unified compensation standards for personal injury in urban and rural areas in 2020.

Cheng was elected a deputy to the 14th NPC in 2023 and submitted three motions on legislation and five other suggestions during the annual two sessions in March, which included suggestions on accelerating the establishment of a long-term care insurance system that was widely covered by major national media outlets.

"I believe that becoming a lawyer was the most correct life choice I have made," said Cheng, emphasizing her commitment to continue helping people in need with her legal expertise. (NPC) ■

Top legislature completes handling of 8,314 suggestions submitted to annual session

All 8,314 suggestions that Chinese lawmakers submitted to the 2023 annual session of the National People's Congress (NPC) have been handled, with feedback sent to NPC deputies, according to a report.

The report, which focused on the handling of the suggestions, criticisms and comments at the first session of the 14th NPC, was submitted on December 26, 2023, to an ongoing session of the NPC Standing Committee.

Of all the suggestions, about 46.5 percent focused on accelerating the creation of a new development pattern and pursuing high-quality development. About 15.9 percent were about improving people's wellbeing and 11.9 percent were related to invigorating China through science and education, and developing a strong workforce for the modernization drive.

Nearly 60 percent of the suggestions were proposed by NPC deputies based on their research, inspections, symposiums and personal visits, according to the report. (Xinhua) ■

Liu Xiya, a deputy to the National People's Congress, has a discussion with some parents to collect opinions and suggestions on the implementation of the "double reduction" policy at the Xiejiawan School in Jiulongpo District, southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, on February 24. *Huang Wei*



Zhang Jinchun (center), a deputy to the People's Congress of Lianshui County, listens to the opinions and suggestions of Party members and villagers on village development in Jinsha Village of Hongyao Town, Lianshui County, east China's Jiangsu Province, on October 11. *Ji Chunpeng*





The parliamentarians from Pacific island countries observe the manufacturing of batteries at SVOLT in Nanchang, east China's Jiangxi Province.
Pan Xiongwen

Program for legislators offers a glimpse into China's development

By Lu Yan

A seminar for legislators from China and Pacific island countries opened in Beijing on November 20, 2023, aiming at strengthening exchanges and cooperation between China and Pacific island countries.

Organized by the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (NPC) and under the theme of "explore new paths to modernization and work together to achieve mutual development," the seminar, attracted 21 parliamentarians from five countries, namely Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga.

During their three-day stay in Beijing, the parliamentari-

Our visit to China has afforded us a profound insight into the nation's path to modernization, the governing principles of the CPC, and its remarkable achievements.

ans had discussions on multiple issues, including democracy, modernization, climate challenges in the process of maintaining sustainable growth and how to realize common prosperity through high-quality development, with the Chinese legislators. They also visited villages, factories, streets, museums and agricultural centers in different regions of China, taking a closer look at the development of the country from various aspects.

It was the first seminar held by the NPC Standing Committee for parliamentarians from the Pacific island countries. The program lasted until November 29, 2023.

Peng Qinghua, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said at the opening ceremony of the seminar that he hopes the activity will make contributions to deepening the mutual respect and development of China and the Pacific island countries by increasing exchanges and cooperation between their legislative bodies.

Papali'i Li'o Oloipola Taeu Masipau, speaker of the Legislative Assembly of the Independent State of Samoa, and other parliamentarians expressed their gratitude for China's long-standing selfless assistance and strong support to Pacific island countries. They also expressed appreciation for the seminar, which provided valuable opportunities for island country parliamentarians to draw lessons from China's experience in modernization.

Studies and communications

There are thousands of grassroots legislative outreach offices in China, and they function as communication channels between people and legislatures. At such an outreach office in Jingdezhen, a city in the eastern province of Jiangxi famous for its quality porcelain products, during their trip there as a part of the program, parliamentarians had a firsthand experience of Chinese democracy.

At the outreach office, a team of 76 information staff members was established, along with 15 community-based groups, each comprising 10 members. Their collective task involves conducting research, and collecting suggestions from the residents to ensure that legislative efforts and other initiatives truly represent the voices and aspirations of the broader public.

Residents were actively engaged in legislative consultations through various means, including face-to-face discussions, surveys and questionnaires. Efforts were made to ensure their direct involvement in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the use of digital platforms allowed for a more efficient and convenient collection of public feedback, enabling a broader range of voices to be heard. During their visits, the parliamentarians from Pacific island countries also listened to stories of people's congresses deputies.

"From Beijing to local communities, I've seen everyone dedicated to the same mission--democracy," a Papua New Guinean legislator expressed. "You directly transmit the opinions collected at the grassroots level to the central government, and you have established a democratic system that truly works."

"The whole-process people's democracy begins with elections, and elected deputies are accountable to the people. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has implemented a well-developed system to listen to the opinions and suggestions of

the people," the legislator further stated. "China is a modern nation that effectively guarantees people's rights through institutional frameworks and laws, achieving remarkable accomplishments in people's democracy throughout the entire process of governance."

The concept of whole-process people's democracy deeply resonated with a parliamentarian from Tonga. "From national leaders to the NPC deputies, China upholds a people-centric ideology, tirelessly working to improve the wellbeing of its citizens and bringing them benefits," the parliamentarian remarked. "The people enjoy democratic rights and actively participate in major decision-making processes. The CPC, the government and the NPC prioritize listening to the people's voices, actively seek opinions and suggestions, and willingly accept oversight. It is no wonder that China has achieved an astonishing combination of rapid economic development and

The whole-process people's democracy begins with elections, and elected deputies are accountable to the people.



long-term social stability. The introduction and implementation of whole-process people's democracy are truly compelling, both in theory and practice.”

During a discussion, one speaker made a captivating analogy between “democracy” and “flowers,” leaving a lasting impression on the parliamentarians. The Tongan parliamentarian expressed, “Every country’s democracy is like a flower, never identical, which is deeply thought-provoking. It made me realize that the shape and appearance of a flower are rooted in its foundation, influenced by factors such as the region, soil and a nation’s history and culture. Actions speak louder than words, and in contrast to some distorted reports, I can assert with certainty that China possesses a genuine and distinctive form of democracy. China has successfully integrated democratic principles into its pursuit of Chinese-style modernization.”

Fruitful trips

During their trips in Beijing, Jiangxi and Fujian Province, parliamentarians witnessed the presence of green mountains and clear waters in abundance, demonstrating China’s determined efforts to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, promote the development and utilization of renewable energy sources, produce electric vehicles, and establish an extensive network



The parliamentarians from Pacific island countries listen to lectures and hold discussions on such topics as Chinese modernization, whole-process people's democracy, common prosperity and climate change response. Pan Xiongwen

of tens of thousands of wind turbines for generating clean energy. China has set the dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060.

Addressing climate change is a major concern for Pacific island nations. Several parliamentarians have voiced their observations, stating, “China, in its pursuit of rapid and high-quality development, is also deeply committed to environmental conservation, actively addressing the challenges posed by climate change. The country is taking a leading position in renewable energy, energy efficiency, emissions reduction, and overall climate change response.”

During their visit to the China National Engineering Research Center of JUNCAO Technology at Fujian Agriculture and Forestry University, a leading institution in the research of fungi in China, the parliamentarians gained insight into the unique functionalities, growth characteristics and adoption status of fungi grass. “We hope that China can provide more scholarship opportunities for young students from Pacific island nations to pursue higher education in China,” the parliamentarian from Papua New Guinea said.

Similarly, legislators from the Solomon Islands and Tonga expressed their hope for China to send experts to introduce this valuable technology to more areas within island nations, assisting rural women and children in breaking free from poverty and improving their quality of life.

“Our visit to China has afforded us a profound insight into the nation’s path to modernization, the governing principles of the CPC, and its remarkable achievements. We have been greatly inspired,” Papali’i said. “One key factor contributing to China’s success lies in its steadfast adherence to a people-centered development philosophy, consistently placing development at the forefront. We are eager to learn from and draw upon China’s experiences and accomplishments.”

The latest Outline of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035 is a blueprint for the world’s second-largest economy as it kicks off a new journey toward fully building a modern socialist country.

China initiated its first five-year plan in 1953. Over the half-century, the country has achieved rapid development with many five-year plans performing as an important mechanism to guide the economic and social activities, one after another.

A Niuean legislator remarked that China’s practice of formulating multiple Five-Year Plans demonstrates its commitment to policy continuity, ensuring that established goals remain unchanged despite external factors. “They emphasized the paramount importance China places on prioritizing the wellbeing of its people,” the legislator said.

In a mere span of 10 days, the legislators embarked on a journey in China, immersing themselves in travel and observations that continuously enhanced their comprehension of the country and shaped a fresh China perspective. They expressed their gratitude for the invaluable learning opportunity presented by the seminar, and intended to take back the experiences and lessons acquired to their respective countries, applying them to national governance and development. Moreover, they aspire to promote more dialogue and exchange with China, joining hands for mutual advancement and prosperity. ■

Xizang schools visits, interviews debunk “forced assimilation” claims



A student answers the teacher's question in class at Damshung County Middle School in Lhasa, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on November 9. *Sun Fei*



Students have a Tibetan language class at Damshung County Middle School in Lhasa, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on November 9. Sun Fei

For Tibetan children like Ngogyan Tenzin who are from ordinary families, “going to school” was something highly unlikely several decades ago.

In old Xizang, where the illiteracy rate exceeded 95 percent among young people, access to education was predominantly limited to the privileged aristocracy.

Hailing from Nyemo County, located over 130 km from Lhasa, capital city of southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, Ngogyan Tenzin is now a boarding student at Lhasa-Jiangsu Experimental Middle School, which provides both boarding and commuting options.

If he chose to commute between home and school every day, the round trip would take more than 4 hours by road. Therefore, he opted for boarding.

The school, a result of a pairing-up aid program supported by the economically developed province of Jiangsu in east China, has about 3,000 students, over 90 percent of them Tibetans, while the remainder have diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Han, Moinba and Lhoba, among others.

Many of the students come from farming and pastoral areas in the vast plateau region.

Thanks to the region's public education policy and trans-

In fact, the boarding school system has long been established nationwide based on the needs of parents and students.

portation subsidies for boarding students, Ngogyan Tenzin's family does not have to pay education fees except for a small amount for his transport.

Known as the “roof of the world,” the region's average altitude exceeds 4,000 meters, and its population density is as low as three persons per square kilometer.

In a bid to guarantee rural children equal access to education across this mountainous region, boarding schools have become crucial.

In fact, the boarding school system has long been established nationwide based on the needs of parents and students. In Xizang, the combination of high altitude, an extremely scattered population and challenges related to

children's commuting has made the implementation of boarding school options a necessity.

The latest statistics showed that the region has more than 3,400 schools, with nearly 950,000 students. Among the 1,000 primary and secondary schools, 895 are boarding schools, while the number of boarding students in primary and secondary schools is approximately 410,000.

School Life

Like many other boarding and non-boarding schools across the region, Ngogyan Tenzin's curriculum encompasses a wide range of subjects, including Tibetan, standard Chinese, English, mathematics, history, geography and arts. The Tibetan language's weight in the national college entrance examination equals that of Chinese and English. As a second-year student in the junior high school department, Ngogyan Tenzin has made significant progress, improving his exam results ranking from 48th in the mid-term exam to 25th in the final exam of the last semester.

Along with his academic studies, Ngogyan Tenzin actively engages in a variety of extracurricular activities at school, such as different clubs, arts events and sports festivals.

Upon his enrollment, he enthusiastically joined the Tibetan calligraphy club.

In contrast to regular classrooms, this clubroom radiates with the opulence of Tibetan culture. Its door is decorated by a curtain featuring a blue mask from the Tibetan opera, while the interior walls are adorned with vibrant traditional Tibetan curtains. Delicately carved tables and sofas in the room enhance the overall ambiance.

"I was thrilled to discover the Tibetan calligraphy club since I have been honing my Tibetan calligraphy skills as a hobby since I was nine years old. I now have a good grasp of five styles of Tibetan calligraphy," he said proudly.

In stark contrast to the colonial-style residential school system established in certain Western countries during the 19th and 20th centuries aimed at cultural assimilation, Ngo-

gyan Tenzin's school operates under a different paradigm—it is not an enclosed institution, nor is it under stringent military-style management.

After five school days, Ngogyan Tenzin usually spends the weekend with his cousin's family in Lhasa, reserving the longer summer and winter breaks for cherished reunions with his parents in Nyemo County.

"I look forward to both Fridays and Sundays, as I can visit my relatives' home on Fridays and go back to school to meet my teachers and friends on Sundays," the 15-year-old said.

During the five-day Shoton Festival holiday in August, a traditional Tibetan festival, he joined his cousin's family to celebrate the festival. "We visited Drepung Monastery in suburban Lhasa, where we watched the unrolling of a giant Thangka painting," he recalled. This sacred ritual is known as the "sunning of the Buddha."

The Shoton Festival, with its origins in the 11th century, was among the first items to be inscribed on the national list of intangible cultural heritage in 2006. Typical celebrations include eating yogurt, picnicking and attending traditional events such as Tibetan opera performances and horse racing.

Upon learning that boarding schools in the region were being demonized by some Western media and that his cherished place was being slandered as a site where "Tibetan culture, religion and language were being assimilated," Ngogyan Tenzin was dumbfounded.

"School is like my second home and it should never be smeared with lies," he said. "It's a warm place that is bringing me closer to my dream of becoming a Tibetan linguist."

Better future

The plateau region has made significant strides in education over the past few decades. Since 2012, students have enjoyed free board and lodgings, and have been exempt from study costs from preschool to senior high school, spanning a total of 15 years. These measures have not only alleviated the financial burden on families but also eased parents' concerns regarding their children's education.

Tashi Sangmo and her older sister, Tenzin Chodron, have both benefited from this policy. They were born to a family in the farming and pastoral area in Namling County of Xigaze. They depend on crop cultivation and yak herding for their livelihood. Their parents, who have only limited education experience, prioritized their children's education and sent the sisters to local boarding schools.

Tashi Sangmo embarked on her educational journey at a local primary boarding school in the township, followed by a junior high school in the county. The arduous journey to school, particularly during inclement weather, posed significant challenges. She still vividly remembers a friend who had suffered injuries in a traffic accident while en route to school.

Her older sister, Tenzin Chodron, faced even greater hardships on her educational path. "We never attended kindergarten. It wasn't until primary school that I first received education at the nearest boarding school," the 28-year-old recounted.

The distance between their home and the boarding



Students have a lunch break at Damshung County Middle School in Lhasa, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on November 10. Tenzin Nyida



Pupils play football at a primary school of Zhaxizom Township in Tingri County of Xigaze, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on June 5.
Jigme Dorje

Receiving education here has broadened my horizons and offers me more opportunities for a better future.

school was hazy in Tenzin Chodron's memory, but what remained clear was the strenuous nature of the journey, which saw her leaving home early on Sunday mornings and only arriving at school by nightfall.

"We really appreciated our parents' unwavering support for our education, as many parents often urge girls to get a job or get married after junior high school graduation," said the elder sister, who managed to go to university in central China's Hubei Province after years of studying in boarding schools, and is now working at an insurance company in Xigaze.

The younger sister has developed a passion for literature at school and is the president of the school's Tibetan

literature club. Her Tibetan-language articles have been published in local newspapers. The 18-year-old is now preparing for the national college entrance examination, slated for June of this year.

"I'm eager to explore the wider world outside the small county. Receiving education here has broadened my horizons and offers me more opportunities for a better future," she added.

Free choices

The number of commuting students at Lhasa-Jiangsu Experimental Middle School totaled about 30 last September. This number fluctuates based on changes in the needs of students and parents.

Tsering Norbu, 13, is among those who are commuting. He had previously been a boarding student at primary school, but now commutes every day between school and home after falling ill with gastroenteritis. His parents do not work in Lhasa, therefore, his grandparents need to accompany him on his daily commute.

The boy's personal experience informs him that there are advantages to both boarding and commuting options, but



Pupils attend a computer class at a primary school of Zhaxizom Township in Tingri County of Xigaze, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on June 5. *Jigme Dorje*



Pupils attend a piano class at a primary school of Zhaxizom Township in Tingri County of Xigaze, southwest China's Xizang Autonomous Region, on June 5. *Fei Maohua*

Parents participate in a round-table conference with school representatives, and they are able to offer suggestions on various aspects of school life.

he evidently prefers the former option.

“When boarding at school, I can make more friends, become more independent and enhance my learning efficiency. Plus, I don’t have to get up too early in the morning and it eases my elderly grandparents’ burden,” said Tsering Norbu, who is eager to resume boarding life on campus once fully recovered.

Jamba Yonten, a boarding school teacher in Lhunzhub County, made the decision to send his daughter, Namkha Lhamo, to the Lhasa-Beijing Experimental Middle School in

mid-August, despite access to junior high schools in Lhunzhub. Every Friday afternoon, he waits outside the school gate to pick her up and take her to their homes in either Lhasa or Lhunzhub.

Having witnessed children engaging in early smoking and drinking due to the absence of parents too busy with work, the father firmly believes that stringent supervision at boarding school is conducive to sound adolescent development. “The middle school years are a critical stage for children to get to know the world, and I hope she remains on the right path,” he said.

Jamba Yonten said that he has noticed improvements in his daughter since she started attending boarding school. She can make her own bed and do the laundry by herself. She even helps the adults do household chores. Her picky eating habits have also improved significantly. He attributes these swift changes to the disciplined, yet nurturing, environment at boarding school.

Jamba Yonten also believes that boarding schools in the regional capital offer advanced campus infrastructure and facilities, experienced teaching staff, diverse elective courses alongside compulsory subjects and rich cultural activities.

“There are many boarding schools in Europe and America, such as the famous Eton College. I don’t understand why the Western media outlets specifically target our boarding schools,” Jamba Yonten commented.

Like other boarding schools across the country, Lhasa-Jiangsu Experimental Middle School emphasizes family involvement in school education. Activities, such as parent committees and open school days, are regularly organized, inviting parents to participate in the management and planning of their children’s boarding lives and education.

Currently, the middle school boasts 60 classes, each of which has its own dedicated parent committee. During open school days, parents are encouraged to visit classrooms, canteens and dormitories, and communicate with various school departments, according to Migmar Cering, a school official. The most recent open school day welcomed approximately 180 parents.

“Parents participate in a round-table conference with school representatives and they are able to offer suggestions on various aspects of school life, while the school will make adjustment in accordance with their suggestions,” Migmar Cering said. In addition, parents are allowed to visit their children or deliver items to them at any time.

Deyung is an English teacher at a local boarding school, who firmly believes that allegations of so-called “forced assimilation” among Tibetan students are unfounded.

“We offer Tibetan language courses and grades for Tibetan language are the same as Chinese and English in the national college entrance examination. We have many Tibetan teachers who communicate with students in Tibetan both in and outside class, and we have various activities and clubs centered on the Tibetan language. We also attach great importance to traditional Tibetan festivals,” Deyung said.

The young teacher has observed a growing enthusiasm among her students for learning English. “My many students recognize that English is a very important tool that can help them better understand this diverse world. So, is learning English a form of Westernization?” She asked. (Xinhua) ■



This aerial photo shows a rice harvest machine working in Jimmen Village of Yongchuan District, southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, on August 13. *Wang Quanchao*

RUIJIN



National Historical and Cultural City