

Global Civilization Initiative Adds Diversity to Garden of World Civilizations

Wang Chao

Diversity spurs interaction among civilizations, which in turn promotes mutual learning and their further development. Since the dawn of the new era, President Xi Jinping has expounded on major international occasions China's positions and solutions regarding development, exchanges and mutual learning among world cultures and civilizations. In his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations five years ago, President Xi Jinping made four proposals on strengthening exchanges and mutual learning. At the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting in March 2023, President Xi elaborated on the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), stating that "We are ready to work together with the international community to open up a new prospect of enhanced exchanges and understanding among different peoples and better interactions and integration of diversified cultures. Together, we can make the garden of world

Wang Chao is President of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs.

civilizations colorful and vibrant.” The GCI is another important public good offered by China to the international community alongside the Global Development Initiative and the Global Security Initiative. It contributes China’s wisdom and offers a source of inspiration as mankind strives for the progress of civilizations and tackles common global challenges.

With a broad vision, the GCI charts the course for the progress of human civilizations.

In today’s world, major changes unseen in a century are unfolding at a fast pace. The human society is going through twists and turns, pulled by the two tendencies of unity and division and confronted with challenges and opportunities, which have brought instability and uncertainty. To address the outstanding problems and issues down the road, human beings must rely on material means against all odds and, equally important, cultural strength to rectify mind through sincere thinking. The human civilization is standing at a crossroads, facing the question of which path to take. In response to the difficulties and challenges for the development of world civilizations by uniting all countries, President Xi Jinping proposed the GCI, contributing China’s wisdom and solutions to the progress of human civilizations. At the theoretical level, the GDI points the way forward for human civilizations, envisions the prosperity of the garden of world civilizations, and finds strength in cultures and civilizations for the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. At the practical level, it provides an answer to how civilizations coexist and injects strong and positive energy into an equal and orderly multi-polar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. It is of great significance for achieving the UN Sustainable Development

Goals and safeguarding world peace and security.

President Xi Jinping said, “To promote the development of human society and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind, we must have a deep understanding and appreciation of the time-honored origin and richness of all civilizations to ensure the present generation and the entire humanity benefit from the essence of all civilizations.” Since ancient times, the Chinese civilization has interacted with and learned from other civilizations in an open and inclusive way. This has been an inexhaustible source of vitality that sustains the inheritance and development of the Chinese civilization. With its own development, the Chinese civilization has given a strong boost to the progress of human civilizations. The CPC has united and led the Chinese people in promoting Chinese modernization. All along the way, we uphold independence and keep to China’s reality, while drawing on the experience of other countries and all fine results of human civilizations. This has made it possible for us to make world-acclaimed achievements in modernization. The GCI is deeply rooted in the fine traditional Chinese culture and the practice and exploration of Chinese modernization. Drawing lessons from the history of various civilizations that was punctuated by periods of peace and chaos, the GDI calls for inclusive and open-minded mutual learning among civilizations and shows China’s style as a great civilization. It also demonstrates the CPC’s deep insight into the trajectory of human civilizations and its broad vision and sense of responsibility to promote human progress and world harmony.

The GCI echos the common aspirations of the international community for the harmonious coexistence and mutual reinforcement among various civilizations. It has received

widespread attention and active support far and wide since it was proposed. At the Understanding China Conference, the Liangzhu Forum and the Taihu World Cultural Forum, international political leaders spoke highly of the GCI, saying that the GCI respects the efforts of people in different countries to find their own development paths, accords with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, and helps to promote dialogue and cooperation in place of hegemonic thinking. As an important consensus, the GCI has been included in the joint statements, press releases or declarations between China and countries such as Russia, Serbia, Hungary, Zambia, and Maldives, as well as regions including Central Asia, the Arab League, Lancang-Mekong Region.

With its rich content, the GCI provides an answer to the question of the times: how human civilizations should develop.

The GCI is underpinned by “four joint advocacy”, i.e., members of international community should jointly advocate respecting the diversity of civilizations, promoting common values of humanity, attaching importance of inheritance and innovation of civilizations, and strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. It holds that civilizations should draw on each other’s strength and make common progress, work together to solve major issues bearing on the future of the world and mankind, and promote the progress of human civilizations.

Respecting the diversity of civilizations. President Xi Jinping stated 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.” The diversity is what defines our world and makes human civilizations fascinating. The progress of human civilizations does not lie in the dominance of a certain civilization, but in the prosperity of different civilizations flourishing together. There are more than 200 countries and regions in the world, and more than 2,500 ethnic groups and a large variety of religions. Different histories, national conditions, ethnic groups and customs have given birth to different civilizations. Diversity brings about exchanges, exchanges breeds integration, and integration leads to progress. The diversity of human civilizations makes the world a colorful place. No civilization is superior or inferior to others; every civilization is special and unique to its own region. Differences in civilization should not be a source of global conflict, but rather a driving force for the advancement of human civilization. In dealing with different civilizations, countries should have a broad and inclusive mind and go beyond the barriers to interaction. Only by drawing on wisdom from one another, can mankind create new achievements of civilization.

Promoting the common values of humanity. As President Xi Jinping remarked, “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.” Global threats and challenges have kept emerging in recent years, such as the growing deficits in peace, development, security and governance. As mankind rise and fall together, only through

unity and cooperation can countries successfully tackle global challenges. However, under the pretext of “universal values”, some countries go their ways to interfere in others’ internal affairs, incite conflict and confrontation, and undermine countries’ efforts to tide over crises through unity and cooperation. China advocates the common values of humanity and accommodate both universality and particularity. It is important to not only build consensus on the common values of different civilizations and but also respect the different and particular pathways countries and civilizations take for realizing their own values. This will help to unite mankind in will and strength to meet global challenges and point the right way for countries to pursue modernization and build a better world.

Attaching importance to the inheritance and innovation of civilizations. President Xi Jinping said that “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.” Inheritance is to protect the foundation of civilizations, and innovation is to drive the development of civilizations. For a civilization to endure, efforts must be made to keep it alive and build on its heritage from one generation to the next. More importantly, a civilization needs to adapt itself to the changing time and break new ground. It is important to uphold fine traditions but not absolute practices, and respect ancient wisdom but not antiquated thinking. New ideas of mankind are nourished in the fertile soil of traditional civilizations, develop in the course of inheritance and innovate in the course of development. They flow and shine in the long river of history, providing wisdom and strength for mankind to solve the problems of the time. We

should carry forward fine cultures across time and space and across countries, not only valuing and preserving the fine traditional cultures of our own nation, but also learning and absorbing the essence of other civilizations, so as to find wisdom and inner strength to solve the difficult problems of the time and let the essence of all civilizations benefit the present generation and all mankind.

Strengthening international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. President Xi Jinping stated that “We advocate robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilization dialogue and cooperation, enrich the contents of exchanges and expand avenues of cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilizations.” International people-to-people exchanges and cooperation are based on mutual understanding and respect among different civilizations, play an important role in deepening political mutual trust, economic ties and practical cooperation between countries, and consolidate public support for building a new type of international relations. In the face of resurgent notions such as “clash of civilizations” and superiority of certain civilizations, rising anti-globalization sentiment and other challenges, countries should make a rational choice between common prosperity or conflict and confrontation, innovation and progress or stagnation and retrogression. In this context, we should strengthen international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation, promote inter-civilization exchanges and mutual learning, tighten the bond of interactions between countries, build bridges of communication between peoples, and write new chapters in the world’s colorful civilizations.

Promoting dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations and mutual understanding among the people

Friendship between the peoples holds the key to good relations between countries, and heart-to-heart communication contribute to deeper friendship. People-to-people exchanges and heart-to-heart communication will help to eliminate cultural estrangement and barriers, enhance the resilience of state-to-state relations, and create conditions for the implementation of the GCI. People-to-people diplomacy plays a unique and important role in facilitating people-to-people cultural exchanges with foreign countries and promoting people-to-people connectivity. On the new journey, we should continue to give full play to the important role of people-to-people diplomacy, actively deliver on the GCI, promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, and advance the building of a community with a shared future for mankind.


Providing high-quality services for the overall diplomacy. People-to-people diplomacy is an important part of the overall diplomacy of the country. Under the leadership of the CPC, people-to-people diplomacy builds on the strength of the people and coordinates resources across society, making important contribution to major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics. On the new journey, people-to-people diplomacy will continue to adhere to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, implement in an all-round way Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy and Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, and keep to the priorities of the Party and the country. Guided by head-of-state diplomacy and in close coordination with official diplomacy, people-to-people diplomacy will promote international exchanges and cooperation as well as

dialogue and interactions among civilizations, and do its own part to enable deeper understanding and appreciation of the GCI by more people across the world.

Enhancing people's friendship at a deeper level. The profound friendship between the peoples is the source of strength for the development of state-to-state relations. People-to-people diplomacy stays close to the people, reflects their perspectives, conveys their wishes, and promotes mutual understanding and genuine communication between the Chinese people and people of other countries. Carried out in flexible ways and through diverse channels, people-to-people diplomacy can reach out broadly and forge deep friendships. Amicable interactions could be held with current and former political leaders, think tanks, scholars, media, sub-national governments, as well as social institutions and groups in various countries. Particular attention will be given to youth exchanges, which will carry forward the cause of people's friendship and promote friendship and amity with people of other countries.

Expanding exchanges and mutual learning in all dimensions. Promoting dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations is a momentous task, which requires synergy and joint efforts in all dimensions. It is important to improve planning, expand channels, enrich content, and build platforms for mutual learning and common development among civilizations through exchanges, mutual visits and international forums, so as to promote economic, political, educational, scientific and technological, and cultural exchanges between countries. Acting on the vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations, people-to-people diplomacy can present diverse world civilizations

to the Chinese people, showcase the unique charm and vitality of the Chinese civilization to the people of other countries, and encourage different civilizations to live in harmony and help each other succeed.

Telling the stories of China from different angles. Telling the stories of China well is essential to promoting exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations. One important mission of people-to-people diplomacy is to present a real, multi-dimensional and panoramic picture of China by the narrative understandable and interesting to people from other countries, and the discourse appealing and attractive to an international audience. More and more people in the world show a keen interest in the Chinese path, theory, system and culture. People-to-people diplomacy will strive to tap into the vivid and vibrant stories and cases and use broad exchange platforms to tell the stories of China in a convincing way about how the CPC governs the country, how the Chinese people work to realize their dreams, and what China has done to promote peaceful development and win-win cooperation. Building on the past and looking to the future, people-to-people diplomacy will draw wisdom from home and abroad to enable a better understanding of China in a new era. 

(Reprinted from People's Daily, 7th Edition, May 23, 2024)