

How Beijing Sees Its Belt and Road Initiative

Dennis Speed: Thank you, Helga. Our next speaker is Mme. Zhang Meifang, the Deputy Consul General, at the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in New York.

Zhang Meifang: Madame Helga Zepp-LaRouche, chairperson of the Schiller Institute, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning to you all. It is truly a great honor and pleasure for me to be invited to attend this morning's conference, named, "China-U.S. Cooperation on the Belt and Road Initiative and Its Corresponding Ideas in Chinese and Western Philosophy."

Please, first of all, let me extend on behalf of the Chinese Consulate General in New York City, on behalf of the Consul General, Ambassador Zhang Qiyue, our heartfelt greetings to you all, and may we also wish this morning's conference to be held with full success.

And thank you so much, Mme. Helga Zepp-LaRouche, for your very interesting and very important speech, which really inspired us all. And as I understand this morning, I'm being invited to share with you what kind of meanings and characteristics does the Belt and Road Initiative carry, and what can it bring to relevant regions and other parts of the world. So perhaps these are the main topics which I'm going to share with you this morning.

First of all, let me start with what really is the initiative of the One Belt, One Road. How did it come into being? The Belt and Road Initiative is a very crucial component of China's new opening-up policy. In 2013, when President Xi Jinping made a trip to the Eastern European countries, he raised the initiative of jointly



Zhang Meifang

building the Silk Road Economic Belt and also, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, during his trip to countries in Central Asia as well as the South-east Asian nations.

So, some three years after President Xi's proposal, the Belt and Road Initiative has been built from scratch, and now it has really taken root and bloomed in more and more countries, and won several positive responses from the international community as well. For instance, so far, about 100 countries and international organizations have already expressed their interest and also expressed their support for the

One Belt, One Road initiative. Apart from this, 40 countries and international organizations have already signed the cooperation agreements.

On this point, I would like to talk about three major points, regarding the Belt and Road Initiative. First of all, the Belt and Road Initiative is a cooperative proposal based on the principle of mutual negotiation, joint development, and sharing. The history of the Belt and Road Initiative is as follows: It was as early as 2100 years ago, when Zhang Qian—probably most of you know of Zhang Qian, the Chinese explorer and diplomat at that time from the Han Dynasty—was dispatched to visit the western regions twice, and also to open up the door for friendship between China and the countries to China's west. So this everlasting and also ever-changing trade route gradually expanded, and gradually became what we call the Silk Road.

Fast forward from that time, in the Song Dynasty and also Ming Dynasty, we have another legendary figure who was named Zheng He. Zheng He commanded several expeditionary voyages down the sea to

the west. So, thanks to the advanced navigation technology of that time, our ancestors successfully embarked on the Maritime Silk Road. For thousands of years, the Silk Roads have not only brought goods such as silk, parsley, and spices, but also brought peace, friendship and real benefits to the people from numerous countries around the world.

Actually, the most important historical legacy of the Silk Road is the Silk Road spirit, which is enshrined in the peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning, and also mutual benefit. Today, China's Silk Road Initiative is not only the inheritance and innovation of the ancient Silk Road, but the common aspirations of the countries along the Belt and Road to extend their mutually beneficial cooperation. Such an initiative really stands for the principle of mutual negotiation, joint development, and sharing, in order to promote policy coordination; facilitate connectivity; and increase trade, financial integration, and people-to-people bonds. The initiative also aims to promote the integration of the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road Initiative to enable all countries involved to complement one another, to narrow regional disparities, and to accelerate the process of the regional integration in order to raise the overall economic development of the region.

The Belt and Road Initiative is by far the most important public project China has provided to the world, and also a crucial practice for China's establishment of partnerships in the world.

Role of Chinese Tradition

As I mentioned, and probably as you know, since the establishment of this initiative three years ago, it has continuously expanded in influence, and received, as I mentioned, positive responses and support from more than 100 countries in the world, and also from international organizations. The support and engagement of all countries along the Road and the Belt and Road Initiative, has progressed smoothly and reaped an early harvest. For instance, Chinese enterprises have established more than 56 economic and trade cooperation zones in more than 20 countries along the Belt and Road, with a total investment of more \$18.5 billion, and a series of major projects have been launched and flourished, stimulating the economic growth of countries along the roads, and creating many employment opportunities.

And I also want to mention in particular, that starting this January, the China-Europe freight train—as

Mme. LaRouche has already mentioned—which departs from Yiwu city in east China, has arrived in London for the first time ever. Over the 12,000-km railway line, it takes the cargo train 18 days to travel through Central Asian and European countries, through the Channel Tunnel, and eventually arrive in London, with a travel time one month shorter than shipping via sea, and at a cost one-fifth that of air freight. This intercontinental freight train service has stimulated the local import and export business, given its obvious time and cost advantage, and it has become really a showcase in the Belt and Road Initiative. This is just one example.

The second point I want to talk to you about is the cultural perspective. The Belt and Road Initiative is deeply rooted in China's rich cultural traditions. It is a pragmatic and cooperative initiative. The ancient Silk Road was a road of trade, and more importantly, a road of friendship that carried humanistic and cultural exchanges as well as promoting mutual understanding of all civilizations. During China's 5,000 years of history, we have leading philosophers, such as Lao Tzu, Confucius, and Mencius, whom Mme. LaRouche has already mentioned, who put forward ideas and thoughts. Some of the most important ones and the most famous, have been to seek common ground while putting aside differences, absorbing the excesses and discarding the dross, contributing to help others when you live a good life, and positioning oneself correctly in the world to walk the correct path. These ideas still shape contemporary Chinese people's lives.

Thanks to China's 5,000 years of history and philosophy, China is a peace-loving nation. We love peace. We love to have a peaceful world, in which we love to develop our friendly relations in cooperation with all countries around the world, including this great country, the United States.

China has become the world's second largest economy, thanks to our 38 years of reform and opening to the outside world. Last year the Chinese economy was stable and very healthy. By the end of this year, we are expecting to have a steady growth of about 6.5%. So the speed of China's economic growth has transitioned from high to a medium-high, and it is expected that within the next five years, China will import \$8 trillion worth of goods, with more than \$750 billion of overseas investment, while outbound tourism is estimated to reach 700 million.

Currently, China has been pushing forward structural reform, guided by a vision of what we call the five

most important pillars, vis-à-vis our national economic and social development. These are: innovative, coordinated, green, open, and shared development, to achieve supply-side economic restructuring and upgrading. We are willing to share with other countries the new historical opportunities China has during the entire process of promoting regional development strategy, new organization strategy, and opening-up strategy.

The third point I want to share with you, is that the Belt and Road Initiative is characterized by openness and inclusiveness as an innovative platform of great potential. At a time when the economic outlook is uncertain and the recovery is slow in the world, and also at a time when various challenges are the backdrop, contradictions between openness and exclusiveness, economic integration and fragmentation, are further highlighted. At the opening plenary session of the 2017 annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held at Davos, this January, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that we shall firmly promote an open world economy, to share opportunities and profits with other countries in a process of opening up, and to realize mutual benefits and a “win-win” situation.

We shall not retreat to the harbor whenever there are wind and waves. Otherwise, we would never be able to enter the paradise of success shared by all. We shall vigorously enhance global connectivity to achieve joint growth and common prosperity with countries all over the globe.

China and the U.S.

Today, what is of great importance, when we are gathering here to talk about the Belt and Road Initiative, is that we not only broaden the space and bring historical opportunities to deepen Sino-U.S. relations and cooperation, but also note that international cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative will not be limited to countries along the routes, but open to all countries including the United States. For more than three years, many Western companies, including those from the United States, have been substantially involved in projects related to the Belt and Road Initiative.

As you probably know, in May this year, China will host in Beijing the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, which aims to discuss ways to boost cooperation, build cooperation platforms, and share cooperation outcomes. The forum will also explore ways to address problems facing the global economy, and also regional economic problems; create fresh energy

for pursuing interconnected development; and make the Belt and Road Initiative deliver greater benefits to all the people of the countries that are involved.

And thirdly, the Belt and Road Initiative is characterized by openness and inclusiveness, and is an integrated platform of great potential. As I mentioned, at a time when the economic outlook is uncertain and recovery is very slow, at a time when there are challenges as the backdrop, contradictions between openness and exclusiveness, between economic integration and fragmentation, will further be highlighted. So what we should do in this entire process is that we need to further strengthen our efforts to promote Sino-U.S. relations. In this way we can bring our initiative into full play.

Let me spend some minutes to talk about Sino-U.S. relations. China and the United States are the world’s largest developing country and the world’s most developed country, so the relationship between the world’s largest country and the world’s most developed country is perhaps the most important and most dynamic relationship in the world. At present, China is the United States’ largest trading partner; the trade volume is more than 210 times as large as it was 38 years ago. In another sense, the total bilateral trade between China and the United States in 2016 reached almost \$109 billion, as against less than \$2 billion in the early 1980s shortly after China established diplomatic relations with the United States.

Last year also the amount of bilateral investment between our two countries reached more than \$170 billion. Besides, I want to mention in particular between our two countries, that China has more than 300,000 students who pursue advanced studies in the United States. As against less than 10,000 traveling between our two countries in one year in the early 1980s, right now, we have almost 10,000 people traveling between the two sides of the Pacific *every single day*. And every 17 minutes there is a flight, flying across the Pacific. According to the statistics on the results from the U.S. side, bilateral trade and investment between China and the United States have created more than 2.6 million job openings for the United States. The number of Chinese tourists travelling to the United States reached 2.59 million last year, in 2016, creating more than \$30 billion of tourism revenue for the United States.

I could talk on and on about the specific statistics about our two countries in all aspects of life, but the development and improvement in Sino-U.S. relations cannot do without the high-level talks, as Mme. La-

Rouche already mentioned in great detail about the results of the meetings between the two heads of state last week.

And I want to conclude my speech by talking about the results of the meetings between President Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump. Last week, upon the invitation of President Donald Trump, President Xi Jinping came to Mar-a-Lago where he had important meetings that are historically significant, meetings with President Donald Trump. President Xi and his wife, Mme. Peng Liyuan, were received by President Donald Trump's family, three generations. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson of the United States went to the airport to greet our President and Madame. That really showed the great importance attached by the United States to this meeting.

Summit of Two Presidents

Last week, over the days when our President was here, the leaders of the two countries have had many important meetings, during which they had in-depth exchange of views on Sino-U.S. relationships and international and regional issues of common concern, reaching many important consensuses. Both sides believed that the meeting was rooted positively and has made many important achievements. Firstly, the meeting is aimed at strengthening mutual understanding and trust of the two heads of state. President Xi Jinping and President Donald Trump shared governance theory and introduced to each other their respective ongoing priority areas, which deepens mutual understanding and establishes a very good working relationship between the two heads of state.

President Donald Trump accepted President Xi Jinping's invitation for a state visit to China later this year. Both leaders have also agreed to keep close contacts through meetings, through calls, and through letters. The deeper the two leaders communicate with each other, the bigger the role they could play in guiding China-U.S. relations, creating the relationships' compatibility and tenacity, in boosting the world's positive expectations for their further development.

And secondly, the result of the meeting is that the meeting affirms the development, through action and principles, of China-U.S. relations. Both leaders highly applauded the historic progress of Sino-U.S. relations and agreed to promote greater development to a new starting point, so as to bring more benefits to the people of both countries and the entire world. President Xi re-

iterated that cooperation is the only choice for China and the United States, and that both countries are capable of becoming good partners. He pointed out in particular, that we have a thousand reasons to make China-U.S. relations a success, and no reasons to make bilateral relations a failure. President Donald Trump noted that the United States stands ready to cooperate with China to eliminate those factors and problems affecting bilateral relations, to realize and bring about greater development of China-U.S. relations. Bilateral relations will certainly be better.

Thirdly, the meeting has also laid out priority views and mechanisms of bilateral cooperation. China and the United States agreed to promote healthy development of two-way investment and trade, as well as to advance two-way investment agreement negotiations. The two heads of state have announced establishment of four high-level dialogue mechanisms which I'm not going to repeat, as Mme. LaRouche has already mentioned them just now. These four high-level dialogue mechanisms are an important achievement from the Mar-a-Lago meeting.

In addition, the two heads of state exchanged in-depth views on international and regional issues of common concern, such as the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, and agreed to expand cooperation on regional and international issues to contribute to the maintenance of regional and world peace, stability, and prosperity.

In summary, the meeting of our two heads of state is very important, timely, and effective, which has achieved the original goal of enhancing mutual understanding, establishing mutual trust, and reaching common consensus.

Last but not least, I want to quote President Xi as saying that China welcomes the United States to participate in cooperation within the Belt and Road framework. President Xi stressed that both countries have become each other's first, largest trading partners and both peoples have benefitted a lot from it. China is pushing forward its supply-side structural reform and continuously expanding domestic demand, and the proportion of service industry in the national economy has been constantly improved. China's economy will maintain a sound development momentum, and economic and trade cooperation between the countries enjoys broad prospects. Both countries should really seize the opportunities.

So finally, I also want to thank the Schiller Institute for inviting me. Thank you.