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**Indispensable multilateralism**

From January 25 to January 29, the World Economic Forum held the ‘Davos Agenda’ through video conference for the very first time. More than 2,000 politicians and business leaders around the world exchanged opinions online.

Chinese President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech, ‘Let the Torch of Multilateralism Light up Humanity’s Way Forward’, comprehensively analyzing the "four major issues" facing the world today and putting forward the "four persistences" necessary to cope with the global challenges, and China’s "five continuations" in helping each other and cooperating with other countries in the world.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." At the Opening Session of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2017, President Xi Jinping quoted English writer Charles Dickens to describe this world full of contradictions, challenges and uncertainties. Today, four years later, humankind is facing more crises and challenges. The Covid-19 pandemic is still disseminating globally, the world economy is in deep recession, and the global industrial chain and supply chain are suffering. Unilateralism, protectionism and bullying are on the rise, economic globalization has encountered a counter-current, and humanity has experienced multiple crises that are rare in history.

Against this background, President Xi Jinping pointed out that the world’s problems are complex and the way out is to maintain and practise multilateralism and promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

First, persistence in multilateralism is derived from the summary of historical experience. In the face of major global problems, no country can solve them by going alone. Global actions and cooperation are necessary. After the end of World War II, it was under the banner of multilateralism that a global governance body with the UN as its mainstay was established, and it played an important role in the global governance system. It has created a sound foundation for the development of human society towards modernization. However, in recent years, the undercurrents of unilateralism have been surging, and the phenomenon of hegemony has become prominent.

Some countries have engaged in "small circles" and "new cold wars", repelling, threatening, and intimidating others. Man-made isolation can only push the world into division or even confrontation. These phenomena not only do nothing to solve the common problems currently facing the world, but also create new contradictions and conflicts for the development of the post-pandemic era, and further aggravate the instability and uncertainty of the world.

Second, multilateralism has gradually become the basic consensus for development in the post-pandemic era, but ‘what kind of multilateralism’ is practised is still a key issue that the world urgently needs to clarify. President Xi Jinping clearly put forward the practice of the "four persistences" of multilateralism – persistence in openness and inclusiveness, and refrain from isolation and exclusivity; persistence on the basis of international law and refrain from soloism; persistence in consultation and cooperation, refrain from conflict and confrontation; persistence in advancing with the times, refrain from being complacent.

There are no two leaves that are exactly the same in the world, and the history, culture and social systems of various countries will not be completely consistent. Whether a country’s development path is appropriate or not, only its people have the final say. The key lies in whether it can gain the support of the people, whether it can bring about sustainable development and promote people’s livelihood, and whether it can contribute to development of society and humanity. Countries must respect differences in historical culture and social systems, and resolve conflicts and differences through consultation and dialogue.

Third, multilateralism in the 21st century must be based on the present and face the future. We must not only adhere to the core values and basic principles of multilateralism, but also focus on meeting the needs of global challenges, actively play the role of the WHO, promote the reform of the WTO and the international financial and monetary system, discuss the formulation of global digital governance rules, implement the ‘Paris Agreement’, implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promote equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal rules, so that people of all countries can share development opportunities and results.

The "Four Persistences" clarified a series of questions about what should be upheld and what should not be done, which further enriched the spiritual connotation of multilateralism.

We have only one earth, and only one common future. Every choice we make today and every action we take will determine the future of the world. As a staunch defender and practitioner of multilateralism, China adheres to a mutually beneficial opening strategy, continues to promote sustainable development and technological innovation, and engages in the construction of a new type of international relations.

In 2020, China continued to take firm steps in pursuing multilateralism. We actively participated in the domestic and global fight against the pandemic and the reform of the global governance system, deeply implemented the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and deepened international cooperation in areas such as women and children, biodiversity, agriculture, poverty alleviation etc, implementing the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind through solid practices.

Important exhibitions were held in China as scheduled. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP) was successfully signed, and the China-EU Investment Agreement negotiations were successfully completed. At the same time, cooperation with the ‘Belt and Road’ countries including Pakistan has continued to deepen, and the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has entered a new stage of development, and further cooperation will be carried out in the fields of industrial cooperation, agriculture, education, medical care, and people's livelihood.

After experiencing the fight against the pandemic, humanity has more deeply realized the importance and urgency of practising multilateralism and building a community with a shared future for humanity. Whether it is to deal with the current global public crisis or to create a happy and beautiful life in the future, as long as human beings can join hands and let the torch of multilateralism light the way forward, we will surely be able to continue towards this destiny of humanity amid thorns.

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