**New Year, New Policy, New Opportunities**

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Ushering in the new year of 2023, a retrospect of the previous year is precious. For both the world and China, the outgoing 2022 is critical in bridging the past and the future. Successfully convened the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), China embarked on a Chinese path to modernization. China has made coordinated progress in COVID-19 response and in economic and social development. China’s GDP for the whole year is expected to exceed 120 trillion yuan. Since the onset of COVID-19, China has always been committed to?a people-first and life-first philosophy. When the pandemic was at its worst, China mobilized all resources to protect the lives and health of every single person at all costs, and achieved great success in pandemic prevention and control. China has kept both the COVID infection rate and the fatality rate way lower than figures of other major countries. Keeping the COVID situation in check, China has been able to maintain its own economic growth and made important contribution to keeping the global industrial and supply chains stable and unimpeded. In 2021, China’s trade in goods exceeded 6 trillion US dollars, hitting another record, and this figure grew by 9.9% year-on-year in the first three quarters of 2022. China continues to provide quality products with good prices to the world. Its enormous market has also provided bigger and bigger opportunities to the international community. Facts have proved that China’s COVID response and policy have been science-based, correct and effective. Moreover, China promoted the building of a community of common health for mankind. It took the lead in making vaccines an international public good, providing 2 billion doses of vaccines and a large amount of anti-pandemic materials to the world. We are proud that Pakistan is the first country to receive the vaccine gifted by the Chinese government and military.

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China has formulated and implemented COVID policy based on realities and the changing conditions. With medical systems fortified, new variants getting tamer and 90 percent of its population get vaccinated, China recently announced new measures to optimize its anti-pandemic policies, which include the removal of measures to control the number of international flights and further restoration of people-to-people exchanges. We consider it?necessary to?further facilitate the flow of personnel between China and other countries, ensure stable and smooth industrial and supply chains, and foster new drivers for global development.

New COVID policy will expedite the implementation of the important consensus reached between leadership of the two countries during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s visit to China. The JWG meetings under the CPEC framework and the annual JCC meeting will be expected conducted face-to-face. Exchange of personnel at various levels from all circles would be enhanced. More Pakistani students are welcomed to China for further study. More delegations and business groups will pay on-site visit to Pakistan naturally. The facilitation of investments between China and Pakistan will be resulted. Our bilateral cooperation, including the CPEC projects would enjoy more robust energy that will bring more benefits to the two peoples.

As the world’s second largest consumer market, second largest source of foreign investment and a major trading partner of over 140 countries and regions, China stays committed to promoting high-level opening up and accelerating efforts to foster a new development paradigm. The year 2023 marks the tenth anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative. Going forward, China will continue to carry out science-based and targeted COVID response measures, and actively promote high-quality development with global vision, contributing to world economic recovery, and bring more opportunities to China-Pakistan cooperation.

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*The writer is Ambassador of People’s Republic of China to Pakistan.*