

# “中国与世界”系列报告之五



## 携手抗疫： 推进构建周边命运共同体

Jointly Tackling COVID-19  
for a Community of Shared Future in China's Neighborhood

Together We Fight  
against the Virus

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## **Abstract**

COVID-19 has created the gravest global public health crisis since the beginning of this century. However, its sudden outbreak has met with a joint and united response from China and countries in its neighborhood. In the early days of the outbreak, China’s neighbors, from their state leaders to people from all walks of life, found various ways of reaching out to China, with leaders from Cambodia, Mongolia and Pakistan going ahead with visits to China in spite of the outbreak. As COVID-19 spreads globally, China, while continuing to make prevention and control efforts at home, has made utmost efforts to aid neighboring countries in their fight by, among others, offering to share best practices, send medical teams, and provide in-kind and cash assistance. Driven by the vision of a community of shared future for mankind, China has made great contributions to regional and global public health security. Its efforts have been commended by neighboring countries and recognized by numerous regional and international organizations.

While the spread of the virus has somewhat abated in China and its neighbors, it remains rampant globally. China and its neighbors are therefore in a difficult position of having to prevent the virus’s spread both on and into their territories. The international cooperation against COVID-19 has also entered a new stage. Building on the successful work done together in the previous stage, China and its neighboring countries need to step up cooperation in such key areas as increased policy communication and coordination, expanded information sharing channels, adequate supplies and personnel, new joint research, better policy communication, and strong economic and trade cooperation. The existing bilateral and multilateral mechanisms also need to be put into full use to make possible more effective cooperation in a joint bid to defeat the virus.



The COVID-19 outbreak has underscored the unprecedented level of interdependence and interconnection in a globalized world, one that is becoming a community of shared future. Future non-conventional security threats such as one caused by other public health crisis are sure to emerge. It is therefore important for China and its neighboring countries to turn the joint battle against COVID-19 into an opportunity to move faster with the creation of community of shared future based on existing cooperation against non-conventional security threats.

## **Introduction**

The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has taken a heavy social and economic toll on China and neighboring countries. However, instead of flinching or passing the buck, China and its neighbors have collectively responded to this common public security threat with unprecedented solidarity and mutual support. Across the region, both state and non-state players have shown a shared commitment to building regional security consensus and jointly containing the spread of the virus, in a vivid sign of friendly ties defined by supporting each other through thick and thin.

As COVID-19 continues its global rampage, the international community's response against it has entered a crucial stage. The virus, though abating slightly in China and its neighboring countries, could rear its ugly head again anytime. What is needed now is by no means slackened efforts but continuous investment in outbreak response as the top priority in regional cooperation. It is important for all parties to closely follow and determine the possible courses of the outbreak, identify loopholes and priorities, so that targeted and concerted efforts could be made to keep the situation under tight control, until the day as the virus is completely defeated.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 will not be the last major epidemic to hit this region. It has been a wakeup call on the urgent need for greater regional public security, pushing China and its neighbors to seek a higher level of non-conventional security cooperation and move faster towards a community of shared future.

## **I. China and Neighboring Countries Combating COVID-19 Outbreak**

China and neighboring countries have been coping with the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 through cooperation and mutual support. China's neighbors have expressed sympathy and sent generous aid to China in a number of ways. In addition to engaging other countries in the region in communications about joint prevention and control measures through bilateral and multilateral cooperation mechanisms, China, in return, has done its best to help out its neighbors.

### **1.1 Neighboring Countries Providing Strong Support for China's COVID-19 Response**

Since the outbreak, China has gained world-wide support in its fight against the spread of the virus. Leaders of more than 170 countries and over 40 international and regional organizations have expressed sympathy, support and commendation for China's effective efforts via correspondence, phone calls or public statements.<sup>1</sup> As of March 18th, as many as 79 countries and 10 international organizations have provided in-kind assistance to China.<sup>2</sup> Bound together with China by geographical proximity and close ties, the neighboring countries in particular have given strong support to China via different channels. The friendship and intertwined interests between China and its neighbors are mirrored by the emotional and material support China has received in many ways from people across the region, be it Northeast Asia or Southeast Asia, South Asia or Central Asia.

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<sup>1</sup> Zheng Guichu, Standing in Solidarity in Tough Times: a Community of a Shared Future for Mankind in the Fight against COVID-19, huanqiu.com, March 16, 2020, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/3xRRYJTImkJ>.

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference Online on March 18 2020, Official Website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt\\_673021/t1757637.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/t1757637.shtml).

**Leaders of Cambodia, Mongolia and Pakistan visiting China despite the outbreak.** Adversity reveals true friendship. The successive visits of Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Mongolian President Battulga, and Pakistan President Alvi came at a special moment when China was battling the outbreak at home. While demonstrating to the whole world the three countries’ support to China, these simple and yet sincere gestures also underscored the robust friendship that China has with Cambodia, Mongolia and Pakistan, one that is based on solidarity and shared interests.

On February 5th, at the peak of the outbreak in China, Prime Minister Hun Sen of Cambodia paid a visit to China, making himself the first foreign leader to come to China in person to show support. When meeting with Prime Minister Hun Sen, President Xi Jinping cited the saying that “a friend in need is a friend indeed” and highlighted the fact that Cambodian people are standing with the Chinese people at this special hour as a proof of the unbreakable friendship and deep trust between the two countries and an example of demonstrating solidarity through thick and thin, a defining feature of the China-Cambodia community with a shared future. Prime Minister Hun Sen said Cambodian people will stand firmly with the Chinese people, hailing this as a true “hard-core” friendship. He also spoke against the extreme restrictive measures taken by certain countries, calling them unhelpful and not warranted by the epidemic.<sup>1</sup>

On February 27th, Mongolian President Khaltmaa Battulga took a concrete step in recognition of China’s fruitful prevention and control efforts by paying a visit to China. During the meeting between the two leaders, President Xi Jinping said that President Battulga’s special visit, as the first head of state to visit China after the outbreak, is a show of solidarity and

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<sup>1</sup> President Xi Jinping Meets with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 5, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1740858.shtml>.



support, speaking volumes of the high importance the President and the Mongolian side attach to relations with China and of the profound goodwill toward the Chinese people. The kind gesture fully demonstrates the spirit of mutual assistance in difficult times shared between China and Mongolia as neighbors. President Battulga stated that Mongolian people keenly feel the suffering of the Chinese people and are standing side by side with the Chinese people in this trying moment, adding that Mongolia will step up its donation to China with a gift of 30,000 sheep.<sup>1</sup>

Pakistani President Arif Alvi visited China on March 16th. As the President's first foreign visit after taking office and scheduled at the special moment when the Chinese government and people were close to defeating COVID-19, his visit once again highlighted the two countries' all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and NPC Chairman Li Zhanshu held separate meetings with him. According to President Alvi, Pakistan and China have an extraordinary relationship, and it is when China is in need that it becomes all the more important for Pakistan to stand firmly with China. The Pakistani leadership and people all support him in visiting China, mainly for the purpose of showing support and confidence in friends in China and of drawing international attention to China's enormous achievements in outbreak control and active contributions to global public health security. As a vivid example of the "iron-clad" China-Pakistan relations and the honorable tradition of solidarity, this visit will take China-Pakistan all-round cooperation to a deeper level.<sup>2</sup>

**Neighboring countries reaching out to China.** Since the outbreak,

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<sup>1</sup> President Xi Jinping Held Talks with Mongolian President Khaltmaa Battulga, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 27, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1750173.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> President Xi Jinping Held Talks with Pakistani President Arif Alvi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 17, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1757053.shtml>.

leaders from neighboring countries have shown support and commended China for its extraordinary efforts to cope with COVID-19 via phone calls or other means.

As China’s comprehensive strategic partner of coordination for a new era, Russia has offered numerous rounds of staunch support to China, speaking for the Russian government and people’s heartfelt support for China’s efforts and the time-honored solidarity between the two countries. Right after the outbreak began, Russian President Vladimir Putin immediately called President Xi Jinping, offering his consolation to the many families hit by the outbreak for their grief and loss. President Putin expressed his confidence that the sweeping measures taken by the Chinese government will help stop the spread of the virus and vowed necessary assistance and close cooperation from Russia’s competent authorities to put an end to this common threat at an early date.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of the outbreak, Russia already donated 23 tons or 2.27 million sets of medical items to China, including medical masks, gloves,



goggles and protective clothing. Health experts also came to China to discuss joint response measures with their Chinese counterparts.<sup>2</sup> Russia's Rossiyskaya Gazeta newspaper on

February 10th wrote in

Russian government provides medical supplies to China.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign political leaders commending and supporting China's fight against COVID-19, February 2, 2020, *People's Daily*, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0202/c1002-31566768.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Epidemic Observation: Several Aspects of China-Russia Joint Fight Against COVID-19, March 2, 2020, *The Beijing News*, <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/news/2020/03/02/698021.html>.

an editorial that China and Russia are friends sharing weal and woe and spoke highly of China's measures to combat the virus. The newspaper also published touching posters rooting for China and displaying solidarity. These are all measurements of how sincere the Russian government and people are in supporting China's outbreak response.<sup>1</sup>

Enjoying a long-standing friendship with China, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was also among the first friendly neighboring countries to have come to China's aid in the face of the outbreak. On February 1st, the DPRK's top leader Kim Jong Un wrote to General Secretary Xi Jinping that the Korean Workers' Party and the DPRK people are saddened to watch the spread of the virus in China as if the same thing were happening to their own kin and that they sincerely offer to help the Chinese people withstand the pains and test.<sup>2</sup> A relief fund was offered to the CPC central committee, as decided by the political bureau of the central committee of the Korean Workers' Party on January 31st. That was hardly an easy decision to make, given the country's own domestic economic difficulties.

The government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) has also provided supplies and moral support to China many times since the outbreak started. On January 28th, President Moon Jae-in of the ROK, in his letter to President Xi Jinping, recognized China's timely response, expressed his hope that the outbreak would be brought under control as soon as possible and pledged to provide the aid and assistance China needs.<sup>3</sup> On February 7th, President Moon

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference Online on February 10, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 10, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt\\_673021/jzhsl\\_673025/t1742871.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1742871.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> The DPRK's top leader Kim Jong Un sends signed consolation letter to Xi Jinping, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 1, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1738736.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> Wei Zhijiang and Lin Yihong, China and South Korea join hands to fight the COVID-19 outbreak, February 27, 2020, *China Pictorial*, [http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/zt2020/20200116\\_fyyq/202002/t20200227\\_800194827.html](http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/zt2020/20200116_fyyq/202002/t20200227_800194827.html).

Jae-in stated that China and ROK are close neighbors, and to help a neighbor is to help oneself.<sup>1</sup> Apart from taking back its nationals in China, the charter airplanes sent by the ROK government also brought to China 2 million face masks and 100 thousand sets of protective clothing along with other medical supplies.<sup>2</sup> Help also came from local authorities, the business community and friendly organizations in the ROK, with the city of Seoul donating aid worth



Embassy of ROK in China puts up a banner saying “we take China’s difficulty as ours.”

600 million won to 12 Chinese cities, including Beijing and Chongqing. Banners with words “China’s difficulties are ours” and “Stay strong China” in Chinese hang outside the ROK Embassy in China.<sup>3</sup>

Since the outbreak, significant amount of support has been given to China from all quarters of the Japanese

society, causing a sensation in China. Japan is the first country to send aid to China, with the first batch of masks and protective suits arriving in China as early as January 25th.<sup>4</sup> On January 26th, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi that Japan applauds the active and forceful measures adopted by the Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> Moon Jae-in says South Korea is willing to continue backing China in outbreak fight, February 10, 2020, People.cn, <http://korea.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0210/c407881-31579221.html>.

<sup>2</sup> South Korea plans to provide 2 million face masks and other medical supplies to China, January 28, 2020, People.cn, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0128/c1002-31563814.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Zhang Xiaoya et al, We need to keep in mind the actions of South Korea and Japan this time! February 11, 2020, huanqiu.com, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKpjsf>.

<sup>4</sup> Who is our true friend? Our statistics of donations from various countries, February 14, 2020, IFENG.com, <https://news.ifeng.com/c/7u4EvDmuCau>.

government and people to control the spread of the virus. As a true friend does his best to help out a friend in need, the Japanese side is willing to work with China to tackle the threat of COVID-19 and offer all-round support and assistance.<sup>1</sup> On February 17th, the Japanese government again sent 5,220 goggles and 5,000 protective suits in donations to China through charter flights, plus protective suits and gloves donated by the prefectures of Tokyo and Oita and the private sector.<sup>2</sup> Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) called upon its members in the Diet to each donate 5,000 yen to China.<sup>3</sup> Quite a number of Japanese cities offered assistance to their sister Chinese cities. Poems written on many aid packages that arrived in China from Japan such as "Though we live in different lands, the same moon and sky make us one", and "Fear not the want of arm or, for mine is yours to wear", became a trendy topic in China. As a sign of support for China, the Japanese Embassy in China posted on social media another verse: "When a ship is caught in a storm halfway in its voyage, all fellow passengers on board will unite as one to fight the storm, for everyone has the same concern." As the two neighbors



A Japanese girl in red cheongsam  
raising money for Wuhan.

<sup>1</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi spoke over phone with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, January 27, 2020, <http://cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0127/c64094-31562960.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy in Japan answers reporter's questions on China's donation of new Coronavirus nucleic acid detection kit to Japan, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Japan, February 20, 2020, <http://www.china-embassy.or.jp/chn/sgxxs/t1747235.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Wang Xiaoxia et al, Global Observation: Why Japan's Liberal Democratic Party asks Diet members to donate 5,000 yen each to China, February 13, 2020, People.cn, <http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0213/c35421-31585743.html>.



joined hands to combat COVID-19, these cultural interactions are a proof of their time-honored ties.

After the outbreak began, leaders of political parties and governments from the five countries in the Mekong River basin sent consolation and support to China via phone or correspondence, and people from different social sectors also provided aid to China in various ways. Cambodian King Norodom Sihamoni and Queen Mother Norodom Monineath offered sympathy and generous assistance to China separately, with the Cambodian government calling on its nationals in China to join the Chinese people in the struggle against the virus. Thailand was the first country to report confirmed cases outside China. Since the outbreak began, Thailand has stayed in close contact with China. King and Queen Vajiralongkorn, and the Thai government donated medical supplies to China. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha explicitly vowed not to deny access to Chinese arrivals, and expressed his confidence that patients will be cured and the outbreak brought under control. Chinese compatriots in Thailand who were confirmed to have been infected were given free treatment by highly competent medical teams. According to Bounnhang Vorachith, General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and President of Laos, after the outbreak began, thanks to the personal commitment and strong leadership of General Secretary Xi Jinping, the Central Leading Group on Responding to the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia Outbreak was established, and a comprehensive, timely outbreak response was initiated. These efforts have helped to protect not just the Chinese people, but people from other parts of the world. Myanmar President U Win Myint stated that as a friendly neighbor, Myanmar stands ready to work closely with China to ride out current hardship. The Myanmar government, the military and all sectors of society made cash and in-kind donations, giving strong support to China's outbreak

prevention and control. Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc expressed the Vietnamese people's concerns and sympathy about the ongoing difficulties facing the Chinese people. Northern border provinces in Vietnam sent aid through different channels to their Chinese neighboring provinces, and its medical institutions also provided timely medical treatment to confirmed cases of Chinese patients in Vietnam.<sup>1</sup>

Other Southeast Asian countries have also provided swift support to China. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte expressed willingness to join hands with China in responding to the outbreak and called for an end to xenophobia. Multiple overseas Chinese organizations donated 39 million Philippine Pesos (roughly RMB 5.3 million yuan). Singapore President Halimah Yacob and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong have both written to President Xi Jinping to convey deepest condolences to the Chinese families grieving the loss of their loved one to the outbreak and to express Singapore's willingness for collective actions at various levels against the outbreak with China. According to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, an outbreak is a public health event and racial discrimination should be frowned upon.<sup>2</sup> The then Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir pointed out that China's measures show the government's determination and confidence in the fight against the outbreak. Malaysia will send aid as part of a joint effort to help Wuhan overcome the crisis. During a telephone conversation with President Xi Jinping, Indonesian President Joko Widodo offered sympathy and support to the Chinese people. The Indonesian government donated emergency medical aid, including medical masks and protective clothing. Multiple Indonesian cabinet and parliamentary members voiced sympathy and support to China by

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<sup>1</sup> Wu Jinguang, Xiong Shunqing, Five countries in the Lancang-Mekong basin support China's fight against COVID-19, February 22, 2020, People.cn, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0222/c1002-31599198.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Unite global efforts for science- and evidence-based measures against COVID-19, March 17, 2020, People.cn, <http://health.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0317/c14739-31635478.html>.

correspondence or phone calls. The National Parliament of East Timor passed a resolution unanimously, expressing their support for the Chinese government and people’s outbreak response. The first batch of donations from Brunei Darussalam was 50 thousand protective masks to the city of Hechi, Guangxi.<sup>1</sup>

Leaders from the five central Asian countries have successively spoken in favor of China’s outbreak response. Turkmenistan President Berdymukhamedov made clear his support for China’s work via China’s ambassador to Turkmenistan, lauding China as a responsible major country. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan made in-kind donations to China to help fight COVID-19. The Kazakhstan Civil Aviation Authority had sent two flights to take 43 Chinese citizens stranded in Kazakhstan to Beijing for free. Kazakhstan-China Trade Promotion Association held fund-raising events. The Uzbekistan government delivered gloves, protective suits, masks and other medical supplies to China through charter flights, supervised by leading officials aboard from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of health and Ministry of Emergency Situations. Kyrgyzstan President Sooronbay Jeenbekov voiced his belief that China will defeat the virus soon. President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan said that Chinese leaders and government’s strong commitment to controlling the situation and preventing spread of COVID-19 will generate the expected results.<sup>2</sup>

As China’s all-weather strategic cooperative partner and “iron-clad” friend, Pakistan pooled the entire country’s resources in support of China. After COVID-19 struck, the Pakistani government announced on many occasions that it would not have its nationals in China evacuated. It also brought

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Wen, Zhang Tingting, Alliance against COVID-19 along the “Belt and Road”, March 10, 2020, *China Pictorial*, [http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/ydyl/202003/t20200310\\_800196376.html](http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/ydyl/202003/t20200310_800196376.html).

<sup>2</sup> Yao Peisheng, Five central Asian countries strongly support China’s COVID-19 fight, and overall cooperation remains stable, February 24, 2020, China.org.cn, [https://news.china.com/internationalgd/10000166/20200224/37832629\\_all.html](https://news.china.com/internationalgd/10000166/20200224/37832629_all.html).

together from the public hospital system and delivered to China 300 thousand medical masks, 800 medical protective suits and 6,800 pairs of gloves. Pakistan President Arif Alvi said he firmly believes that under the leadership of the CPC, the strong Chinese nation will surely be able to prevail over the current challenge. Prime Minister Imran Khan lavished praises on China's efforts and stressed his country's readiness to send all the medical supplies in stocks to China. The Senate of Pakistan passed a resolution to give full support to China's battle against COVID-19, the first state legislature to do so in the whole world. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended the forceful measures taken by China against the outbreak, and stated their willingness to offer support and assistance. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa acknowledged China's assistance to the country's students in Wuhan during the trying time and pledged cooperation with China to cope with the outbreak. Maldivian President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih praised the openness,

transparency and sense of responsibility with which China combated the virus. Nepal President Bidya Devi Bhandari expressed a firm commitment to staying united with the



Chinese government and friendly Chinese

Pakistani students donate anti-epidemic supplies to the Chinese in Pakistan.

people in this difficult time. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina spoke highly of the efforts made by the Chinese government and people. King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck of the Bhutan and Afghanistan's Chief Executive

Abdullah Abdullah also offered sympathy and support to China.<sup>1</sup>

## **1.2 China Supporting Neighboring Countries in Fighting COVID-19**

Fellow passengers will unite to save a sinking ship, because they are in the same peril. As COVID-19 became globally widespread, China, as a responsible major country, has done its best to aid neighboring countries in the fight against the outbreak while continuing its efforts at home.

**China supporting the outbreak response in its neighborhood. China was quick to offer sympathy and support to the most affected neighboring countries.** Northeast Asia is among the hardest hit regions in China’s neighborhood by COVID-19. The statement from China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was clear, “China will not be found wanting in ROK and Japan’s efforts against the virus”.<sup>2</sup> President Xi Jinping called President of South Korea Moon Jae-in to send consolation. In phone calls with South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha and Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed China’s concerns about the situation in Japan and the ROK, recognized their abilities in outbreak prevention and control, and stated willingness to provide necessary support and assistance.<sup>3</sup>

As for West Asia where the outbreak has been worsening rapidly, President Xi Jinping offered sympathy to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Wen, Zhang Tingting, Alliance against COVID-19 along the "Belt and Road", March 10, 2020, *China Pictorial*, [http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/ydyl/202003/t20200310\\_800196376.html](http://www.rmhb.com.cn/zt/ydyl/202003/t20200310_800196376.html).

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, 2020, [http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt\\_673021/jzhsl\\_673025/t1750121.shtml](http://new.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1750121.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone call with the ROK Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zt\\_674979/dnzt\\_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq\\_699171/t1749879.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq_699171/t1749879.shtml); State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Had a Phone Call with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/gjldrhd\\_674881/t1749878.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrhd_674881/t1749878.shtml).



by phone. State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi also called Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif and Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Ali al-Hakim successively to voice support.

In terms of Southeast Asia, Wang Yi called Philippine Foreign Minister Rochin, pledging China's best efforts to help the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Huang Xilian, Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, visited Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte to convey President Xi Jinping's sympathy and support to the Philippines' efforts to contain the outbreak.<sup>2</sup>

Aside from the government, many public institutions and non-governmental organizations from China have also delivered their consolations, an example being Peking University, Fudan University, Shandong University, Jilin University, the Chinese Association of Asia-Pacific Studies, and the Charhar Institute sending a joint letter of consolation to the ROK ambassador to China.<sup>3</sup>

**China has maintained close communication and coordination over the outbreak with neighboring countries, shared best practices and sent medical teams where needed.** Since the outbreak began, neighboring countries have been kept updated about the outbreak in China thanks to the timely information coming from a variety of sources, including state leaders' telephone calls or meetings, the Foreign Ministry's briefings to foreign missions in China, diplomats' statements and

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<sup>1</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi: China will do its utmost to help the Philippines, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 15, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zt\\_674979/dnzt\\_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq\\_699171/t1756129.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq_699171/t1756129.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> Chinese Ambassador Huang Xilian visiting President Duterte, calling China and the Philippines a community of shared future amid COVID-19 outbreak, the Chinese Embassy in the Philippines, March 13, 2020, <http://ph.china-embassy.org/chn/tpxw/t1755356.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Solidarity and sincerity, Chinese people from all walks of life aiding South Korea's outbreak response, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Korea, March 9, 2020, <http://kr.china-embassy.org/chn/sgxx/t1753254.htm>.

outbreak-related data disclosure on multiple platforms. China has also stayed in communication with health authorities of many countries.<sup>1</sup>

Amid the outbreak, A Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on COVID-19 in Laos issued a joint statement, with all sides to the meeting reaching important consensus on collective response and calling for solidarity, mutual support and confidence.<sup>2</sup> The Fifth Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting led to a joint press communique, in which the parties agree to, as appropriate to local reality, give the WHO’s recommendations active consideration, and work together against the COVID-19 outbreak through more information exchanges, experience sharing and joint research.<sup>3</sup>



ASEAN-China holds a special foreign ministers’ meeting on COVID-19 in Vientiane, Laos.

China has shared its best practices in outbreak prevention and control, engaging in a number of technical exchanges in the form of videoconference with such international and regional organizations as the ASEAN, APEC and SCO, as well as with countries including South

Asia and SouthPacific countries. China has released 7 editions of Clinical Guidance for COVID-19 Pneumonia Diagnosis and Treatment and 6 editions

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<sup>1</sup> China and ASEAN joining hands in the face of coronavirus outbreak, February 20, 2020, WWW.CHINANEWS.COM, <http://finance.chinanews.com/gn/2020/02-20/9099000.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Joint Press Communiqué of the Fifth Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 21, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zt\\_674979/dnzt\\_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq\\_699171/t1748082.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq_699171/t1748082.shtml).

of COVID-19 Pneumonia Prevention and Control plan. Both are among the technical documents that have been made available in time in different languages for neighboring countries.<sup>1</sup>

China has given extra attention to the worse-hit areas in the neighborhood. Japan and the ROK joined a special Foreign Ministers' video conference on COVID-19 at China's initiative, during which the three countries agreed to strengthen tripartite cooperation, put in place a joint prevention and control mechanism and hold a Health Ministers' meeting at an early date.<sup>2</sup> A hot line for CDC experts and a formal mechanism for joint outbreak response have been set up between China and the ROK.<sup>3</sup> In the Philippines, efforts made by China's Embassy in the Philippines include keeping close contact with the Philippines' Department of Health, timely sharing of China's diagnosis and treatment guidelines and other documents, recommending help from China-Philippines Traditional Chinese Medicine Center, opening up special columns on local English and Chinese media outlets to share China's experience,<sup>4</sup> and actively coordinating the visits of Chinese medical experts.<sup>5</sup> As for Iran, China's latest versions of diagnosis and

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<sup>1</sup> The State Council Information Office's press briefing on international cooperation against COVID-19, [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), March 26, 2020, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/26/content\\_5495712.htm#1](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/26/content_5495712.htm#1); The State Council Information Office's press briefing on international cooperation against COVID-19, [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), March 5, 2020, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content\\_5487144.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content_5487144.htm).

<sup>2</sup> China, Japan and the ROK Hold Special Foreign Ministers' Video Conference on COVID-19, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 20, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbzhd/t1758607.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> The State Council Information Office's press briefing on international cooperation against COVID-19, [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), March 5, 2020, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content\\_5487144.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content_5487144.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Chinese embassies and consulates actively promote international cooperation on COVID-19 fight, [people.cn](http://people.cn), February 19, 2020, <http://yuqing.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0219/c209043-31593537.html>.

<sup>5</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi: China will do its utmost to help the Philippines, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 15,

treatment guidelines and prevention and control plans are all sent without delay to the Iranian side.<sup>1</sup> At the local authority’s request, China has sent teams of experts who volunteered to go in order to assist with outbreak detection, treatment and control to Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Cambodia, etc.<sup>2</sup>

**China has actively provided its neighbors with in-kind and cash assistance.** Despite a still challenging situation at home, the Chinese government and all sectors of the society have reciprocated the support it has received by making utmost efforts to find supplies and donations for the struggling areas in the neighborhood. As of March 26th, China has organized four batches of anti-epidemic emergency aid for 89 countries and four international organizations, including 28 Asian countries.<sup>3</sup>

Preliminary statistics show that, by this March 13th, the Chinese central government, more than 20 local governments at the provincial level, the Chinese Embassy in the ROK, the business community and various social organizations have donated to the ROK 5.1 million face masks, 140 thousand protective suits, 260 thousand pairs of medical gloves and shoe covers, 150 thousand medical face shields, medical caps, and goggles, among other medical supplies, as well as a significant amount of cash assistance.<sup>4</sup> As asked by the central government, 10 provincial-level governments, including Henan, Shandong and Liaoning, acted to secure the first batch of mask export to the

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2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbzhd/t1756129.shtml>.

<sup>1</sup> Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua published a signed article in the Iranian IRNA news agency entitled “China and Iran are good partners who can count on each other in hour of need”, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 13, 2020, <http://ir.chineseembassy.org/chn/sgzc/t1755218.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> The State Council Information Office’s press briefing on international cooperation against COVID-19, [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), March 26, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> The Chinese government and all sectors of society actively giving cash and in-kind donations to the ROK, the Embassy of China in the ROK, March 13, 2020, <http://kr.china-embassy.org/chn/sgxx/t1755485.htm>.

ROK, totaling 5 million pieces.<sup>1</sup>

Japan was among the first countries to receive China's aid. When the COVID-19 nucleic acid reagent was under-supplied in Japan in the second half of February, China made an emergency test kit donation to Japan through the Shenzhen BGI Genomics Technology Co. and the Shenzhen Mammoth Public Welfare Foundation, before donating a total of 5,000 protective suits and 100 thousand masks in several batches. Local administrations at the provincial level, such as the governments of Shandong, Heilongjiang and Liaoning, and municipal governments in Guangzhou, Zhoushan, Shenyang and Jinan donated medical supplies in the amount of hundreds of thousands to sister prefectures and cities in Japan, including Wakayama Prefecture, Hokkaido, Fukuoka City, Miyagi Prefecture's Kesennuma City and Kanagawa Prefecture.<sup>2</sup> Generous donations also came from the business sector, non-governmental organization and general public, chief among which are the China Construction Bank, Wuhan Guide Infrared Co., Ltd, and the Shanghai Overseas Friendship Association.<sup>3</sup>

The Chinese government and the Red Cross Society of China delivered emergency medical supplies to Iran through various means. Within 24 hours of the Iranian Embassy in China announcing on Weibo its official channel for accepting donations, nearly RMB 4 million yuan in donation was delivered from the Chinese people, and supplies were also sent to the Embassy by many

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<sup>1</sup> China and South Korea fight side by side against the ruthless COVID-19, people.cn, March 10, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0310/c1002-31625440.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Guangzhou donates 300,000 masks to sister city Fukuoka, people.cn, March 17, 2020, <http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0317/c35421-31636389.html>; Liaoning Province donates emergency protective supplies to Japan and South Korea in a sign of solidarity and support, people.cn, March 16, 2020, <http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0316/c35421-31634243.html>; Heilongjiang donates 20,000 masks to Hokkaido, Japanese netizens grateful for China's act of kindness, people.cn, March 13, 2020, <http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0313/c35421-31630927.html>; Xu Jingbo, What aid has China quietly provided to Japan?, Wechat official account Jingshuoriben, March 11, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*



Chinese companies and individuals.<sup>1</sup> As of March 15<sup>th</sup>, China has donated hundreds of thousands of masks and test kits for 60-70 thousand samples to Iran.<sup>2</sup>

China also offered assistance to the ASEAN countries. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, Chinese Consulate in Siem Reap, Cambodia, donated 20 disinfectant sprayers to the government of Siem Reap Province.<sup>3</sup> On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, China’s medical experts arrived in Cambodia, along with huge amounts of medical supplies. On March 28<sup>th</sup>, Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Wang Wentian handed over 20 thousand test kits to Cambodia, which were donated by the Jack Ma Foundation and Alibaba Foundation.<sup>4</sup> Only five days after an initial donation total of 2,000 test kits from the Embassy and Chinese companies to the Philippines on March 16<sup>th</sup>, another batch of assistance provided by the Chinese government arrived in Manila, including 100,000 test kits, 100,000 surgical masks, 10,000 N-95 masks and 10,000 sets of personal protective equipment. Anti-epidemic materials have also been sent to Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Laos and other ASEAN countries, as well as the ASEAN Secretariat.<sup>5</sup>

As part of efforts to support Pakistan’s campaign against the outbreak,

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<sup>1</sup> Chinese Ambassador to Iran Chang Hua published a signed article in the Iranian IRNA news agency entitled “China and Iran are good partners who can count on each other in hour of need”, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Islamic Republic of Iran, March 13, 2020, <http://ir.chineseembassy.org/chn/sgzc/t1755218.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Bai Yunyi and Xie Wenting, Interview with Chinese expert team to Iran: “zero infection” reported by Chinese businesses in Iran due to same countermeasures brought from China, *huanqiu.com*, March 16, 2020, <http://hqtime.huanqiu.com/share/article/3xQkI8nZtcQ>.

<sup>3</sup> Chinese consulate office in Siem Reap donated equipment for outbreak prevention to Cambodia, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of Cambodia, March 11, 2020, <http://kh.china-embassy.org/chn/dssghd/t1754551.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Chinese Ambassador to Cambodia Wang Wentian handed over Covid-19 test kits to Cambodia, the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of Cambodia, March 11, 2020, <http://kh.china-embassy.org/chn/dssghd/t1763011.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Deng Xijun, China returns favor, helps ASEAN, *the Jakarta Post*, March 30, 2020, <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2020/03/30/china-returns-favor-helps-asean.html>.

Chinese government has donated hundreds of thousands of sets of medical items such as masks, protective suits, ventilators and testing kits, and will support Pakistan in building a temporary quarantine hospital. Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region sent medical supplies through Khunjerab Pass. Chinese companies and groups, such as Alibaba Foundation and CGGC, have also donated large scale of urgently needed anti-epidemic materials to Pakistan.<sup>1</sup>

**China has been actively seeking stronger technological cooperation with neighboring countries and organizations, endeavoring to contribute to an early end of the epidemic.** President Xi Jinping has stressed the need for greater international cooperation in epidemic prevention and control research, enhanced exchanges and communication with the WHO, and the importance of joint research in such areas as virus origin tracing, drugs, vaccines and testing with relevant countries, especially high-incidence countries.<sup>2</sup> The National Health Commission in China plans to push for relevant Chinese institutions to become the WHO COVID-19 reference laboratories, ensure the in-depth involvement of China's research bodies and scientists in WHO-led joint international research projects, and provide technological support to the relevant affected countries via WHO through recommended experts.<sup>3</sup>

The strong technological abilities of China, Japan and the ROK lay a solid foundation for research cooperation. When speaking with his counterparts in Japan and the ROK over phone, State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang

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<sup>1</sup> Shi Yu, The Chinese governments and all circles of society vigorously assist Pakistan in fighting the epidemic, *ce.cn*, March 29, 2020, [http://intl.ce.cn/qjss/202003/29/t20200329\\_34573630.shtml](http://intl.ce.cn/qjss/202003/29/t20200329_34573630.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> Xi Jinping, Provide strong technological support for winning the fight of outbreak prevention and control, *QSTHEORY.CN*, March 15, 2020, [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2020-03/15/c\\_1125710612.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/qs/2020-03/15/c_1125710612.htm).

<sup>3</sup> The State Council Information Office's press briefing on international cooperation against COVID-19, *www.gov.cn*, March 5, 2020, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content\\_5487144.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-03/05/content_5487144.htm).

Yi already proposed cooperation in the areas of epidemic prevention and control, medical treatment, drug and vaccine development.<sup>1</sup> The Health Ministers’ meeting, senior officials’ meeting, Japan-China-Korea Forum for Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, CDC Director’s meeting and other similar platforms will help the three countries work more closely to promote joint technological projects, ranging from outbreak prevention and control, medical treatment, vaccine development to drug development.<sup>2</sup>

China and Japan have established special communication and cooperation channels between their health authorities and communicable disease prevention and treatment institutions. Some of the two countries’ researchers and businesses have started to work together on such key projects as KL-6 rapid virus testing technology, efficient disinfection technology with sodium-free electrolyzed water, antibody analog targeted therapy drugs, UV ray-based safe and efficient disinfection technology. The two sides will also promote cooperation in the areas of virus prevention and control as well as distance diagnosis and treatment system under the cooperation frameworks of smart cities and super metropolis.<sup>3</sup>

China and ASEAN have also engaged in active cooperation to fight the outbreak. According to Statement of the Special ASEAN-China Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone call with the ROK Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zt\\_674979/dnzt\\_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq\\_699171/t1749879.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq_699171/t1749879.shtml); State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Had a Phone Call with Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/gjldrh\\_674881/t1749878.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/gjldrh_674881/t1749878.shtml).

<sup>2</sup> State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a phone call with the ROK Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, February 27, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao\\_674904/zt\\_674979/dnzt\\_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq\\_699171/t1749879.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zt_674979/dnzt_674981/qtzt/kjgzbdffyq_699171/t1749879.shtml).

<sup>3</sup> Close neighbors in solidarity, the Chinese Government donating medical supplies to Japan, people.cn, March 2, 2020, <http://japan.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0302/c35421-31612664.html>.

Ministers' Meeting on the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), both sides agree to shore up their position to fight COVID-19 and other emerging or reemerging communicable diseases, organize data, technology and experience sharing and joint capacity-building programs, and push forward drug and vaccine development.<sup>1</sup> On February 3rd, China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region took the lead in releasing official guidelines for starting joint emergency research projects against COVID-19 with international partners, mainly from ASEAN countries. Guangxi has succeeded in bringing together top researchers from China, Thailand and Singapore in technological and clinical research projects designed to explore the local traditional Chinese medicine's value. One of the projects is COVID-19 drug development based on China's and Thailand's natural medicines, and another is a China-Singapore joint project that seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of Guangxi's local traditional Chinese medicine and Zhuangyao medicine in COVID-19 activity control.<sup>2</sup>

**China's neighbors commending its assistance.** Envisioning a community of shared future for mankind, China has made active contributions to the fight against COVID-19 in its neighborhood by offering substantial and much-needed assistance, earning recognition and praises from its neighbors.

Multiple governments have expressed appreciation for China's emergency aid and recognized its contribution to regional and global health security. Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen called China "a great friend" on social media in recognition of China's timely help to embattled Cambodian

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 21, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbzhd/t1748133.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Guangxi launched the first batch of emergency international joint research projects for outbreak response [www.gov.cn](http://www.gov.cn), February 11, 2020, [http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-02/11/content\\_5477203.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-02/11/content_5477203.htm).

factories.<sup>1</sup> Philippine President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Foreign Minister Rochin have thanked China for its consolation and support. Foreign Minister Rochin cited Time magazine’s article on tweeter that the world got off to a good start in the prevention and control of COVID-19 outbreak because China’s scientific community has a strong disease control network and rich experience from coping with SARS outbreak. The global response against the virus was accelerated because within weeks of the outbreak, Chinese scientists had isolated the virus, completed gene sequencing, and shared data with the international community.<sup>2</sup> Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan pointed to the spirit of openness, sharing and collaboration fully embodied by a China that actively sought international cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

Kim Jin-pyo, head of a special committee set up by the ROK National Assembly to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, the ROK Ambassador to China Zhang Xiacheng and the Mayor of Seoul Park Won-soon have spoken in TV interviews or written to thank China’s speedy aid.<sup>4</sup> During a media interview, Toshihiro Nikai, secretary-general of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party expressed appreciation for the help coming from all quarters of China. In his reply letter to Jack Ma, the founder of Alibaba, he wrote that “it is mutual assistance and sincere exchanges like this that will create a solid basis for

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<sup>1</sup> Mao Pengfei, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen: We thank China for much-needed assistance to embattled Cambodian factories”, [www.news.cn](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/10/c_1125692746.htm), March 10, 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/10/c\\_1125692746.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/10/c_1125692746.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Philippine Foreign Minister Rochin: because of China, outbreak is under control on a continental scale, [www.CHINANEWS.com](http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2020/02-21/9100256.shtml), February 21, 2020, <http://www.chinanews.com/gj/2020/02-21/9100256.shtml>.

<sup>3</sup> Gong Ming et al, China's experience gives other countries confidence in defeating the virus (true friendship revealed in adversity, COVID-19 fought with collective efforts)-the international community speaks highly of China's active cooperation in outbreak response, [people.cn](http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0314/c1002-31631604.html), March 14, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0314/c1002-31631604.html>.

<sup>4</sup> The donation ceremony for aid to South Korea from the JiangSu Chamber of Commerce in Beijing was held in Beijing, [people.cn](http://korea.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0310/c431815-31625335.html), March 10, 2020, <http://korea.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0310/c431815-31625335.html>.



future Japan-China relations”.<sup>1</sup>

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani sent the Iranian people's gratitude to China for its supplies and medical teams. The spokesperson for the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs also thanked China in a video press conference, hailing China's help as a fine example of international medical cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Iraq's deputy Health Minister Jassim Al Falhy and President of China-Iraq Friendship Association Mowaffak al-Rubaie appreciated Chinese experts' help in the country's outbreak prevention and control efforts, saying that China's medical teams not just brought aid but also showed commitment to a higher cause, and that they came to aid the Iraqi people and, in doing so, have protected the whole world.<sup>3</sup>

**A great many international and regional organizations have spoken highly of China's input in international cooperation against COVID-19.** António Guterres, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, said that the UN is grateful for China's assistance to nations embattled by the virus, and appreciative of China's efforts to share best practices with other developing countries and to offer medical supplies, vaccines, drugs and other valuable aid.<sup>4</sup> According to the WHO, China's measures have gained the international community “a window of opportunity” to contain the outbreak, and the world stands to benefit a lot from China's rich experience in case diagnosis, treatment, and outbreak prevention and control.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ma Yun donated 1 million masks to Japan, and exchanged gratitude letters with Toshihiro Nikai, huanqiu.com, March 3, 2020, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKpH55>.

<sup>2</sup> Iranian officials: several international NGOs have expressed willingness to help Iran contain the outbreak huanqiu.com, March 3, 2020, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/3xGf2aZEFJ>.

<sup>3</sup> Iraqi officials thank Chinese experts for helping fight the outbreak, new.sina, March 14, 2020, <https://news.sina.com.cn/w/2020-03-14/doc-iimxxstf8903213.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> President Xi Jinping spoke with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres over phone, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 13, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1755323.shtm>.

<sup>5</sup> WHO Director-General: China has turned the tide, and the international community should

Ban Ki-moon, Chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia and former Secretary-General of the United Nations, applauded China for making tremendous efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and bolster global health security.<sup>1</sup> Cao Jing, deputy secretary-general of the China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, pointed out that by coming to one another's aid during trying times and in good faith, people from China, Japan and the ROK have honored their deep-rooted tradition of mutual assistance



WHO has urged countries around the world to seize a “window of opportunity” that China’s effective anti-epidemic measures have won.

and solidarity in tough times.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to expressing appreciation of China’s resolute measures against the outbreak and the openness, transparency and a high sense of responsibility shown by China, various parties in ASEAN also recognized China’s important contribution to regional and global public health security.<sup>3</sup>

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make full use of the “window of opportunity” created by China, huanqiu.com, March 11, 2020, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/3xNIwuxe2NO>.

Gong Ming et al, China’s experience gives other countries confidence in defeating the virus (true friendship revealed in adversity, COVID-19 fought with collective efforts)-the international community speaks highly of China’s active cooperation in outbreak response, people.cn, March 14, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0314/c1002-31631604.html>.

<sup>1</sup> Ban Ki-moon: China makes great efforts to safeguard global health security, people.cn, February 21, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0221/c1002-31598227.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Geng Xuepeng, Tian Ming, Joint outbreak response provides new momentum for deepening China-Japan-ROK cooperation—a special interview with Cao Jing, deputy secretary-general of the China-Japan-South Korea Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, xinhuanet, March 2, 2020, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/02/c\\_1125653170.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/02/c_1125653170.htm).

<sup>3</sup> Sun Guangyong, the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers’ Meeting on Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) was held in Vientiane, people.cn, February 20, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0220/c1002-31597083.html>.

China's COVID-19 response and measures for international cooperation have also been commended by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

**The general public from neighboring countries also expressed gratitude for China's timely assistance.** Hundreds of thousands of Japanese social media users left comments on the tweeter account of China's Embassy in Japan and online reports of China's aid, praising China as a responsible major country and celebrating the touching mutual support and solidarity between China and Japan.<sup>1</sup>

People from the ROK also showed gratitude to China's help. A South Korean reader wrote to people.cn to talk about stories of a valuable friendship of mutual assistance with Chinese friends. China and the ROK are neighbors who show solidarity and offer sincere help in hour of need, or, as a poem quoted by a professor from Dongguk University in South Korea so aptly puts it, "the sincerity with which we treat each other is as clear as crystal moon's reflection in lucid water".<sup>2</sup>

On Iran's social media outlets, a group of online volunteers translated documents and made videos to help share with the Iranian people COVID-19 outbreak response and China's experience, winning the genuine acclamation of countless people in Iran.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Yuan Meng, China lauded as a major country online in Japan after sending in-kind aid to Japan to reciprocate, March 4, 2020, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0304/c1002-31617001.html>; One million masks donated by Jack Ma arrives in Tokyo, causing a stir on Japanese social media, IFENG.COM, March 3, 2020, <https://tech.ifeng.com/c/7uXgDz4qBZQ>.

<sup>2</sup> A South Korean reader's letter: solidarity amid outbreak, China and ROK friendship shines brighter, people.cn, March 16, 2020, <http://korea.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0316/c407366-31633967.html>; Huang Taiyuan, People's Daily International Forum: the sincerity with which we treat each other is as clear as crystal moon's reflection in lucid water, people.cn, March 12, 2020, <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0312/c1003-31627954.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Gong Ming et al, China's experience gives other countries confidence in defeating the virus (true friendship revealed in adversity, COVID-19 fought with collective efforts)-the international community speaks highly of China's active cooperation in outbreak response, people.cn, March 14,

A special highlight in the joint efforts to contain the virus has been the exchange of uplifting verses. “National borders cannot separate those who pursue a common higher purpose”, “You throw a peach to me, I give you a white jade for friendship”, “Just as chilly winter reveals the resilience of pine and cypress, so too time shall reveal the truly durable friendship”, “There are no true borders in the world, as we are connected by the same mountains and rivers”, “Genuine friends can feel close to each other even if thousands of miles apart” and “The sons of Adam are limbs of each other, having been created of one essence.” These are all poems printed on China’s aid packages, and have left the local people deeply moved.

## **II. Working Together to Win the Fight against COVID-19**

As COVID-19 rages on around the world, especially in Europe and North America, China and its neighboring countries, despite a slight respite at home, are now under the dual pressure of preventing the virus from spreading on and into their territories. A new stage has also started for cooperation against COVID-19. It is important for China and neighboring countries to build on existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation, step up cooperation in priority areas, and fight for an end to the outbreak with concerted and undistracted efforts.

### **2.1 The Other Half of the Battle: Risks and Challenges**

**China and neighboring countries under dual pressure of preventing virus spread on and into their territories.** Although the situation in China has stabilized and is steadily turning for the better, the global outbreak keeps getting worse, with Europe and North America reporting explosive growth in infections and China's neighbors continuing to see newly confirmed infection cases. As such, the global campaign to contain COVID-19 has arrived at a critical juncture. As of 6pm, March 30th, as many as 614,789 cases of infection have been confirmed outside China's border, surpassing the 82,455 recorded in China. Among the worse-hit neighboring countries, Iran has registered a cumulative total of 41,495 confirmed cases, the ROK 9,661, Malaysia 2470, Japan 1,886, Pakistan 1,625, the Philippines 1,546, Russia 1,534, Thailand 1,524, Indonesia 1,414, India 1,071, Singapore 844.<sup>1</sup>

Both China and neighboring countries are faced with dual pressure of controlling both locally transmitted and imported cases. By March 30th, the

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<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 situation dashboard, March 31, 2020, WHO, <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/62c28590b5ae41ef920e4d5a4128504a>.



total of imported cases in the Chinese mainland was 7,711. Spread across 20-plus provinces, these cases mainly came from Europe, North America and neighboring countries.<sup>2</sup> The outbreak response system in most parts of China is being redirected to block imported cases. Japan, the ROK and China are major sources of tourists for one another and have close links with Europe and North America. Strategically positioned at the crossroads on the Eurasian continent, Iran has frequent exchange of visits with China’s northwestern provinces. Most imported cases in Gansu and Ningxia are from Iran.<sup>3</sup> In Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and the Philippines are the hardest hit areas. Vietnam, Brunei and Cambodia all have confirmed triple-digit numbers of cases. India and Pakistan have the most serious outbreaks in South Asia, with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan also reporting cases. The situation is particularly challenging for China and its neighboring countries as they represent the most densely populated areas in the world, hosting half of the world’s total population. Further complicating the issue is the fact that most of these countries are developing ones, lacking adequate medical facilities or public health systems and thus facing tremendous pressures in the prevention and control of COVID-19.

Extensive domestic spread of the virus has been averted due to swift response initiated by all the regional countries in early days of the outbreak. Border controls have been tightened to avoid losing the hard-won ground, with travel restrictions at varying degrees imposed on most-affected countries and regions. Certain countries have closed down borders, cutting off all contact with the outside world. These measures can only stop the virus from

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<sup>1</sup> Daily briefing on novel coronavirus cases in China, March 31, 2020, NHC, <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/yqtb/202003/ec2689b0e716468fbfff7cf890c74bb7.shtml>.

<sup>2</sup> Sha Xueliang, Imported cases from 10 countries found in 12 Chinese provinces, *The Beijing News*, March 18, 2020, <http://www.bjnews.com.cn/news/2020/03/18/705443.html>.

<sup>3</sup> 595 imported cases, where are they from?, March 27, 2020, xinhuanet.com, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-03/27/c\\_1210533593.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/2020-03/27/c_1210533593.htm).

entering for now, but they do not offer long-term solutions. Neither is a complete lockdown really feasible for China and its neighboring countries, not when they are this close, geographically and culturally, and with so many people on both sides of borders sharing the same ethnic origin.

As the situation worsens, China has recently introduced stricter entry control policies, enforcing collective quarantine measures for overseas arrivals, but it has followed the WHO's recommendation against a sweeping entry ban. Going forward, China needs to stay in timely communication with other countries, and share information and experience with the WHO and other countries, so as to stick more closely together through thick and thin.

**COVID-19 bringing daunting challenges to China and neighboring countries.** With vaccines still under development and not yet cleared for production and distribution, it is difficult to bring the virus's spread under complete control. Further worsened, bigger or longer-than-expected outbreaks are possible. These are daunting challenges to the cooperation and socioeconomic development in the entire region.

COVID-19 outbreak has dealt a heavy blow to the region's tourism industry. In recent years, China has become the biggest source of foreign tourists for Japan, Thailand and many other neighboring countries, with over 10 million visits made by Chinese tourists to both Japan and Thailand in 2019. In the aftermath of the outbreak, tourist arrivals in Japan were down nearly 60% in February. The falling numbers of inbound tourists will set Japan's first quarter export back 2 percentage points on a quarter-on-quarter basis, as estimated by Nomura Securities.<sup>1</sup> The firm also predicts a roughly 40% reduction in tourist arrivals to ASEAN countries, costing their tourism sector

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<sup>1</sup> The latest data are out! February Chinese tourist arrivals to Japan plunged by nearly 90%, *21st Century Business Herald*, March 19, 2020, <http://dy.163.com/v2/article/detail/F83O1J0F05199NPP.html>.

billions of dollars.<sup>1</sup> The Thailand tourism industry could suffer a loss of 3 billion dollars after about 1.2 to 1.3 million Chinese tourists canceled plans to visit Thailand on February and March.<sup>2</sup>

COVID-19 outbreak has caused severe disruptions to regional industrial and supply chains. China, Japan and the ROK are all key players in two of the world’s major industries: electronics and automobiles. Export of auto parts and components to Japan was disrupted by production suspension in parts of



Most attractions in Bali have been closed.

China during the outbreak, the impact of which has been shown in Japanese automakers’ production and sales numbers. Supply of core materials, components and equipment such as panels and chips from Japan and the ROK, both on the middle and upper end of the industrial chain for consumer electronics, could be

cut off by COVID-19 outbreak, putting the global industrial chain at risk. A knock-on effect has been created by the outbreak in Southeast Asia. The Philippines relies on China to supply a considerable share of its imported goods and raw materials. The country’s manufacturers, retailers and distributors have taken a heavy battering because in February alone, container shipment from China fell by 62.5%. China hosts half of the Japanese clothing giant Uniqlo’s factories and supplies raw materials to another 20% located in

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<sup>1</sup> ASEAN tourism badly hit by COVID-19, March 13, 2020,

<https://vietnamnet.vn/en/travel/asean-tourism-badly-hit-by-covid-19-623878.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Huang Xiaona, et al, China's outbreak affecting tourism industry in the neighborhood, with the Thailand Tourism Authority expecting a \$3 billion loss in tourism revenue, huanqiu.com, February 5, 2020, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrNkpcmp>.

Vietnam. Malaysia's export processing sector has also been hit hard by the outbreak.<sup>1</sup> This sector provides 58.4% of the country's GDP, but intermediate goods such as electronic components from China account for 20.8% of its supply chain. India, the world's largest exporter of generic drugs, imports 70% active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) from China. If raw material supply from China is reduced or cut off, India's large pharmaceutical producers could only last for 2 to 3 months, and the smaller ones only 30 to 40 days.<sup>2</sup>

COVID-19 outbreak has not only had an impact on regional countries due to division of labor and cooperation but also taken a heavy toll on the capital market. Around the world, share prices have plunged like never before since the 2008 financial crisis, triggering circuit breakers in many countries and spawning a liquidity crisis. Countries in this region have sought to cushion the impact by using fiscal and monetary tools designed to jolt export and consumption and help out struggling businesses, including lowering interest rates, pushing for a weaker national currency and offering tax cuts. However, protracted outbreaks threaten to seriously hamper regional production and investment, which in turn holds back employment and consumption until eventually the regional economy ends up in a vicious cycle of recession. The strain put by the virus's further spread on public health system and the resultant social tensions could well make the outbreak a social and political issue.

## **2.2 Priority Areas for Current Outbreak Response Cooperation**

**China fulfilling its responsibilities.** The Chinese people have waged an arduous battle against COVID-19, stopping the virus from spreading across border by taking the most resolute and thorough measures and making the

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<sup>1</sup> Tham Siew Yean: Leverage in The Time of Coronavirus, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), March 3, 2020,

<https://www.iseas.edu.sg/media/commentaries/leverage-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/>.

<sup>2</sup> Indian economy hit by COVID19: nearly 70% of its APIs supplied by China, IFENG.COM, March 8, 2020, <http://news.ifeng.com/c/7ugS1zn8xCW>.

utmost efforts. Chinese medical workers and researchers raced against time to improve diagnosis and treatment. Apart from raising cure rate and lowering mortality rate, their speedy efforts have earned precious time for the global fight against COVID-19. This in itself is an act of a responsible major country. Thanks to its efforts to contain the virus, China now has a sizable amount of firsthand patient database and rich experiences in building a multi-tiered prevention and control system as well as offering clinical diagnosis and treatment. Relevant medical research into drugs and vaccines is being ramped up. All of these will greatly boost a global response to the virus.

Important initial progress has been reported in China’s domestic outbreak control efforts, but rise in global infection has not yet peaked out. As the first major country to stage a response, China is duty-bound to promote coordinated and joint international efforts against COVID-19. Most of China’s neighbors are developing countries who may lack the resources or capacities for coping with a major public health crisis. China can make positive contributions to upholding the hard-won prosperity and stability in this region by sharing prevention and control measures and medical expertise, pushing for a well-functioning regional joint response and mutual assistance mechanism, and working to ease impact on intra-regional economic and trade cooperation and people-to-people exchanges.

China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs has listed five aspects of measures that China will take to aid the global fight against the virus. They include: enhancing communication and coordination with the WHO and international community; sharing and exchanging experience with the rest of the world to bolster collective capacities of upholding regional and global public health security; sending medical teams to countries and regions in need; offering drugs and other aids to international community, donating masks, drugs, protective clothing and other products and exporting much-needed medical supplies and equipments to relevant countries; stepping up international

technological cooperation, such as in areas of medicines, vaccines, and test reagents.<sup>1</sup> These measures can effectively support the global fight against the virus, and reduce chances of overseas cases transmitting back to China.

In addition to the above-mentioned measures, China will also do its best to offer assistance, as may be required by the changing situation, to other countries, especially those who have borne the brunt of the outbreak. China will keep sharing and exchanging cooperation experience with regional countries, in a joint bid to protect the health and life of the people in this region.

**Priority areas for regional cooperation.** Policy coordination, disease containment, logistical support, medical research should be among the priorities for international cooperation in the next period. Specific measures in six areas are listed as follows:

First, more coordinated and better communicated policies. Border control of varying strictness enforced by governments in this region has impeded normal travels for business, education, employment and other purposes. Since these measures are essentially about stopping imported cases from entering through ports of entry and border crossings, there needs to be a consistent standard for introducing science-based, reasonable and appropriate levels of border management. As new infections are still on an upward trajectory, temporary restrictions suited to the local reality are allowed as a response to the current extraordinary circumstances, such as the temporary suspension of entry visa by Japan and compulsory collective quarantine of arrivals to China. These policies need to be open and transparent, and well communicated before entry into force, to avoid misunderstandings or frictions in the international community. They also need to be adjusted and relaxed in time to avoid causing long-term damage, if the situation stabilizes or improves.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on March 11, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, March 11, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt\\_673021/jzhsl\\_673025/t1754530.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1754530.shtml).



Second, more information sharing channels. Coordinated efforts are needed to improve risk data collection standard and procedure and build a data sharing system. Cooperation between academic institutions, industrial associations and businesses should be encouraged. It is important to support professionals from health and other areas in strengthening cross-border exchanges, sharing experience and research results, and employing new technological solutions to regularize long-distance cooperation. An all-round, multilevel network is needed to exchange information and facilitate practical cooperation.

Thirdly, stronger logistics and expertise support. The level of economic development and supply of public health resources vary a lot in China’s neighboring countries. Many of these countries are struggling to secure enough personal protective equipment (PPE), such as masks and protective suits, and medical equipment, such as ventilator, dialysis machine, oxygen generator, as well as medical supplies, such as test kit. A major focus of multilateral cooperation is on emergency coordination to create green channels to expedite medical items delivery to the undersupplied countries. This would require tariff exemption or reduction. Better-positioned countries can also provide professional support to countries with serious outbreaks or weak public health systems by sending health experts and medical workers.

Fourthly, joint scientific research. It is necessary to share research information and exchange technologies on bilateral and multilateral cooperation platforms. Some of the joint work will include science-based discovery of virus origin, identification of infection sources and transmission pathways, tracking virus mutations, sharing procedures for outbreak prevention and control as well as patient diagnosis and treatment, anti-viral drug and vaccine development. From China’s experience, digital technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence and cloud computing could play an important role in disease surveillance and monitoring, tracing virus origin, prevention, control, diagnosis and treatment, and logistics management, thus

helping the government make well-informed and science-based decisions. This approach could be replicated elsewhere in the region.

Fifthly, better policy communication to the general public. No country can fight a public security crisis alone. The only option is solidarity and cooperation. It is important to let science and evidence, instead of panic, be the bases for decision-making. Overreaction, silo mentality and bigger-thy-neighbor approach should be avoided. It is important to stand against discrimination and stigmatization against citizens of any country, reject sensational disinformation intended to fuel panic, make efforts to minimize the consequences of the crisis and create a favorable international environment for disease control.

Sixthly, maintaining economic and trade cooperation to prevent a financial crisis. As a result of the outbreak, industries such as tourism, leisure, aviation, passenger transport, catering and hotel, have been heavily hit. Industries that heavily rely on international division of labor and cooperation, including auto manufacturing, electronics and semi-conductor, are facing the risk of disruption and even a break-down in supply chain. Decisive actions are needed to prop up ailing industries, keep supply chains safe and well-functioning, and unlock emergency aid to vulnerable middle- and small-sized countries. After the shocks created by the outbreak in the international financial market, governments around the world have rushed to roll out extraordinary monetary and fiscal policies to ward off a new round of financial crisis. Asia needs to carry on regional cooperation, which began from efforts dealing with the 1998 Asian financial crisis, by enhancing monetary and fiscal policy communication and coordination, and reinforcing regional financial stability through such multilateral financial and fiscal cooperation vehicles as the Chiang Mai Initiative.

### **2.3 Giving Full Play to Existing Cooperation Mechanisms**

The COVID-19 outbreak has been a rallying call for global actions. In

order to more effectively contain the infection and cushion its impact, China and other countries in the region need to engage in stronger coordination and cooperation based on the existing cooperation mechanisms. On the one hand, existing bilateral and multilateral cooperation platforms need to play their part. On the other hand, special communication and cooperation mechanisms should be created as needed.

**Reinforcing the foundational role of bilateral cooperation.**

Bilateral mechanisms are the basis for efficient, responsive and thorough regional cooperation against COVID-19. China’s smooth bilateral channels with Northeast Asian and Southeast Asian countries have played a key part in marshaling a collective response to the outbreak. A joint prevention and control mechanism has been formed by China and the ROK, involving multiple government agencies for foreign affairs, health, education, customs, immigration and civil aviation. The first video conference under that mechanism has been held to discuss priorities and detailed measures as the new step of cooperation.<sup>1</sup> Health authorities and communicable disease prevention and control agencies from China and Japan have created dedicated communication and cooperation channels. China’s in-depth cooperation with the ROK and Japan offers a good model for other countries in the region to follow. Existing bilateral cooperation platforms need to be empowered to create the foundation for a regional joint prevention and control mechanism.

**Utilizing existing regional multilateral mechanisms.** After the outbreak took place, several of the more mature multilateral cooperation mechanisms began to take actions, including Trilateral Cooperation among China, Japan and Korea, China-ASEAN cooperation mechanism, the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) mechanism and the Shanghai

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Conference on March 13, 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, March 13, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/fyrbt\\_674889/t1755505.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/fyrbt_674889/t1755505.shtml).

Cooperation Organization. Member states have used relevant channels to strengthen dialogue and communication, voice mutual support and engage in coordination and cooperation, contributing to a joint international response to the outbreak. In the next stage, efforts should be made as follows to help regional mechanisms play a more effective and stronger role in the fight against COVID-19.

First, improving institutional arrangements for cooperation. The most important thing now is to raise the awareness of regional countries of the urgent need for a cross-region joint prevention and control mechanism. So far, regional public health cooperation still takes the form of forum, dialogue, initiative and other soft-institutional arrangements. But the COVID-19 outbreak has made it clear that as the sudden outbreak of communicable disease increasingly threatens human life as well as economic and social development, it is high time to tackle major public crises through greater multilateral cooperation. Regional cooperation mechanism must be institutionalized and given a strong binding force. A range of important agreements have been reached over COVID-19 response cooperation at the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting.<sup>1</sup> Some of the measures are also relevant elsewhere in the region. If needed, efforts should be made to secure a higher-level political commitment through dialogues between state leaders, so as to facilitate implementation on the ground.

Second, improving the crisis response mechanism. A cross-border system to report and coordinate work against major outbreak developments is needed. Under this system, cross-border monitoring networks and early warning will be triggered once the latest outbreak is identified. It will support information

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, February 21, 2020, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq\\_676201/gjhdqzz\\_681964/lhg\\_682518/zywj\\_682530/t1748133.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/gjhdq_676201/gjhdqzz_681964/lhg_682518/zywj_682530/t1748133.shtml).

sharing and policy coordination within the region, and help governments find political common ground through high-level exchanges over telephone, video calls or other channels. Government agencies in charge of foreign and consular service, customs, quarantine, public health, aviation, tourism, disaster relief, etc. will be able to work more closely together, and a joint prevention and control mechanism will be built.

Third, reinforcing coordination between different cooperation mechanisms. The virus treats every country indiscriminately and a pandemic cannot be tackled by any national or international mechanism single-handedly. Therefore, these mechanisms should work in concert through coordination. During a special video conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to discuss strategies against COVID-19 outbreak, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said, “I propose we increase our coordination with them (the SCO) and learn from their experience.”<sup>1</sup> But without effective coordination and cooperation channels among regional mechanisms, and between them and global mechanisms such as the WHO, these cooperation mechanisms are still working in silos. In the early days of the outbreak, the WHO was left to fight alone. For the sake of people’s health and well-being, these different cooperation mechanisms need to be coordinated more seriously, and work together in good faith and for concrete results. It is recommended to bring together existing public health cooperation mechanisms, kick start the initiative of Asia public health conference, bring the WHO, well-known public health schools and scholars from the region into a network where information and research results can be shared on an easier and regular basis.

Forth, investing in long-term institutional readiness for collective crisis

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<sup>1</sup> Li Lin, SAARC video conference to discuss collective outbreak response and Afghan president calling for learning from China’s experience, new.sina, March 15, 2020, <https://news.sina.com.cn/w/2020-03-15/doc-iimxxstf9261919.shtml>.

management. The outbreak is not just a public health event. It has led to secondary crises in multiple fields and at various levels, affecting the economy, education, social culture, etc. As multilateral and bilateral mechanisms deal with the most pressing challenges at hand, it is also important to make long-term institutional arrangements, including contingency plans and institutions, to ensure readiness against a crisis of any type and at any stage. It is necessary to prioritize prevention and preparedness, channel resources to contingency planning, reserve supplies, enhance coordination skills, create local-oriented crisis management systems and rules, and agree on trigger thresholds and action plans for “state of emergency” system. The purpose of the above recommendations is to keep up with and even be “one step ahead of” the crisis.



### **III. Collective Efforts against COVID-19 will Inject Strong Impetus to the Building of a Community of Shared Future in China’s Neighborhood**

The COVID-19 outbreak shows that in a globalized world, countries are more interdependent than ever before, and are increasingly becoming a community of shared future. It has been proven by facts that no country can stay isolated or immune from the outbreak. China and its neighboring countries are bound together by both geographical proximity and intertwined interests. The collective efforts against the outbreak are vivid demonstration of a neighborhood community of shared future.

#### **3.1 COVID-19 Outbreak Underscoring the Shared Future between China and Its Neighbors**

**The outbreak highlighting the interdependence between China and its neighbors.** At a time of growing connectivity and ever more frequent cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and its neighbors, any outbreak of communicable disease can cross the borders easily and cause profound damages to the local economies and societies. For example, the ongoing pandemic has impacted the Chinese economy and brought challenges to the global supply and industrial chains, with China’s neighbors the first to feel the pinch. When the industrial and supply chains in the neighborhood take a hit, regional flow of production elements will be held back, creating a drag on China’s growth in turn. According to statistics, if China’s economic growth narrows by 1.0% as a result of the outbreak, the country’s direct investment flow to ASEAN will fall by about 2.8%, costing ASEAN’s economy 2.4-3.4 billion dollars in direct loss, or 0.07-0.11% of its GDP. Under this scenario, ASEAN is also expected to see a 1.2% drop in export

to China.<sup>1</sup> By another estimation, if the outbreak results in a 10-billion-dollar reduction in China's manufacturing industry's output, the ROK's export of goods to China will fall by nearly 300 million dollars; reduced supply of parts and components from China will cut the ROK's export of finished goods by roughly 200 million dollars. Production suspension in parts of China will also have repercussions for Japan's key parts and components makers.<sup>2</sup>

**The outbreak highlighting the urgency of joint response to non-conventional security issues.** COVID-19 will not be the last major emergency call in a globalized world. Non-conventional security problems will keep escalating and spreading across borders, bringing new risks and challenges. In response, China and neighboring countries need to build on non-conventional security cooperation and push for a community of shared future.

The public health cooperation China and its neighbors have engaged in during the outbreak is unprecedented, but the vulnerability of regional public health situation is also clear. The existing regional cooperation mechanisms are in many ways inadequate in the face of major cross-border public health crises. State-to-state health cooperation mechanisms are either absent or inefficient, and therefore cannot be counted on to tackle these crises. Besides, there is also a lack of fast response and coordination mechanism between China and neighboring countries in face of these crises.

The COVID-19 outbreak has clearly indicated that the non-conventional security cooperation between China and its neighbors remains absent or inadequate in certain areas. Therefore, better planned and more meaningful

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<sup>1</sup> Economic and trade ties between China, ASEAN and ASEAN 10 + 3 against the backdrop of COVID-19 outbreak, "Dongboshe" Wechat official account, February 28, 2020, <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/mkknq-gd10K53wD-8DNHNA>.

<sup>2</sup> Kazuya Manabe & Kensaku Ihara, Coronavirus outbreak highlights downsides of global dependence on China, quoted from huanqiu.com, February 9, 2020, <https://oversea.huanqiu.com/article/3wy65Dtg8xW>.

cooperation arrangement is needed. The ongoing cooperation programs China has with other regional countries are still focusing emergency response to the virus's spread, but regional financial turmoil, disrupted supply and demand and other secondary damage caused by the outbreak are not yet on the agenda. The outbreak's knock-on effect on economic and social development will surely be more severe and wider if a regional economic crisis looms. One thing is for sure: major communicable disease outbreak, tsunami, extreme violence and terrorism, bio-chemical and environmental pollution-these are among a myriad of non-conventional security threats the world can expect to see in the future and governments will be tested for their abilities to respond.

The outbreak is another wake-up call for countries in this region to turn the crisis into an opportunity of exploring new pathways for non-conventional security cooperation. In the face of a crisis, there are both dangers and opportunities, difficulties and hope. China and its neighbors need to build on existing non-conventional security cooperation, take a problem-oriented approach, promptly address inadequacies, and set up a long-term response mechanism, so as to put countries in the region in a better position to respond, coordinate and cooperate.

**The outbreak pushing China and its neighbors to put aside differences and tackle common threats together.** COVID-19 knows no border. Its impact on health and social economic development is everywhere. The outbreak will drive countries all over the world to re-examine engagement with other countries, move beyond differences, find common ground and motivation for stronger cooperation.

China's neighborhood is beset by territorial disputes and geopolitical frictions. But when threatened by the virus, people from across the region, being Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia or South Asia, all call for cooperation. For now, countries in the region have put aside territorial disputes, historical

grudges and trade tensions. Both the governments and the general public are sending goodwill gestures, best wishes and aid to one another. The positive and uplifting interactions between people from the region have created a stronger people-to-people bond and higher political mutual trust.

### **3.2 Working for a Community of Shared Future in the Neighborhood Based on the Epitome in Non-Traditional Security Cooperation**

**Cooperation is the only way to ensure security.** The virus has become the biggest common enemy for human society, and the only way out of the current difficulty is solidarity and mutual assistance. Non-conventional security threats stemming from new infectious diseases and other sources will keep cropping up in the future. Solidarity and sincere cooperation are the best choices for the international community. Even though technologies have never been so advanced in history, humanity still faces a future full of unknown risks. In the new era of globalization, countries increasingly rely on connectivity and population flow for economic and social development. In this ever smaller global village, people are both citizens of their own country and of the planet. Never have security risks been so contagious and common threats so grave. Meanwhile, as technologies keep advancing with each passing day, communication technology has brought people together across time and distance. Humankind is increasingly better equipped to cope with crises and disasters and more tools are available for international cooperation.

Counter-globalization, protectionism and isolationism, trends that have gained ground somewhat in recent years, may receive a boost from the outbreak. But the dilemma some countries find themselves in during the outbreak point exactly to the deficit and deficiencies in global governance. When it comes to tackling cross-border security threats and various risks and challenges associated with globalization, turning inwards and a beggar-thy-neighbor approach are short-sighted and irresponsible choices

that will only backfire. The fundamental solution lies in better global governance structures and more efficient international cooperation. What has happened to China and its neighboring countries shows that effective



Asian Culture Carnivals held at Beijing National Stadium, as part of the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations, on May 2019.

international cooperation is the building block of successful outbreak control efforts and essential to human survival and development. There may be more unknown cross-border, cross-regional, and even global crises to come for China and its neighbors.

It is important to learn from the past, bear in mind the vision of a community of shared future for mankind, strive to be more open-minded, and earnestly discuss ways of working more effectively together. It is also important to stay committed to the spirit of humanitarianism, shoulder the responsibility of protecting people's life together and enjoy security, development and prosperity together.

**Taking a multipronged approach for a community of shared future in the neighborhood.** Proposed twice by President Xi Jinping from the UN podium, a community of shared future for mankind is an initiative spoken highly of and widely supported by international community. An important part of that vision is a community of shared future in China's neighborhood, since the neighborhood has always been a priority in China's foreign policy. Taking the opportunity of the collective efforts against the

outbreak, China will intensify work with its neighboring countries to build a community of shared future in the neighborhood based on shared benefits and responsibilities.

First, keep making efforts to build a community of shared interests. Due to geographical proximity and cultural ties, the most direct and earliest impact of any public security crisis will always be on China and its neighboring countries. The outbreak should become a learning experience, driving countries to enhance the sense of crisis and urgency for cooperation. It is important to seek wider consensus and stronger regional identity in order to build a community of shared interests. Efforts are also needed to turn headwind to tailwind and to make sure that such a community means more than a vision and initiative but more and more concrete actions in the region. Countries need to reaffirm commitment to the philosophy of open development and firmly pursue regional integration.

Second, keep working towards a community of shared responsibility. In the face of non-conventional security threats like the COVID-19, human beings seem so insignificant. Solving a problem that is beyond the power of a single country requires both the collective wisdom and efforts of the international community, and every country doing its best to shoulder more responsibilities. In the efforts to build the community, it is important to follow the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, accommodate each other's comfort level, and find fairer and more effective regional governance plans in line with the trend of history. It is important to uphold multilateralism, improve and upgrade regional multilateral mechanisms, and build a multileveled community of governance. Countries in the region need to enhance people-to-people connectivity so as to develop the habit of cooperation and rally public support for cooperation. It is also necessary to take concrete actions, identify and adjust accordingly common



goals and action plans in order to effectively cope with similar public security crises and various risks and challenges that could possibly emerge in the future.

Last but not least, uphold the solid faith in building a community of shared future for all mankind. Health for all is a shared vision for human beings and an inherent part of a community of shared future in the neighborhood. In face of global threats such as cross-border communicable diseases, safeguarding the health of a country’s own people is to safeguard global public health security, and helping others’ fight against outbreaks is to lessen one’s own pressure. The response to COVID-19 outbreak provides an opportunity to reflect on ideological differences and the debate on governance model, to abandon the zero-sum geopolitical competition mentality, to replace bias with rationality, to ponder over ways of human interaction from the height of human collective good, to cultivate mutual trust through cooperation, to boost cooperation through enhanced trust, and achieve ultimate mutual benefit and win-win.

## Conclusion

Faced with the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, China and its neighboring countries have joined hands to tide over the difficulties, which shows the good-neighborly relations of mutual assistance and intertwined interests. Goodwill came along with the assistance sent by China's neighbouring countries, which Chinese people have always kept in mind. "Receiving drips of water when in need, and I shall return the kindness with a spring". Now, envisioning a community of shared future, China has made active contributions to the fight against COVID-19 in its neighborhood, earning recognition and praises from its neighbors. As COVID-19 still rages on around the world, China and its neighboring countries must jointly deal with the daunting social economic challenges while preventing virus spread. This requires not only China to behave as a responsible major country, but also the neighboring countries to cope closely and give full play to the coordination role of the regional mechanisms. By fighting together against COVID-19, China and the neighboring countries will build a cooperative network to deal with non-traditional security issues, adhere to the principles of mutual benefit and shared responsibility, and accelerate the building of a community of shared future.

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