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Creating a New Era for Global Civilization Development by Deepening Exchanges and Mutual Learning

Summary: The international landscape has undergone deep changes in the past years, whereas the noise in the public opinion gives rise to the notions such as superiority, collision of civilizations, conflict of cultures etc. However, in the east of the world, China in the new era explores ways of interaction between nations and civilizations with its unique cultural spirit enriched by the concept of Chinese modernization and Xi Jinping's vision of the necessity of cooperation expansion among diverse civilizations. Committed to exchanges and integration of different civilizations and focusing on the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China vigorously advances the connectivity of people while at the same time building cooperation networks in, among other things, education, health, sports and tourism. China's proposal for globalization in the post-pandemic era refrains from drawing ideological lines, not targeting a third party, nor striving for the formation of an exclusive bloc. Instead, China advocates respect of diversity and differences and works on building a community with the common future for whole humanity.

Keywords: "Belt and Road", cooperation, exchange and learning, dialogue, connectivity of goods, people and ideas

On March 15, 2023, General Secretary Xi Jinping proposed for the first time the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI) at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting. The GCI, like the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative, is another important public good provided by China in the new era to address common global challenges and build a shared future for humanity. This year marks the tenth anniversary of General Secretary Xi Jinping's proposal of building a community with a shared future for mankind and the Belt and Road Initiative

(BRI). The GCI has further expanded the means and pathways towards the building of a community with a shared future for mankind, enriched the ideological connotation of the BRI, and offered Chinese solutions and contributed Chinese wisdom to promoting the exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations as well as advancing progress of human civilization.

In recent years, the international landscape has been undergoing profound changes. The various conflicts among different cultures and civilizations have not yet been eliminated, and

noises hyping up the notions such as superiority of certain civilizations and clash of civilizations have been lingering in the international public opinion arena. However, in the east of world, China in the new era has been exploring ways of interaction among nations and civilizations with its unique cultural spirit. With the continuous development of Chinese modernization, China has forged its own unique vision on civilizations. General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting: “As the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilizations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity’s modernization process and making the garden of world civilizations flourish.” Based on the features of the times and the development context of China, the GCI encapsulates the Chinese wisdom of state governance in the new era, follows the trend of world modernization and the law of human civilization development. With the GCI in mind, China will join hands with all countries to create a new era for global civilization cooperation through exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

Diversity of civilizations is a Necessary Law of the Development of Human History

Human history is one of plural civilizations prospering together in diversity. Interaction, collision and integration of different civilizations have brought about possibilities for progress of human

society and painted a colorful picture of the world moving forward. As early as remote antiquity, human beings created a variety of colorful original civilizations, including, among others, the Mesopotamia civilization, the Nile River Valley civilization, the Indus Valley civilization, the Yellow River and Yangtze River civilization, the Maya civilization, which all brimmed with unique splendors. 2000 years ago, Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, Socrates and Plato in ancient Greece and other great thinkers emerged, who were just like bright stars shining together and became high mountains that later generations look up to. The ideological propositions and ethical principles they put forward created cultural traditions of different ancient civilizations and jointly lit up the sparks of the age of reason in human civilization.

With the opening of new trade routes, individuals from different civilizations set foot on each other’s territory more frequently. The exchanges and cooperation among civilizations gave impetus to the progress of human society. The four great inventions of China were transmitted to Europe via the Arab world, which promoted the Renaissance and the religious reform and facilitated the emancipation of mind and social progress in Europe; Zheng He made seven voyages by his treasure-loaded ship to the Western seas and spread advanced technologies to the South Seas, which led to civilization and enlightenment of local communities; Matteo Ricci and Xu Guangqi jointly translated *Elements by Euclid*, which marked the beginning of the exchanges between Chinese and Western science. It can be seen that the exchanges and mutual learning of civilizations served as a basic form of human

social interaction in history, and had great significance for the common prosperity of human civilizations. Connectivity between regional civilizations and inclusion of global civilizations have provided an inexhaustible source of nutrients for the emergence of new philosophies and new ideas, pushing for the continued development of human civilizations in all forms.

However, the industrial revolution has led to rapid changes in balance of power between countries. With the expansion of colonialism, the diversity of world civilizations has been severely challenged. After two world wars, the world established the basic order and rules for international relations and entered a period based on independent nation states. After more than a hundred years of endeavors, a vast number of developing countries have finally embarked on their own modernization paths, and the collective rise of diverse groups has become an inevitable trend of world development. Consequently, many ancient civilizations have regained their vitality and confidence, bringing the world civilizations back to the track of diversified and inclusive development featuring open dialogue, mutual learning and drawing on each other's strengths. The diversity of human civilizations is bound to reappear, and the relations among civilizations are bound to return to equality. This is the general trend of human historical development and the aspiration of the people. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed in the GCI that "We advocate the respect for the diversity of civilizations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement,

mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority." China in the new era, guided by the vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among different civilizations, has become a practitioner and promoter of global civilization exchanges and mutual learning, contributing Chinese wisdom and Chinese strength to promoting diversity, coexistence and development of human civilizations.

Exchanges and Mutual Learning of Civilizations Have a Profound Bearing on Peace and Development of the World

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As human society enters the globalization era, the exchanges and communication among civilizations have been more intensive than ever before, providing a strong impetus for social development and progress. However, in recent years, the international political and economic situation has been rapidly changing, with anti-globalization thoughts being on the rise and all kinds of conflict happening frequently. In dealing with the multiple challenges facing the world, the significance of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations has become more prominent.

Exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations are an important driving force for peace and development of the world. Facing never ceasing gunfire, haunting terrors and piling conflicts in today's world, neither Francis Fukuyama's "the end of history" nor Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" can change the crises and dilemmas of the contemporary mankind. These theories,

in final analysis, advocate the standards of Western civilization and deviate from the spirit of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. The reality of today's world has proven that the attempts of putting a certain civilization above another, dividing the world into irreconcilable blocs and ignoring the possibility for harmonious coexistence among civilizations will gravely obstruct the relations among different countries and peaceful and stable development of international order. General Secretary Xi Jinping stressed that "We advocate the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation." The common values of humanity provide fundamental guidelines for all parties. Refraining from imposing one's own values and models to others is a manifestation of political civilization and represents the historical trend of human development. Human history tells us that the attempt to establish a unified world with a single civilization is only an unrealistic fantasy. Only by respecting the political systems, economic systems and religious philosophies under different historical backgrounds, cultural traditions and special national conditions, and by enhancing people's recognition of harmony without uniformity and inclusiveness of civilizations, can mankind find a way of coexistence among civilizations that eliminates barriers and misunderstandings, resolves clashes and conflicts, and ensures lasting peace and common development of the world.

The exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations can help countries better inherit and develop their traditional cultures. Thousands of years of human civilizations have produced beautiful and colorful fine traditional cultures in different countries, which well ground profound cultural and ethical pursuit of all peoples and represent the unique cultural identity of different nations. The fine traditional culture of a country belongs not only to its nation, but also to the whole world. How to treat our own traditional cultures? This is a question that any country must address well in the modernization process. For this question, General Secretary Xi Jinping offered a clear answer in proposing the GCI, "We advocate the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures." The exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations can help traditional cultures of various countries to spread widely to the world, and at the same time help them absorb the essence of various ideas and cultural elements, thus bringing these traditional cultures fully up to date and enhancing their vitality and influence.

Exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations will be the main driver for globalization in the post-pandemic era. As the international community is moving fast to remove the negative impact of COVID-19, the development and prosperity of the world call for mutual understanding, mutual exchanges, mutual learning and common development among different civilizations, so as to break the stubborn mindset of anti-globaliza-

tion. In face of global challenges, the wisdom and strength of civilizations are all the more needed to provide in-depth guidance for survival and development of all nations and all countries. China's proposal for globalization in the post-pandemic era refrains from drawing ideological lines, not engaging in values-oriented diplomacy, not targeting a third party, nor forming exclusive bloc. Instead, China advocates the respect for diversity and differences and works to build a community with a shared future for mankind. Building such a community is not only about close cooperation in the material dimension, but also about building a cohesive consensus in the cultural and ethical dimension and strengthening the bonds of identity. Through inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning, countries can enhance mutual understanding and mutual recognition, take into account the reasonable concerns of other countries while pursuing their own interests, and promote common development of all countries while seeking their own development.

China is a Firm Practitioner and Promoter of Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilizations

Since ancient times, China has forged a vision of diversity, tolerance and mutual learning on civilizations through its peaceful and friendly interactions with different countries and civilizations. The ancient Chinese sages have long realized that there is no such thing as a uniform standard for everything in the world. Therefore, the respect for diversity and

commitment to the harmonious coexistence have been transformed into the essence of thoughts and ideas nurtured in the ancient Chinese wisdom. It was observed in the Book of Rites that "All living things can grow in harmony without hurting one another, and different ways can run in parallel without interfering with one another".

This observation profoundly points out that the development of things is not possible without pursuing common ground while shelving differences and seeking openness and inclusiveness. During the Western Han Dynasty, the ancient Silk Road opened up by China not only served as a road of economic exchanges, but also a road of cultural exchanges and inter-civilization dialogue. The ancient Silk Road opened the window of interaction and dialogue between Arab and Western civilizations along the route. The connectivity of people, commodities and ideas greatly drove the common progress of civilizations along the Silk Road. At the same time, when facing the colorful external cultures, China opened the door of inclusion and integration with a broad mind. With the arrival of different cultures, an inclusive ideological and cultural system combining Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism came into being.

With the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence as its diplomatic guidance, China adheres to the diplomatic guideline of seeking common ground while reserving differences, and is committed to engaging in inter-civilization exchanges and dialogues with all ethnic groups and regions on an equal and harmonious basis. Especially since the reform and opening up, China has held high the banner of peace and development, participated extensively in the dialogue and exchanges among

countries and civilizations with its independent foreign policy of peace. China has promoted joint cooperation through joint participation, maintained long-term friendly dialogue and cooperation with the majority of third world countries, and gradually established relatively stable diplomatic and dialogue relations with the world's major countries, especially with the Western countries. In the process of exchanges and mutual learning, China has always been committed to promoting South-South cooperation and North-South dialogue, and enhancing coordination and cooperation with emerging and developing countries. China has worked together with developing countries to seek opportunities and prospects for modernization and social progress.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary Xi Jinping has set great store by the exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations and proposed a new vision on civilization, which outlines the way forward for the development of diverse civilizations. Taking into consideration both the domestic and international situation, China in the new era has successively put forward important ideas such as the initiative to build a community with a shared future for mankind, the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, demonstrating China's broad mind and sense of responsibility to work for peace and development of the whole world.

Not only is China an advocate of civilization exchanges and mutual learning, but even more so its practitioner and promoter. Guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China has been advancing inter-civilization exchanges and dialogue through concrete actions.

Committing to the exchanges and integration of diverse civilizations and focusing on high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, China has been vigorously advancing Belt and Road people-to-people connectivity and has built cooperation networks in education, health, sports and tourism, among others. China has developed new models for dialogue and cooperation among civilizations. It has established a series of platforms for inter-civilization dialogue, including the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting, Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, Conference on Dialogue between Chinese and African Civilizations. All these platforms have become mechanisms for open and equal communication among civilizations, providing lasting and strong impetus for deepening inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning. In February 2023, the Center of Chinese and Greek Ancient Civilizations was established jointly by China and Greece, setting a good example for exchange and mutual learning between Chinese and foreign civilizations.

Amid the once-in-a-century changes, the world is once again at the crossroads of history. The GCI proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping has built a bridge of inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning for upholding world peace and development. As another important intellectual contribution made by China to human civilizations, the GCI will move forward with China, a country moving closer to the center of the world stage, to have a profound bearing on the forms and pattern of human civilizations, usher in a new era of development of global civilization and present a beautiful vision for the world's modernization process.