

INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

国际交流

1

Vol. 1, 2024

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LETTING THE WORLD UNDERSTAND CHINA  
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中国国际交流协会

CHINESE ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

## INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

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International Standard Serial  
Number:

ISSN1002-8285

China Standard Serial Number:  
CN11-2491/D

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Letters may be edited for length or content.

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## President Xi Delivers 2024 New Year Message

Greetings to you all! As energy rises after the Winter Solstice, we are about to bid farewell to the old year and usher in the new. From Beijing, I extend my best New Year wishes to each and every one of you!

In 2023, we have continued to forge ahead with resolve and tenacity. We have gone through the test of winds and rains, have seen beautiful scenes unfolding on the way, and have made plenty real achievements. We will remember this year as one of hard work and perseverance. Going forward, we have full confidence in the future.

This year, we have marched forward with solid steps. We achieved a smooth transition in our COVID-19 response efforts. The Chinese economy has sustained the momentum of recovery. Steady progress has been made in pursuing high-quality development. Our modernised industrial system has been further upgraded. A number of advanced, smart and green industries are rapidly emerging as new pillars of the economy. We have secured a bumper harvest for the 20th year in a row. Waters have become clearer and mountains greener. New advances have been made in pursuing rural revitalisation. New progress has been made in fully revitalising northeast China. The Xiong'an New Area is growing fast, the Yangtze River Economic Belt is full of vitality, and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is embracing new

development opportunities. Having weathered the storm, the Chinese economy is more resilient and dynamic than before.

This year, we have marched forward with robust steps. Thanks to years of dedicated efforts, China's innovation-driven development is full of energy. The C919 large passenger airliner entered commercial service. The Chinese-built large cruise ship completed its trial voyage. The Shenzhou spaceships are continuing their missions in space. The deep-sea manned submersible Fendouzhe reached the deepest ocean trench. Products designed and made in China, especially trendy brands, are highly popular with consumers. The latest models of Chinese-made mobile phones are an instant market success. New energy vehicles, lithium batteries, and photovoltaic products are a new testimony to China's manufacturing prowess. Everywhere across our country, new heights are being scaled with dogged determination, and new creations and innovations are emerging every day.

This year, we have marched forward in high spirits. The Chengdu FISU World University Games and the Hangzhou Asian Games presented spectacular sports scenes, and Chinese athletes excelled in their competitions. Tourist destinations are full of visitors on holidays, and the film market is booming. The "village super league" football games and "village spring festival gala" are immensely

popular. More people are embracing low-carbon lifestyles. All these exhilarating activities have made our lives richer and more colourful, and they mark the return of bustling life across the country. They embody people's pursuit of a beautiful life, and present a vibrant and flourishing China to the world.

This year, we have marched forward with great confidence. China is a great country with a great civilisation. Across this vast expanse of land, wisps of smoke in deserts of the north and drizzles in the south invoke our fond memory of many millennium-old stories. The mighty Yellow River and Yangtze River never fail to inspire us. Discoveries at the archeological sites of Liangzhu and Erlitou tell us much about the dawn of Chinese civilisation. The ancient Chinese characters inscribed on oracle bones of the Yin Ruins, the cultural treasures of the Sanxingdui Site, and the collections of the National Archives of Publications and Culture bear witness to the evolution of Chinese culture. All this stands as testament to the time-honoured history of China and its splendid civilisation. And all this is the source from which our confidence and strength are derived.

While pursuing its development, China has also embraced the world and fulfilled its responsibility as a major country. We held the China-Central Asia Summit and the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, and hosted leaders from across the world at many diplomatic events held in China. I also paid visits to a number of countries, attended international conferences, and met many friends, both old and new. I shared China's vision and enhanced common understandings with them. No matter how the global landscape may evolve, peace and development remain the underlying trend, and only cooperation for mutual

benefit can deliver.

Along the way, we are bound to encounter headwinds. Some enterprises had a tough time. Some people had difficulty finding jobs and meeting basic needs. Some places were hit by floods, typhoons, earthquakes or other natural disasters. All these remain at the forefront of my mind. When I see people rising to the occasion, reaching out to each other in adversity, meeting challenges head-on and overcoming difficulties, I am deeply moved. All of you, from farmers in the fields to workers on factory floors, from entrepreneurs blazing the trail to service members guarding our country-- indeed, people from all walks of life-- have done your very best. Each and every ordinary Chinese has made an extraordinary contribution! You, the people, are the ones we look to when we fight to prevail over all difficulties or challenges.

Next year will mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. We will steadfastly advance Chinese modernisation, fully and faithfully apply the new development philosophy on all fronts, speed up building the new development paradigm, promote high-quality development, and both pursue development and safeguard security. We will continue to act on the principle of seeking progress while maintaining stability, promoting stability through progress, and establishing the new before abolishing the old. We will consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery, and work to achieve steady and long-term economic development. We will deepen reform and opening up across the board, further enhance people's confidence in development, promote vibrant development of the economy, and redouble efforts to boost education, advance science and technology and

cultivate talents. We will continue to support Hong Kong and Macao in harnessing their distinctive strengths, better integrating themselves into China's overall development, and securing long-term prosperity and stability. China will surely be reunified, and all Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

Our goal is both inspiring and simple. Ultimately, it is about delivering a better life for the people. Our children should be well taken care of and receive good education. Our young people should have the opportunities to pursue their careers and succeed. And our elderly people should have adequate access to medical services and elderly care. These issues matter to every family, and they are also a top priority of the government. We must work together to deliver on these issues. Today, in our fast-paced society, people are all busy and face a lot of pressure in work and life. We should foster a warm and harmonious atmosphere in

our society, expand the inclusive and dynamic environment for innovation, and create convenient and good living conditions, so that the people can live happy lives, bring out their best, and realise their dreams.

As I speak to you, conflicts are still raging in some parts of the world. We Chinese are keenly aware of what peace means. We will work closely with the international community for the common good of humanity, build a community with a shared future for mankind, and make the world a better place for all.

Right at this moment, when the lights in millions of homes light up the evening sky, let us all wish our great country prosperity, and let us all wish the world peace and tranquility! I wish you happiness in all the four seasons and success and good health in the year ahead!

Thank you!

# Work Actively to Implement the Global Civilisation Initiative and Jointly Advance Human Civilisations

Liu Jianchao

As countries around the world face common challenges in the course of seeking peace and development and making explorations towards modernisation, the call for solidarity, collaboration and dialogue is growing stronger than ever. However, the deep-seated problems of suspicion, division and confrontation are still blocking international cooperation. Therefore, it is essential to step up inter-civilisation exchanges for closer people-to-people connectivity. The Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI), proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping in his keynote address entitled "Join Hands on the Path Towards Modernisation" at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting on March 15, 2023, is a sincere call to the world for in-depth inter-civilisation exchanges and dialogue to advance human civilisations through inclusiveness and mutual learning. This is yet another effort to contribute China's wisdom and solutions to promoting international cooperation at a higher level.

**I. The GCI epitomises General Secretary Xi Jinping's profound strategic vision, broad historical perspective, strong sense of responsibility for the times and deep care for**

**humanity.**

The GCI is a timely response to the urgent call of peoples around the world for stronger solidarity and collaboration to jointly deal with common challenges. In today's world, multiple challenges and crises are intertwined. The global economic recovery remains sluggish, the development gap is widening, ecological environment is deteriorating, and the Cold War mentality is lingering. Humanity's modernisation process has once again reached a crossroads of history. To meet our common challenges, we need material means to conquer difficulties, and cultural and ethical resources to garner strength. General Secretary Xi Jinping noted that as the future of all countries are closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilisations play an irreplaceable role in advancing humanity's modernisation process and making the garden of world civilisations flourish. Proposing the GCI at the CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-level Meeting conveys China's sincere desire to work with all countries in pursuing modernisation with distinctive features of each country, and promoting global inter-civilisation exchanges and



mutual learning for the advancement of human civilisations.

The GCI is an earnest response to the common aspirations of countries for upholding equality, inclusiveness and diversity of world civilisations. Just as no country is superior to others, there is no such thing as inferior or superior civilisation. Since ancient times, people of different regions have developed a myriad of great civilisations in the course of production and in exploiting and changing nature. They have pursued the common human values and goals of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, and promoted progress of human society. No value should be above other values. Modernisation and civilisation can be realised and advanced through more than one model. The illusion of self-important "universal civilisation" will easily fall through. Drawing lines along ideology and values and creating divisions and confrontations will only bring disastrous results upon the world and blemish the civilisations. General Secretary Xi Jinping has elaborated on the significance of diversity for human civilisations on various occasions. He stressed that the GCI advocates, first and foremost, the respect for the diversity of civilisations and that countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilisations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation. This demonstrates China's inclusive vision of jointly promoting inter-civilisation cooperation with all countries so as to prosper respectively and together.

The GCI is a natural response to the common call of the international community for closer inter-civilisation dialogue and exchanges and more vibrant cultural development. Over the

course of several thousand years, the Chinese civilisation has preserved its roots and constantly broke new ground by drawing inspiration and wisdom from exchanges and mutual learning with other civilisations. In turn, it has also advanced the progress of human civilisation with its own development. As economic globalisation unfolds, there is a growing need to modernise traditional cultures through mutual learning. In response, General Secretary Xi Jinping advocates cultural exchanges over estrangement, mutual learning over clashes and coexistence over feelings of superiority, and pushing for creative transformation and innovative development of fine traditional cultures through exchanges and mutual learning. China has all along been a firm advocate and an active practitioner of inter-civilisation exchanges and cooperation. The GCI is yet another living proof of our unceasing efforts to this end.

The GCI is a sincere response to the call of the times for countries around the world to advance progress of civilisations and build a human community with a shared future. As General Secretary Xi Jinping rightly pointed out, in promoting the development of human society and the building of a human community with a shared future, we need a keen understanding and grasp of the origins and the substance of different civilisations so that humanity can benefit from the cream of all civilisations. The Global Development Initiative and Global Security Initiative put forward by China in recent years open up new possibilities for international cooperation in the field of development and security, while the GCI injects new dynamism into and builds new safeguards for global development cooperation and global security cooperation.

The three initiatives provide a powerful underpinning for the building of a human

community with a shared future and embody China's holistic thinking on fostering a world of lasting peace and prosperity.

**II. The GCI is clear in logic and rich in content with the "four advocatings" making up a well-structured system for inter-civilisation exchanges and sustained development of civilisations.**

The GCI centres on the core tenets of "four advocatings" as follows:

— advocating the respect for the diversity of civilisations. Countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilisations, and let cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.

— advocating the common values of humanity. Peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom are the common aspirations of all peoples. Countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilisations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

— advocating the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilisations. Countries need to fully harness the relevance of their histories and cultures to the present times, and push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

— advocating robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. Countries need to explore the building of a global network for inter-civilisational dialogue and cooperation, enrich the content of exchanges and expand avenues of

cooperation to promote mutual understanding and friendship among people of all countries and jointly advance the progress of human civilisations.

The "four advocatings", with each focusing on a particular aspect, are mutually reinforcing and make up a coherent organic unity. They reveal the basic laws that underlie the exchanges among and development of civilisations and open up new prospects for cooperation of human society.

The respect for the diversity of civilisations is the prerequisite for their exchanges and development. All civilisations are rooted in their unique cultures. Each embodies the wisdom and spiritual pursuit of a country or a nation, and each has its unique value of existence. Such diversity, being an objective reality, is also an invaluable asset shared by the entire humanity. Differences among civilisations should not be viewed as a threat to one's own civilisation. Civilisations are not isolated either. It is exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations that drives their progress. Thanks to economic globalisation, interactions among civilisations and cultures have become more frequent and in-depth. During his historic visit to the headquarters of UNESCO in 2014, General Secretary Xi Jinping expounded in a keynote address there his vision on civilisation featuring diversity, equality and inclusiveness. As time passes by with more inter-civilisation exchanges, General Secretary Xi has enriched the vision to encompass equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness. He advocates promoting dialogues among different civilisations as long as its diversity is respected and protected, removing estrangement, bias, fear and conflicts through mutual learning for mutual understanding, and building a new pattern of world civilisations where they learn from each other and coexist in harmony.

The common values of humanity are the fundamental guidance for the exchanges and development of civilisations.

Human civilisations progress in differentiated ways but they produce the same set of core values, which is not only the spiritual bond that connects different civilisations, countries and nations, but also the underlying force driving human progress. General Secretary Xi Jinping advocates peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom as the common values of humanity, which are also universally recognised by peoples around the world. It is an important step towards building common understanding among different civilisations on the perception of values, and will garner stronger willpower for the building of a human community with a shared future. While championing the common values of humanity, we also need to appreciate the perceptions of values by different civilisations and respect the efforts of other countries and peoples to turn their values into reality. We should seek common ground while reserving differences and stand opposed to the practice of uniting with the like-minded and alienating those with different views. We should refrain from imposing our own values and models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation. These are also what common values of humanity mean and require. Only by upholding openness, inclusiveness and mutual respect, can the common values of humanity be truly carried forward and an even closer human community with a shared future be built.

Inheritance and innovation of civilisations are the mighty driving force for their exchanges and development. All civilisations that are still in existence have stood the test of time in their long histories. They have carried forward from

generation to generation the cultural gene of a country or a nation and have become a mighty cohesive force to hold that country or nation together. For any civilisation to remain its vigour and vitality, it must advance with the times, make progress while preserving its heritage, and be adept at creative transformation and innovative development. Its progress is sure to be impeded by attempts to hold fast to the established ways or follow the beaten track. Countries and nations should undertake the responsibility of sustaining and developing human civilisations, and draw on the merits and wisdom of other civilisations through exchanges, dialogues and mutual learning. Efforts should also be made to enrich the content and diversify the form of civilisations in light of the features and requirements of modernisation. Only in this way can fine traditional cultures demonstrate immense charm and vitality that transcend time and space, and truly benefit the whole of human society. For any civilisation to be inherited and innovated, people's creativity must be unleashed, the outcomes of cultural inheritance and innovation must be shared by all, and people's aspiration for coordinated material and cultural-ethical advancement, harmony between humanity and nature, and all-round development must be satisfied.

Robust international people-to-people interactions and cooperation are important means to advance the exchanges among and development of civilisations. People are the best vehicles for exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations. Friendship between the peoples holds the key to sound state-to-state relations, and heart-to-heart communication contributes to deeper friendship. Therefore, people-to-people exchanges always serve as bridges connecting countries and nations

for better mutual understanding and stronger friendly bonds, yet some interest groups, out of their selfish interests, attempt to provoke conflicts between civilisations and stoke bloc confrontations, which has seriously eroded the foundation of understanding and trust among civilisations and undermined international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. We should, once again, galvanise the mighty force of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation. By expanding the flow of personnel and strengthening bilateral and multilateral people-to-people cooperation, we can enrich the content of exchanges, expand avenues of cooperation, and explore the building of a global network for inter-civilisation dialogue and cooperation. By doing so, we will enhance mutual trust among countries and nations and promote mutual understanding and friendship among different peoples, and build a world more culturally-advanced that enjoys greater prosperity and security.

**III. The GCI has received extensive attention and positive response worldwide, and its implementation requires joint efforts of all parties to create the maximum synergy.**

Since its launch, the GCI has won warm response and overwhelming support from leaders of many countries and people from various sectors. They believe that the Initiative reflects the vision and sense of responsibility of General Secretary Xi Jinping as the leader of a major country. Contributing Chinese wisdom to solving the most acute and pressing problems facing the world, the GCI brings hope for reducing conflicts and confrontations and promoting world prosperity, and pictures a beautiful world aspired by all. Therefore, they stand ready to deepen inter-civilisation exchanges and cooperation with China

for the implementation of the Initiative.

Looking back in history, we would find that inter-civilisation exchanges have had both good times and bad times. The good times would see civilisations flourish and the society develop rapidly. While in the bad times, civilisations declined and the society regressed. By proposing the GCI, General Secretary Xi Jinping hopes to draw wider attention to the value of inter-civilisation exchanges and restore confidence in exchanges and cooperation among civilisations. The Chinese side stands ready to work with the international community to ensure that the GCI will take root and come into fruition for the benefit of human society.

We need to keep to the approach of extensive consultation and joint contribution to cultivate an inclusive and equal-footed atmosphere for inter-civilisation exchanges. Guided by the global governance principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, we need to enrich the content and improve the forms of inter-civilisation exchanges on the basis of extensive discussions and joint efforts. We need to regard the development and rejuvenation of other civilisations as our own opportunities, and strengthen political communication, economic cooperation and mutual security trust, so as to facilitate exchanges and development of various civilisations through sustainable development and sustained security. We should advocate equality, inclusiveness, and mutual respect, abandon arrogance and prejudice, and jointly oppose treating one or certain civilisations as adversaries. Instead of believing that civilisations are destined to clash, we should pay more attention to the impact of history, culture and values on conflicts between countries and groups, and encourage inter-civilisation dialogue to strike

a common chord among peoples and eliminate misunderstanding and estrangement, so as to lay a foundation for peace talks.

We need to leverage various platforms and mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of global governance system in people-to-people exchanges. We need to work together to practice true multilateralism and give full play to existing platforms and mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral dialogues among civilisations at all levels. We should respect and safeguard the authority and status of the United Nations (UN), increase synergy with the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation and the UN Alliance of Civilisations, and join hands with all relevant parties in implementing the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations. We need to value regional, sub-regional and bilateral mechanisms for inter-civilisation exchanges, and inject fresh impetus into existing mechanisms according to realities and needs of relevant countries. Based on the existing agenda, we need to unleash the potential of other important multilateral mechanisms to strengthen civilisational dialogue, and promote the sharing of ideas driving national policies and useful experience to find solutions to global challenges and problems.

We need to bring out the potential of all players in all fields, and join hands to foster greater exchanges among the peoples. We need to give full play to the sense of responsibility of public sectors, private institutions and civil society Organisations, attach greater importance to the role of political parties, parliaments, research institutions, schools, enterprises and civil society Organisations in promoting exchanges among civilisations and enhance the participation of groups such as youth and women in dialogue and

exchanges among civilisations. We should strive to let everyone be a bridge for civilisational dialogue and exchanges, and advocate the elimination of discriminatory and unreasonable restrictions hindering international personnel exchanges so that people of all countries can have equal access to global civilisational exchanges more intensively and frequently. We need to work together to build a multi-tiered and multi-field paradigm for inter-civilisation exchanges and create favourable conditions for personnel exchanges in such fields as culture, education, science and technology, health, sports, tourism, media outlets and think tanks, and jointly put in place flagship projects for people-to-people and cultural exchanges in or across different fields. Proceeding from meeting the needs of people of the times, we need to advocate the idea of coordinated advancement in material, political, cultural and ethical, social and ecological civilisations, and correct the one-sided emphasis on a particular aspect so as to further enrich the connotation of exchanges among civilisations.

We need to innovate the forms of dialogue and exchanges, and join hands to explore the building of a global network for dialogue and cooperation among civilisations. As inter-civilisation dialogue and exchanges call for new, vivid and attractive means and media presentation, we need to fully adapt to the new requirements of the digital, smart and low-carbon era. While continuing to strengthen the traditional channels for communication and exchanges among civilisations, we also need to innovate the paths and forms of inter-civilisation dialogue with new media and new technologies and jointly explore ways to integrate cultural exchanges into the daily lives of the people. On the basis of establishing and consolidating bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation

relations among civilisations, we need to join hands in the building of a multi-mechanism and multi-field global network for dialogue and cooperation among civilisations with rich contents and diverse forms for multiple entities.

All that is past is prologue and all that is in the future is something to be hoped for. China is not only the initiator of the GCI, but also a practitioner in delivering on this major initiative. Standing firm on the right side of history and on the side of human civilisation and progress, we will work

hand in hand with the international community to actively implement the GCI, carry forward the shared values of humanity, and deepen the exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations. By doing so, we will make the flowers of human civilisation blossom more splendidly and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity brighter and more promising.

*(Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee)*

# Why Inter-Civilisation Dialogue Crucial for a Changing World

## An Essential Proposal

Exactly a year ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI).

In his speech addressing a dialogue between the Communist Party of China and other world political parties via video link in March 2023, Xi explained why he proposed the GCI: "As the future of all countries is closely connected, tolerance, coexistence, exchanges and mutual learning among different civilisations play an irreplaceable

role in advancing humanity's modernisation process, and making the garden of world civilisation flourish."

The initiative, as Xi pointed out in his speech, advocates the respect for the diversity of civilisations, the common values of humanity, the importance of inheritance and innovation of civilisations, as well as robust international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

Throughout human history, civilisations, both





oriental and occidental ones, marched forward by learning from each other. During the Graeco-Arabic translation movement, which had run for some two centuries since 750 AD, a profusion of enlightening works by ancient thinkers like Aristotle and Plato were translated from Greek to Arabic, thereby preserving the old wisdom from perishing with the fall of the Roman Empire, and enabling the European cultures in later times to revive in the Renaissance.

The Four Great Inventions, which originated in China, also helped set the stage for the Renaissance to occur, and usher in the Age of Sail after they were relayed to Europe. As Francis Bacon, a British philosopher, has observed, "Printing, gunpowder and the compass ... whence have followed innumerable changes, in so much that no empire, no sect, no star seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these

mechanical discoveries."

With a deeper consciousness of the power of inter-civilisation dialogue, former Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, opined, "We are living in an era in which, mainly due to the distorted use of certain aspects of technological development and economic globalisation, we find ourselves, more and more often, in front of hybrids of war and peace."

"Therefore ... we must intensify the dialogue of civilisations," he said.

### **All Civilisations Entitled to Modernisation**

In Xi's eyes, each civilisation "embodies the wisdom and vision of a country or nation, and each is valuable for being uniquely its own."

As China is advancing on its own path to modernisation with high-quality development, its





ample cultural heritage plays an indispensable role.

The Chinese modernisation, as has been elaborated, is the modernisation of a huge population, of common prosperity for all, of material and cultural-ethical advancement, of harmony between humanity and nature, and of peaceful development. These features can find reflections in traditional Chinese culture.

Take its emphasis on humanity and nature harmony for example. The Chinese culture is consistent with the age-old tenet of the Chinese that humans are an integral part of nature, and all living creatures grow together without harming each other. Those ancient creeds shed light on why China has exerted tremendous efforts in green transition.

While many countries in the developing world are looking to draw on China's experience on poverty reduction and socioeconomic development, they are also inspired by its determination to explore a modernisation paradigm other than by way of Westernisation.

Chea Munyryth, President of the Cambodian Chinese Evolution Researcher Association, said finding the right path for one's own country requires combining one's own historical and cultural traditions with the practical requirements of modern development.

The Africans are also exploring their own path of development. The continent, which is rich in natural resources and boasts a huge population as well as an expansive market with great potential, now faces a demographical challenge. The United Nations projected that Africa will be home to at least 25 percent of the world's population in 2050, and half of that population will be less than 25

years old, hence greater demands for education, jobs and food.

With the Ubuntu philosophy, a cultural tradition that emphasises the interconnectedness of all individuals and their responsibilities towards each other, the Africans are managing to come together for shared development. The African Continental Free Trade Area, the world's largest free trade area, now brings together the 55 countries of the African Union to create a single market for the continent.

Individual African nations are also embarking on their own programmes. The South African government in 2020 proposed the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. The Plan, according to South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, is designed to build a new economy, with the aims of creating jobs primarily through aggressive infrastructure investment and mass employment programmes, reindustrialising the economy, fighting crime and corruption, and improving the capability of the state.

Zimbabwe has proposed in its Vision 2030 to achieve an empowered and prosperous upper middle-income society by 2030. Ethiopia, inspired by the East Asian "tiger economies," put forward its "developmental state" concept, focusing on exploring its own way of a state-led economy.

If there is a Chinese way (of modernisation), then there must be a Nigerian way, a South African way, said Charles Onunaiju, Director of the Centre for China Studies in Nigeria.

### **From Diversity to Multipolarity**

As the Global South countries are rising collectively, the world is undergoing an unprecedented shift to multipolarity. Those emerging economies, with diverse cultural traditions, represent 85 percent of

the world's population and nearly 39 percent of global economic output.

And on the world's hotspot issues like the protracted Ukraine crisis and the still-raging Palestine-Israel conflict, they have their distinctive points of view. As British scholar Martin Jacques has argued, the Global South needs the right of their civilisations to be heard and represented.

The GCI, he wrote, "seeks to de-centre the idea that Western civilisation is somehow universal, and instead recognise and legitimise the enormous richness and diversity of humanity's many civilisations."

Nasser Abdel-Aal, a China expert and professor of the Chinese language at Egypt's Ain Shams University, said the Chinese thoughts rooted in an ancient civilisation have contributed to a new world order based on equality, justice, diversity, cooperation and win-win results.

Over the years, China has been working

with countries worldwide to build bridges of communication and cooperation, as by holding such dialogues as the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilisations and the China-Central Asia Cooperation Forum, and bringing together its Belt and Road partners for common development. Last year, with unremitting efforts, Beijing managed to broker a deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran to restore diplomatic relations, bringing a tint of harmony and peace to the landscape of the Middle East.

"History has shown that humanity only thrives when different civilisations can live together peacefully, harmoniously and in dialogue," argued Sebastian Schulz, a researcher at the National University of La Plata in Argentina.

"Each civilisation is unique and no civilisation is superior to any other, therefore each civilisation has excellent contributions to share with the rest of civilisations," Schulz said.

## GCI: a Leading Advocate for Cultural Exchanges

Mourad Alami



On March 15 a year ago, the Chinese top leader proposed the Global Civilisation Initiative, emphasising the importance of common development and common prosperity for the world.

Cultural exchanges, essentially, involve sharing by people from different countries and backgrounds, ideas, values, traditions and customs, and other knowledge about each other's countries. In our increasingly intertwined world, cultural exchanges help broaden our vision and enrich our perspective

by exposing us to different traditions, values, beliefs.

The impact of cultural exchanges goes beyond the personal level; it extends to the social and cross-border levels, and the lessons inherent in them go beyond the lessons of textbooks. The least cultural exchanges do is to provide an opportunity to learn the different aspects of different societies, the ways of different people's lives, their traditions and customs, and their opinions on important national, regional and global issues, and help build mutual

understanding and trust.

The ancient Silk Road, for example, embodied these traits thanks to the massive economic and cultural exchanges among people of many regions. The trade route facilitated conversations among different traders coming from distant lands. Thanks to this valuable trade route, the world came to know about silk, tea, paper, typefaces and printing, compass and gunpowder.

In modern times, cultural exchanges, an integral part of international relations, involve the exchange of not only goods but also ideas and artifacts. Yet cultural exchanges are not necessarily limited to a group of people travelling from one country to another to exchange ideas and perspectives on important national, regional and global issues. They also include translating books, especially literary works, written in a language or languages spoken in one country, into a language spoken in another country, and telecasting one country's films in another country.

Talking about translations of literary works, I once walked into a bookstore in Hefei, Anhui province, and, out of curiosity, inquired whether they had any books by Austrian author Stefan Zweig. I was told, to my pleasant surprise, that the entire work (30 volumes) of one of the most popular writers in the first half of the 20th century had been translated into Chinese.

More surprisingly, the poems of Austro-Bohemian poet and author Franz Werfel and Romanian-born German poet Paul Celan, whose poetry is described as closed and aloof, are freely accessible in the Chinese language on the internet. Surprisingly, the reverse (translation of Chinese authors' works into other languages) is also true. For instance, the poems of famous Chinese poets

have been translated from Chinese into English, French and German. This means one can enjoy the poems of Tang Dynasty (618-907) poets Du Fu, Li Bai, Meng Haoran and Du Mu, Song Dynasty (960-1279) poets Su Shi and Lin Bu, Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) poet Gao Qi.

Pinyin, the phonetic transcription of spoken Chinese based on the Latin alphabet and developed by economist and linguist Zhou Youguang has been of immense help to non-Chinese people in learning the Chinese language, as well as to native Chinese speakers in accessing European languages. Indeed, it is cultural exchange that helps integrate the knowledge, experiences and skills of one people with another, and promotes better understanding between them.

When it comes to food and music, well-known Western fast food chains have opened thousands of outlets in China, although they try to prepare the items in a way that suits the palette of the Chinese people. The fact that some Chinese fast food chains offer the same food items but under a purely Chinese label shows some sort of resilience.

Economic globalisation has greatly influenced people's lifestyle and consumption habits, and impacted the media landscape. And with the development of economic globalisation, cultural exchanges among countries will increase. It is important to mention here that the most important task of cultural exchanges is to promote mutual understanding and mutual trust, and facilitate dialogue among people from different countries. As a matter of fact, this is already taking place through lectures, concerts, exhibitions and meetings, be it in the Confucius Institutes in the universities in German cities or in the German consulate building in China.

Town twinning, too, plays an important role in building mutual understanding among different countries. Town twinning refers to pairing of cities across the world in order to foster human and cultural links, and is sometimes called "the diplomacy in small format". In this context, Hamburg, which is the sister city of Shanghai since 1986, organises a high-level event called "China Time" every two years to promote cultural exchanges and dialogue between Germany and China.

The other sister cities in Germany and China are Cologne and Beijing, Trier and Xiamen, Braunschweig and Zhuhai, Dresden and Hangzhou, Frankfurt am Main and Guangzhou, Nuremberg and Shenzhen, Regensburg and Qingdao, and Augsburg and Jinan.

Cultural exchanges not only promote dialogue on culture but also facilitate joint research and help ease the access to archives. Cultural exchanges are like glue; they join different societies and promote friendship.

## **China's GCI to Shape Harmonious World by Connecting Cultures, Says Former Pakistani Minister**

Misbah Saba Malik, Jiang Chao

The China-proposed Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI) holds immense potential to shape a harmonious world through cultural connectivity, greater cooperation and mutual respect among nations, a former Pakistani Minister said.

Cultural connectivity encourages inclusive coexistence and deters aggression by promoting mutual respect and understanding. By advocating these values, the GCI has inspired a new era of unity, understanding and peaceful coexistence on

a global scale, Syed Jamal Shah, former Pakistan Minister for National Heritage and Culture, told Xinhua in a recent interview.

Chinese culture itself is very diverse, so the "GCI is a very rightly promoted idea because, through the experience of its country's vast cultural landscape, it knows that unity in diversity is the most beautiful thing, and can inculcate the spirit of respecting other people's cultures, which is the only way forward for the world peace," he added.







Talking about cultural connectivity between Pakistan and China, Shah, who is also an expert on culture and a renowned actor and artist, said that his country also has a very rich cultural heritage and needs China's assistance in preserving Gandhara and Buddhist artifacts.

"I recently visited China and met cultural experts, heritage experts, and archaeologists to encourage them to help us preserve, digitalise, and 3D scan rock carvings in the northern part of the country bordering China, and we are planning something together about it," he added.

He added that he is also planning to hold exhibitions of Pakistani culture and heritage in China because Gandhara and Buddhist civilisations are very relevant for both countries and people from both sides take a keen interest in them.

Shah said that frequent cultural exchanges between Pakistan and China have strengthened people-to-people contacts between the two countries and the people of his country are fond of Chinese cultural performances because they give them a better understanding of Chinese people and culture.

"We are looking forward to having more and more Chinese delegations, artists, dancers, musicians, visual artists, theatre people, and cinema people, come here," said Shah.

"I think creating aesthetic bridges is the best way to strengthen friendships because they are very strong, elastic and resilient, and can witness the test of time," he added.

## The Return of Civilisations

Miguel Ángel Moratinos

I was pleasantly surprised when visiting the new Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi, magnificently designed, and created by the great French architect Jean Nouvel to prove the creative force of the world's diverse civilisations. All of them are represented in this imaginative space on the island of Saadiyat overlooking the Persian Gulf.

For me, the most important thing about this visit was not to confirm the value of each of the representative pieces of every civilisation on display, but the fact that almost all of them were created at the same time with no possibility of human, creative, and/or cultural contact that may explain why— thousands of kilometers away— artists and creators conceived pretty similar artworks.

The pieces were reunited in Abu Dhabi, and their message is clear and simple: we are one, “sole humanity” . There have been and there are many civilisations, but in the end, there is more binding us together than drawing us apart.

This is the main takeaway from visiting the Abu Dhabi Museum. Again, its message is straightforward: there are many civilisations and cultures, but we are one, “sole humanity” .

We should ask ourselves why this discussion about civilisations has been downplayed lately while, to the contrary, it was very present during the 20th century.

More than 100 years ago, in 1918, Oswald Spengler published his famous book “The Decline of the West”, the first alarm signal that resounded heavily in a Western world convinced of its technological, scientific, political, and moral superiority. Years later, another renowned European thinker, Arnold Toynbee, started to devote his studies to the history of civilisations and concluded his review stating that all of them had a similar cycle duration: commencement, peak, and decadence.

Therefore, he did not find it surprising that Western civilisation showed the consequences of this process common to every civilisation.

The Spanish thinker José Ortega y Gasset addressed the matter in his book *An Interpretation of Universal History*. No one knew better than him, who accurately and with a premonitory vision depicted that “rebellion of the masses” we are experiencing worldwide right now.

During those post-World War times, the study and



rationale of civilisations dominated to a large extent the political-intellectual debate. However, since the end of the Second World War, the Soviet-American ideological-political-military rivalry led to the abandonment of reflections mainly centred on historic-cultural thinking and a focus on how to overcome the confrontation of two worlds: one capitalist and the other communist. The discussion was not in terms of civilisation but in terms of geopolitics; it was about the so-called liberal-capitalist and authoritarian-communist systems. The international community was established based on these two ways of thinking and organising the future of humankind. “Civilisations” were expressions of the past, and the world of the 21st century should be built on practical foundations, where technological-scientific advances and economic-financial answers should transcend the old historic-cultural approaches where different civilisations could have determined the speed of the train of humanity throughout history.

It was not until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the rise of American hegemony that the issue of “civilisations” was reintroduced in the political-economic agenda. Along with the statement of the American thinker Francis Fukuyama, who announced with great fanfare the “end of history,” professor emeritus at Harvard University Samuel Huntington introduced, at his well-known conference in October 1992 at the American Enterprise Institute, his famed thesis called “Clash of Civilisations.”

This American politician, immersed in a conservative political and academic world, could not resist the temptation to explore the fields that could threaten American-Western hegemony. Once the West, i.e., the U.S., managed to defeat—in the political, economic, financial, military, and

ideological fields—its sole opponent, the U.S.S.R., there only remained a space where the West could be subject to rivalry or conflict: culture or religion. None of these two fields could be eliminated or controlled by the “hyperpuissance”, notwithstanding the multiple major attempts to build an “American cultural model” where the three Macs could prevail (McDonald, Macintosh, McLuhan).

Religion and, as the case may be, cultural identities and civilisations were tough elements to eradicate. They did not seem to be willing to be blurred in favor of a general homogenisation by way of a one-dimensional world.

Accordingly, the Harvard professor states at his renowned conference, subsequently developed in his article in “Foreign Affairs”, his thesis that in the future, any new source of conflict would be cultural or religious. Thus, the West should prepare to defend its “civilisation” against the remaining civilisations in the international community that refuse to submit to Western proposals unconditionally.

This entire political-intellectual foundation of American conservatism reached a pinnacle following 9/11, when the Twin Towers in New York collapsed before the bewildered eyes of the world. The Islamic-Jihadist terrorist attack placed Islamic and Muslim civilisation in direct confrontation with the West. “The Clash of Civilisations” was thus automatically justified, and an entirely new brand of geopolitics was set in motion to continue ensuring the West’s moral, political, and cultural supremacy.

These approaches sparked reactions from many analysts and politicians, including the Spanish government itself, which had just endured the

worst terrorist attack in its entire history on March 11th, 2004. This led the newly elected executive power to propose a UN initiative called the Alliance of Civilisations in order to counter, in a collective and jointly responsible manner, the threats from sectaries or extremists determined to justify their terrorist actions under religious-cultural veils.

September 2024 will mark the 20th anniversary of the launch of this initiative by Spanish President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, which was later supported by the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and it has become crystal clear over the course of these two decades that there is no such thing as a “Clash of Civilisations.” There may have been a clash of ignorance or a fight for geopolitical power that sought to use culture, religion, or civilisation as a guise for its objectionable aspirations. But there was never a “Clash of Civilisations.”

Unfortunately, the response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and subsequent attacks perpetrated throughout the world (London, Madrid, Bali, etc.) radically polarised the confrontation against Jihadist Islam, and overnight the Muslim world became the big enemy to be defeated. The Western answer to the Afghan, Iranian, and Syrian crises and the huge threats in the African Sahel did not help to dismantle this perception about a “replacement” theory where new Muslim generations wish to eliminate and/or replace the Western world.

Ultimately, the war in Ukraine has awakened from their traditional slumber most of the countries of the so-called global south, where they remained marginalised under the Western dominion, and has led them to put an end to their dependence and demand new leadership in the Concert of

Nations, where their cultural and civilisational heritage is respected and they are treated on an absolutely equal footing.

Therefore, we are living in a new world where ignored, defeated, and excluded civilisations are claiming a new role in the future of humankind.

For this reason, it is not surprising that a country-civilisation like China has decided to propose a “global civilisation initiative.” In the face of Western inaction, the new Chinese political direction has understood the significance and relevance of cultural and/or religious matters. The need to respect other identities and the willingness to mold a new frame of understanding so that each may find his own place and realise his fullest creative potential.

Given the circumstances, it seems imperative to reconsider the novel goals of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations as well as its framework of action adapting to a new international context.

To articulate this new task, it may be necessary to clearly examine and rigorously define what is conceived as “civilisation” and what its appropriate role may be in world governance going forward.

Encyclopedia Britannica defines the term “civilisation” as a “set of customs, knowledge, acts, and traditions constituting the forms of life of a given human society.” This clear definition requires us to distinguish the concept of “civilisation” from others we usually employ with very similar expressions, such as identity or culture.

In this regard, “identity” is the first space of personal conscience where the utmost intimate and essential sense of the individual is revealed. It can be extended to a collective and speak of collective or national identity, but its structure is

simpler and is not expected or intended to include in its other dimensions of our complex existence.

With identity comes culture or cultures. These are expressions and experiences which are added to identity and essentially incorporate elements of creation and aesthetics. Likewise, they are cataloged to build part of the collective memory. Customs and cultural traditions accompany us in the vital development of our human development and naturally permeate into our deep identities.

Finally, "civilisations" are one more step in the complex journey of organising our societies. Some analysts have examined the term "civilisations" and have come to the conclusion that it is the "representation of a complex society," as Edgar Morin would say. Its more sophisticated form of Organisation, which includes institutions to organize its social structure and available technology in addition to how it uses resources, reflects a more systemic and complex reality than simple identities and cultures.

These features are present in all civilisations: they all propose a vision of the world. Each has its beliefs, values, and customs cataloged.

Furthermore, all civilisations have maintained a profound relationship with nature and the environment. Even some that seem to have lost the train of history now re-emerge with greater legitimacy for their references and attitudes towards Mother Nature in these times in which we must all save the planet.

However, civilisations have not always coexisted in peaceful and respectful terms. Their history shows us that in most cases there were periods of confrontation and domination. What's worse, many of them intended to impose themselves and

replace preexisting ones. The most relevant case is that of Western civilisation.

The etymology of this concept in the Western world may better explain its rationale. The term "civilisation" comes from the Latin root "civis," but above all, civilisation is opposed to barbarism. Those who are not civilised are not part of that citizenship that seeks a higher degree of evolution. For a vast majority of European and Western people, Western civilisation represents the most advanced stage of development. There is only one civilisation, which means there is only one "superior civilisation," hence our Western civilisation is presented as that which counters savagery and barbarism, seeking to reach a final vision better than all previous civilisations.

However, in other languages, the term "civilisation" does not reflect these elements. For example, in China its translation allows us to better understand this country's philosophy (文明 = culture and enlightenment /illustration). There, "civilisation" is the sum of cultural elements as well as a new vision that may illustrate the future of society.

This is today's major dilemma: no "civilisation" has succeeded in imposing itself on all others. This ideal dream that "our civilisation" is the most advanced stage in the development of humankind has proven to show its own limits.

Nowadays we are able to state with full legitimacy and certainty that there is no such thing as a "civilisation superior" to others, that the ultimate destiny of humankind is not about succeeding in the creation of a new "universal civilisation", but that we live as one sole humankind where "multiple civilisations" coexist.

Ultimately, the goal is not so much to create an “ideal civilisation”, i.e., a “final civilisation”, but to make contributions based on the numerous positive inputs of multiple civilisations, elements, principles, values, customs, creations, artworks, scientific discoveries, etc. In other words, one sole humankind that feels proud as it moves towards the future, with respect and solidarity among diverse cultures and civilisations.

The 21st century will be known as the century

marking the end of imposition and dominion of one block or vision over others. The 21st century must become the century of cooperation, respect, and collective construction of a better world.

In this first third of the 21st century, it is not the supremacy of two or three powers that is at stake, but the survival of the planet and of humanity.

*(Miguel Ángel Moratinos, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations & High Representative for the Alliance of Civilisations of the United Nations)*

## The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) Delegation Visits China

At the invitation of CAFIU, a delegation of 7 members of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES), headed by Mr. Martin Schulz, Chairman of the Foundation, Former President of SPD, and Former President of European Parliament, visited China from 2nd to 7th February.

During the delegation's visit in Beijing, Mr. Li Hongzhong, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China, met with the delegation. Mr.

Ji Bingxuan, Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the 13th National People's Congress of China and President of CAFIU, met the delegation and hosted the welcoming banquet. President Ji also attended the reception jointly organised by CAFIU and FES. Mr. Ji, together with Mr. Schulz, witnessed the signing of a cooperation agreement between the two organisations. The Delegation paid a courtesy call to Mr. Wan Gang, Vice-Chairman of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative



Conference of China and Chairman of the China Association for Science and Technology. Mr. Liu Jianchao, Minister of the International Department of CPC Central Committee, met the delegation and hosted a banquet in its honour. The delegation visited China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and had

discussions respectively with Mr. Wu Hongbo, China's Special Representative on European Affairs and Mr. Li Hui, China's Special Representative on Eurasian Affairs. In addition to Beijing, the delegation visited Shanghai and Ningbo.



## **Address by CAFIU President Ji Bingxuan at the Reception Hosted by CAFIU and FES**

Distinguished President Martin Schulz,  
Dear guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Friends,

Good evening! It's a great pleasure to gather with all of you at this Reception ahead of the upcoming Chinese New Year. Let me begin by extending, on behalf of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU), a hearty welcome to President Schulz, delegation from the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) and all friends present today. The visit of FES delegation is of great significance. It is the first visit to China by President Schulz as the FES President, and also the second time CAFIU receives a high-level delegation of FES in six years. We are convinced that this visit will not only inject new impetus to the cooperation between CAFIU and FES, but also make new contribution to enhancing mutual understanding and trust between China and Germany. In the meanwhile, I wish to extend our heartfelt greetings to all the guests and friends here who have long demonstrated care and support to the development of China-Germany relations and people-to-people exchanges, and my

cordial appreciation to the FES Beijing Office for the thoughtful arrangements tonight.

At present, China and Germany are heading for the second half century of the bilateral relationship. As comprehensive strategic partners, we have marched ahead together by upholding the principle of mutual benefit, win-win cooperation and common progress. We have achieved common development by drawing on each other's strength and through exchanges and mutual learning, giving strong boost to our respective national development and making positive contribution to global peace and development. We have deepened our cooperation in various fields including trade and economy, science and technology and produced fruitful results. The trade volume between our two countries has surpassed US\$220 billion, an interlinked economic dynamics thus been formed and tangible benefits brought to our peoples. The two countries have made continued efforts in strengthening communication and coordination in international and regional affairs, jointly addressing such global challenges as food security, climate change and public health. The development of bilateral relationship



between China and Germany has not only brought benefits to our peoples, but also boosted the sound development of China-Europe relations, thus adding positive energy to a world full of uncertainties.

The state-to-state relations thrive when there is friendship between peoples. Chinese and German people have enjoyed time-honoured exchanges and profound friendship. Recent years have witnessed prosperous development of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation that has brought our two peoples closer to each other and further cemented the popular support for the growth of China-Germany relations. Chinese households are very familiar with German culture. Great literature by Goethe, Heine and Schiller, philosophy concepts developed by Marx, Leibniz, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, Heidegger, Marcuse, and the beautiful melodies created by Bach, Beethoven, Schuman, Brahms have rendered cultural nourishment and spiritual strength to many Chinese people.

The long-term friendly exchanges between CAFIU and FES serve as a microcosm of the friendly China-Germany relations and people-to-people cooperation. Since we started our cooperation in the 1980s, our two organisations have continuously expanded the area and elevated the level of the cooperation. We have jointly launched various events with rich content and diversified forms, and carried out many institutionalised cooperation projects. These have boosted the mutual understanding between our two peoples, strengthened our people-to-people connectivity, and served as an important bridge and bond to facilitate inter-party exchanges between the Communist Party of China and the Social Democratic Party of Germany. The FES

Beijing Office has made important contribution throughout the whole process. By launching exchanges and cooperation with Chinese government departments, universities, think tanks and civil society organisations in such areas as economy, culture and society, the FES Beijing Office has made dedicated efforts to enhance China-Germany people-to-people exchanges. As for our guests present today, you all have worked dedicatedly in your respective post for years to promote China-Germany as well as China-Europe exchanges. Today, CAFIU and FES will sign a new cooperation agreement at the witness of the entire audience. It will surely bring the exchanges and cooperation between our two organisations to new heights. Standing on a new historical starting point, I wish to make the following propositions on the future exchanges and cooperation between CAFIU and FES.

First, we shall enhance people-to-people connectivity and foster a closer bond between our peoples. As a German saying goes, mountains do not meet, but people do. Our face-to-face communication was hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic in the past three years. Therefore, our gathering today is truly valuable. The mutual understanding between our peoples may not be sufficient because of such factors as changes in political situation, long geographical distances and non-objective media reports. We should strengthen personnel exchanges, facilitate mutual learning and mutual understanding, and help our peoples to develop objective perception of each other, so as to promote people-to-people connectivity. In particular, we should look forward to the future development of the bilateral relations, enhance exchanges and mutual trust of younger generations.



Second, we shall strengthen exchanges and mutual learning among civilisations and jointly advance the development of different civilisations. Both Chinese and German nations have time-honoured and splendid civilisations. Chinese and European civilisations are the two major civilisations that boost the advancement of mankind. It is therefore critically important to carry out dialogues and advance exchanges and mutual learning between China and Germany as well as between China and Europe, so as to seek common value foundations and meet our common challenges in joint efforts. In recent years, CAFIU has built a number of platforms for dialogues, such as Dialogue on Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilisations and The Civilisation Lecture Series among others and dedicated itself to people-to-people and cultural exchanges. The continued participation of FES is always welcome. We are ready to work together with FES to host events such as China-Germany and China-Europe dialogues on civilisations, so as to advance the engagement, exchanges and mutual learning among our civilisations.

Third, we shall facilitate the improvement of global governance and make non-governmental contribution to build a better world. Changes unseen in a century are unfolding at an even faster pace and the world has entered a new period of disorder and transformation. We should reject the zero-sum ideology where one side out-competes or thrives at the expense of the other. Instead, we shall practice true multilateralism. FES is an

important think tank of German Social Democratic Party and has accumulated rich experience in the promotion of national development and global governance. Our two sides shall promote exchanges of ideas on topics of common interest, seek convergence, consolidate and expand cooperation, and explore third-party cooperation with active efforts. We shall fully develop the positive role of civil society organisations in the reform and building of global governance, thus contributing people's wisdom to the development of China-Germany all-round strategic partnership and the building of a community with a shared future.

Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

History and practice have proved that the cooperation and dialogue between China and Germany follow the trend of the times and the development of history, and have made positive contribution to world peace and development. Let us stick to the great efforts and work as the bridge builders of China-Germany people-to-people connectivity, facilitators of mutual understanding and trust, advocates of dialogues among civilisations, and practitioners of friendly cooperation. Let us work together to write a new chapter for China-Germany people-to-people friendship, and create a brighter future for China-Germany relations.

Thank you.

## **Vice-President Liu Hongcai Meets Kamada Takeaki, President of the JCI Japan-China Friendship Association**



On December 4th, CAFIU Vice-President Liu Hongcai met Mr. Kamada Takeaki, President of the JCI Japan-China Friendship Association (JCFA), to exchange views on China-Japan people-to-people and youth exchanges. Vice-President Liu Hongcai said that JCFA has long been committed to promoting China-Japan youth exchanges and has played a positive role in enhancing mutual understanding between the Chinese and Japanese youths. China and Japan should take the 45th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan as an opportunity to further strengthen exchanges, especially those between the Chinese and

Japanese youths, and contribute youth power to building a constructive and stable China-Japan relationship that meets the requirements of the new era. The JCFA stated that it is in the common interest of both countries to encourage the younger generation to devote themselves to the cause of Japan-China friendship. Both sides should continue to expand and deepen cooperation in various fields, promote people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, especially youth exchanges and visits, deepen mutual understanding between the youths, and strive to cultivate successors to the cause of Japan-China friendship.

## Vice-President Liu Hongcai Meets the Japanese Okinawa Peace and Friendship Delegation



On December 29th, CAFIU Vice-President Liu Hongcai met with the Japanese Okinawa Peace and Friendship Delegation to exchange views on the relationship and people-to-people exchanges between China and Japan. Vice-President Liu Hongcai said that Okinawa-ken and China are geographically close and culturally connected, and both sides share a long history of friendly exchanges. In recent years, Okinawa Prefecture has actively carried out exchanges and cooperation with many parts of China in various fields at different levels, achieving fruitful results and creating a good atmosphere for the improvement of China-Japan relationship. It is expected that

Okinawa will actively carry out local and people-to-people exchanges and continue to deepen friendly exchanges with China. The Japanese side stated that Okinawa has always attached great importance to the exchanges with China and benefited a lot from its long-term exchanges and cooperation with different parts of China in various fields. Okinawa will continue its exchanges and practical cooperation with various places in China, promoting mutual benefits and achieving win-win results for both sides, and play an active role in improving mutual understanding between the peoples of the two countries.

## **Vice-President Liu Hongcai Meets the (JCP) Japan-China Friendship Association Delegation**



On March 13th, CAFIU Vice-President Liu Hongcai met the delegation from (JCP) Japan-China Friendship Association. The two sides exchanged views on people-to-people and youth exchanges between the two countries. Vice-President Liu Hongcai said that civil society organisations in China and Japan should persist in serving as bridges for official communication and contributing civil society efforts to promote China-Japan friendship. The two organisations should continue to support each other, visit each other regularly,

and carry out exchanges and activities, especially youth exchanges between the two countries. The Japanese side said that the (JCP) Japan-China Friendship Association has long been committed to promoting China-Japan friendship since its founding. The (JCP) Japan-China Friendship Association will firmly safeguard the principles of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between China and Japan and make unremitting efforts for Japan-China people-to-people friendship and the development of Japan-China relationship.

## Vice-President Ai Ping Meets Secretary-General Saqib of India China Economic and Cultural Council



On March 26th, CAFIU Vice-President Ai Ping met Secretary-General Mohammed Saqib of the India China Economic and Cultural Council. The two sides exchanged views on China-India relations and people-to-people exchanges. Vice-President Ai Ping said that the development of relationship between two states is based on their peoples. Strengthening people-to-people exchanges between China and India and promoting mutual understanding between the peoples are important for the improvement of the relationship between the two

countries. China is ready to strengthen cooperation with the India China Economic and Cultural Council and other Indian civil society organisations, aiming to promote dialogues between Chinese and Indian civilisations and deepen mutual understanding between the two peoples. Mr. Saqib said that the India China Economic and Cultural Council is ready to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with Chinese civil society organisations and contribute to the sound development of India-China relationship.

## **Vice-President Ai Ping Meets the US Word4Asia Delegation in Beijing**



On March 21st, Mr. Ai Ping, Vice-President of CAFIU, met in Beijing with a 6-member delegation from the US Word4Asia led by Dr. Gene Wood, Chief Executive Officer of Word4Asia. Mme. Xiao Ningning, Deputy Secretary-General of China NGO Network for International Exchanges, Mr. Gu Chuanyong, Vice-Chair of Board of the Amity Foundation, and Mme. She Hongyu, Deputy

Secretary-General of the Amity Foundation, attended the meeting. The two sides exchanged views on deepening people-to-people exchanges and cooperation between China and the United States and on the preparation of the 5th “Amity Cup” International Table Tennis Charity Competition.



## “Silk Road People-to-People Connectivity” China-Myanmar Friendly Cultural and Educational Exchanges Held in Yangon



On January 10th, at the invitation of the Yangon University of Foreign Languages for its Cultural Exchanges Week, the China Foundation for Peace and Development and the Myanmar Chinese Cooperation & Communication Centre, jointly organised the “Silk Road People-to-People Connectivity” China-Myanmar Friendly Cultural and Educational Exchange activity. U Soe Thein, Chief Minister of Yangon Province, Zaw Myint, Deputy Minister of Education of Myanmar, and Kyi Shwin, President of Yangon University of Foreign Languages, attended the activity and delivered speeches. Officials from 9 diplomatic

corps in Myanmar including the Chinese Embassy, representatives of offices of international organisations in Myanmar, and teachers and students from Yangon University of Foreign Languages attended the activity.

During the activity, the Myanmar martial arts sports team, which went to China to participate in the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, brought a wonderful Chinese martial arts performance to the audience. Chinese and Myanmar bilingual volunteers displayed art works with Chinese characteristics, such as paper cutting, window



grilles and folding fans, vividly introducing Chinese history. They also handed out Chinese cultural books and publications such as Paukhpau Monthly to the audience. Myanmar Radio and Television

(MRTV), Myanmar Newspaper Golden Phoenix in Chinese language and other local media organisations covered the event.



## The Launching Ceremony of the Silk Road People-to-People Connectivity Donation Activity "Care for the Future" Held in Yangon



The launching ceremony of the Silk Road People-to-People "Connectivity donation activity" Care for the Future was jointly held by China Foundation for Peace and Development and the Myanmar-Chinese Cooperation & Communication Centre in Yangon on January 16. The Yangjin Middle School in Yangon Province of Myanmar received football, volleyball, badminton, notebooks, LED lights and other school utensils and sporting goods. , Secretary General of China Foundation for Peace and Development Mr. Xu Jianguo,

Political Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy to Myanmar Mme. Qiao Li, Chairman of Myanmar-China Friendship Association (Central) Mr. U Tin Oo, Director of Yangon Region Education Bureau Mr. Daw Cho Cho Myat Aung and Chair of Nay Oke Foundation Mr. U Nay Oke attended the ceremony and delivered a speech respectively. Mr. Zhang Yanhong, UNICEF Representative to Myanmar, Mr. Xiang Jianbo, Director of China Cultural Centre in Yangon and about 150 representatives from Chinese and Myanmar non-governmental

organisations, international volunteers from Yangon University of Foreign Languages as well as teachers and students from Myanmar International Education Centre attended the event. The Global

New Light of Myanmar, Myanmar Golden Phoenix, NP News and other local media reported on the event.



## Side Event "Human Rights Protection for the Next Generation: the Rights of Children and Youth" Held in Geneva

On January 23, as the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group conducted its fourth review of China's human rights record, the side event "Human Rights Protection for the Next Generation: the Rights of Children and Youth", co-sponsored by the New

Sunshine Charity Foundation and China NGO Network for International Exchanges, was held in Geneva. Experts and scholars representing dozens of civil society organisations from different countries exchanged their views around the topic.



## The Reception Commemorating the 45th Anniversary of China-U.S. Diplomatic Ties Held in Beijing

On January 5, the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs jointly hosted a reception commemorating the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between China and the United States in Beijing. Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi attended the commemoration and delivered a

speech. David Meale, Chargé d'Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in China, addressed the reception. He extended on behalf of the U.S. side congratulations on the anniversary, expressing the readiness of the U.S. to implement the consensus reached by the two heads of state and promote the steady development of U.S.-China relations. More than 350 people from all walks of life of both countries attended the reception.



## China International Chamber of Commerce for the Private Sector (CICCPs) Hosts the China and Foreign Entrepreneur Ambassadors Dialogue - Entering UK

On January 11, China International Chamber of Commerce for the Private Sector (CICCPs) and Yingke Law Firm jointly hosted the China and Foreign Entrepreneur Ambassadors Dialogue - Entering UK at the Yingke China headquarters. Mr. Rahul Ahluwalia, Deputy Trade Commissioner

for China and the Minister Counsellor (Financial Services & Investment) of the British Embassy in China, Mr. Mei Xiangrong, Executive President of CICCPs together with more than 30 representatives from CICCPs members and enterprises attended the conference.





## The “Decoding Zhonghua” International Conference on Dialogue among Civilisations Held in Beijing

The “Decoding Zhonghua” International Conference on Dialogue among Civilisations, hosted by China International Public Relations Association, China Ethnic News and Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies was held in Beijing on January 17th. With the theme “Pursing Harmonious Coexistence of Civilisations through Dialogue”, the conference saw participants engage in discussions around two

parallel topics: “community for the Chinese nation and community with a shared future for mankind” and “the relationship between modern Chinese civilisation and the shared values of humanity”. About 20 experts, scholars, cultural celebrities and well-known bloggers from China, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Spain, Brazil and other countries attended the conference and conducted in-depth discussions.





## A Special Fund for the Protection of International Cultural Heritage: Wanli Tea Road

On January 22, the signing ceremony of the Wanli Tea Road Special Fund for the Protection of International Cultural Heritage jointly initiated by the Wanli Tea Collaboration of the Chinese Culture Promotion Association, and Hainan Asian Culture and Arts Foundation was held in Beijing. This fund will be used to organise activities featuring art, design and public welfare that are related

to the Wanli Tea Road, including the Wanli Tea Road International Cultural Forum and the Wanli Tea Road International Artistic Creation Project, carry out preservation of the Wanli Tea Road international cultural heritage, and support the bidding of "Wanli Tea Road" for the World Cultural Heritage.



## The World Digital Education Alliance Officially Founded

Themed "Digital Education: Application, Sharing, and Innovation", the 2024 World Digital Education Conference opened in Shanghai on January 30th. Secretary of CPC Shanghai Municipal Committee Chen Jining, Vice-Chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China Cai Dafeng, and President of the 42nd session of the UNESCO General Conference Simona-Mirela Miculescu attended the opening ceremony and delivered speeches. Huai Jinpeng, China's Minister of Education delivered a keynote

speech at the plenary session. During the Conference, the World Digital Education Alliance was officially founded. This Alliance positively resonates to the spirit of the United Nations Summit on Educational Transformation and the UNESCO 2030 High-level Steering Committee for Education, aiming to create an international platform for enhancing dialogues and exchanges to promote practical cooperation and high-quality development in digital education.



## **The Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG) Attends the 60th Munich Security Conference (MSC) and Hosts Side Event**

The Centre for China and Globalisation (CCG) hosted a side event on February 17 titled “China, Europe, and the United States: Climate Cooperation in an Era of Great Power Politics” at the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2024, which was convened from February 16 to 18, 2024 in Munich, Germany.

Policy advisors and specialists from China, the

United States and Europe were invited to the side event to examine the developments of the bilateral and trilateral relations among China, Europe and the US from the perspectives of climate diplomacy and a wider range of geopolitical issues, aiming to explore the ways for China, EU and the US to work with the Global South countries to advance global cooperation.



## **Tsinghua University Student Social Practicum Team Go Overseas for International Exchanges**

Organised and sponsored by Tsinghua University, 45 social practice teams composed of nearly 700 faculty members and students visited 27 countries in six continents during the winter vacation of 2024 for international exchanges through face-to-face dialogues with young people around the world to discuss topics of global concern. Some of the team members participated in the China-Malaysia Youth Exchange Forum held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and six teams attended the Closing Ceremony of

the Milan Academic Week at China-Italy Design Innovation Hub of Tsinghua University and Tsinghua Global Youth Dialogue “The Renaissance witness sustainable innovation” in Milan, Italy, among other activities. The team of the Global Competence Overseas Practicum Course went to Chile and Argentina for a field study of the status quo of China-Latin America cooperation, aiming to promote China-Latin America people-to-people exchanges.



## A Tale of the CPC's Foreign Relations

*( Excerpt from the Introduction of A Tale of Two Continents )*

In 2017, China time and again captured the attention of the world. On January 17, President Xi Jinping delivered a keynote speech at Davos entitled Jointly Shoulder Responsibility of Our Times, Promote Global Growth at the opening session of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting. Then, on May 14-15, the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was convened in Beijing, attended by more than 1,500 delegates, including 29 heads of state or government, more than 70 chiefs or their deputies of international Organisations, and senior representatives from more than 110 countries. Towards the end of the year, the Communist Party of China (CPC) would hold its 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress, the last one before the centenary of the Party. These events attracted a lot of attention and interest, as China now serves as one of the major growth engines of the world economy and a source of huge opportunities. Hundreds, even thousands of foreign reporters came to cover these events, and China's official Xinhua News Agency publishes keynote documents. Still, there is confusion as well as suspicion, apprehension and anxiety about the country's intentions. This book, in the style of an oral history, tries to assist and provide some relief

to the situation through the life story of Mr. Ai Ping, mainly through his encounters with the two continents of Africa and Asia as a representative of the CPC. In this way it documents the international activity of China's ruling party and helps foreign readers to gain a better understanding of China's policies in the present-day world.

Mr. Ai Ping is now a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and Vice President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding (CAFIU). His previous posts include Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia and Vice Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee (IDCPC). His life has, in a sense, reflected the expansion and deepening of the CPC's international relations, an integral part of the country's efforts to open up to the outside world that have led to tremendous changes both in the country and in the world.

At the beginning of 1969, Mr. Ai was sent for re-education in rural Yanchuan County, northern Shaanxi. Ai spent two years in his village, and was then employed on behalf of the state by the Non-staple Food Company of the County. His job

required that he literally made his way on foot from one village to the next to procure live pigs, goats, sheep, chickens and eggs from local peasants.

He joined the Youth League but returned to Beijing to enroll in the Beijing Foreign Languages Institute. There he studied English shortly before China began to send young people to study abroad again after the end of the Cultural Revolution. He was assigned a job in the IDCPC, giving him an opportunity to observe and to understand life and society beyond the Chinese border. Ai first went to Canada to study, and then to Africa, where he assisted the Party's efforts to establish international relations in the region.

So this book is about the life experiences of one of the youngest members of that Chinese generation that played a crucial role in China's reform, opening up and peaceful rise. The story is mainly about his personal involvement in the Party's encounters with two continents of Africa and Asia, part of the efforts to understand the outside world and help the outside world to understand China so as to expand cooperation. These efforts to promote international understanding have, in a sense, led to China's present initiatives to build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in particular, and a more inclusive globalisation in general.

Thus, the tale that this book will tell is the gradual change in China's international understanding through practice. Following this Introduction is a Preface, telling the back story through which Ai started in his career of international understanding. He was born on the campus of Tsinghua University, went to the famous Middle School Attached to Tsinghua University (MSATU) and experienced the Cultural Revolution there, settled down in northern

Shaanxi in 1969, came back to the capital to learn English in 1973, and was assigned a job in the IDCPC in 1977.

There were two key points in this story. Nationally, the crisis the country was facing led to a decision to shift the focus of the Party and the government to economic development, and personally, Ai Ping chose English as his major without realizing its significance in the later opening up of the country.

Part I tells stories about his encounters with Africa, basically a vertical expansion of skills, knowledge, understanding, and capabilities plus some good luck in the process of reform, which finally led to his appointment as Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, a position that enabled him to play a role in innovative bilateral relations. Chapter 1 tells how Ai Ping started his job in the International Department of the ruling party through on-the-job training as a competent interpreter who, though only a minor actor in the international arena, could observe on the spot the CPC's changing relations with Africa. The chapter offers some typical examples of the party's international relations in those years: attending the national congresses of fraternal parties, informing the new ruling party of the value of this channel when there was a regime change, exchanging through high-level visits information about and experience of development and governance. These would become the CPC's "killer app" in its international relations. Trained as a proficient interpreter, Ai Ping had the opportunity to participate in these activities and develop a real understanding of the continent.

Chapter 2 recounts the process through which Ai trained himself as an Africanist through research and direct experience on the continent. One important element of this was to conduct



international academic exchanges with Africanists from the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Russia, and to organize mutual visits, symposiums and joint comparative studies.

Chapter 3 deals with the other side of international understanding: how Ai received training from the Party both in school and on the job so that he would be able to keep his foreign counterparts informed with greater clarity. Still, the most important part of a Party member's work is to fulfill the task assigned to him, and in particular, to dare to innovate.

Chapter 4 describes the climax of his engagement with Africa: his experience as Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia. And Chapter 5 relates what Ai found when he returned to Africa some six years after leaving his post as Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia in 2004.

Part II depicts Ai's experiences with neighboring areas of South and Southeast Asia, mainly a tale of horizontal growth of the understanding of China's neighbors and efforts made to build deeper mutual trust and cooperation. The countries portrayed include India (Chapter 6), the only country in the world that is comparable to China in terms of its population, the brilliance of its ancient civilisation, and the testing obstacles to development it faces; Pakistan (Chapter 7), a country that has enjoyed a long friendship with China that has had to adapt

to modern times, Nepal (Chapter 8), a country in the course of transformation from constitutional monarchy to federal republic; and those in Southeast Asia (Chapter 9) which Ai visited more in the form of field trips or as company to senior leaders.

Chapter 10 recounts stories of the CPC's participation in the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), a multilateral platform.

The Conclusion tells of Ai's life of semi-retirement and his reflections. Ai joined the CPPCC Foreign Affairs Committee in 2013 and in the following year he became Vice President of CAFIU, where he has continued to contribute to international understanding.

The book ends with some concluding observations.

One unique feature of the book is that, unlike almost all other books published in English in the People's Republic of China, which have been translated from the original Chinese version, this one was written in English and targeted at foreign readers from the start. The author has tried his utmost to make it interesting and easy to understand through providing personal anecdotes, useful background information, and his own updated reflections.



**Book Review**

## **A Tale of Two Continents – An Autobiography**

Balmukunda Regmi

On 14th September 2023, we were gathered in a Beijing conference hall to exchange views with the leaders of the Chinese Association for International Understanding. We had been introduced about the Association by researcher Zhang Yaowu during our field trips. However, when we met Ai Ping, I had no idea that we were talking with the author of "A Tale of Two Continents: An Autobiography". In receiving his signed book, I realized that the speaker was the current Vice-President of the Chinese Association for International Understanding and a Deputy Minister and an Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of China to Ethiopia.

The book is a collection of stories about the author and his experiences gathered while working in Africa and Asia. Through facts and figures, Ai Ping highlights the efforts of the Communist Party of China to lead the expansion of party-to-party relations and promote the construction of a community with a shared future.

### **Experience in Africa**

Ai Ping was first deputed in Tanzania. In order to correctly understand Africa, he widely read available Africanist literature from the US, the

UK, France and Russia. Academic exchanges were important means. The author lists the Chinese efforts in promoting relations with Egypt, Ethiopia, Senegal, Uganda, Burundi, Botswana, Burkina Faso, and many other countries. In 1960s, Chairman Mao began to meet guests from Africa. China began to study Africa, to engage with Africa, including the creation of party-level relations. Ai mentions how China took help of professors George Yu, Berg and Hyden, worked with the US, and organized the First Sino-American Africanists Symposium in 1988. China not only helped form Forum on China African Cooperation, it also helped to organize its ministerial conference in Ethiopia. The current close relation between China and Africa is an outcome of constant efforts.

### **Mending Relations with India**

Ai Ping shows how China has used multiple channels in promoting relations with India. Besides government-to-government tracks, China also sought party-level relations first with the communist parties and the Indian National Congress, then with the BJP, and even with the regional parties. China also pushed the dialogue through think tanks the INC-associated Rajiv

Gandhi Foundation, and old friends like Dr Saqib, and the media. When China realized the important roles of local governments in India, China shifted focus to engaging with the state governments. Ultimately, China has developed mutual exchanges to such a level that whichever party wins the election and forms the government, the upcoming prime minister is known to and been to China.

The book also demonstrates the depth of understanding of the Indian leaders. Once Chief Minister of Karnataka Yeddyurappa was impressed of China's advances in the agricultural sector, the state decided to send one thousand farmers to a fact-finding tour to China.

### **Pakistan, Nepal and Other Neighbours**

The author describes the political courses Pakistan and Nepal have undergone in recent history. He considers Pakistan's relation with China as 'sweeter than honey' and gives a glimpse of China's engagement with Pakistani government, parties and leaders.

The book discusses the transition Nepal is undergoing. The book also briefly mentions his visits to Myanmar, the Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Vietnam,

Laos, among others.

### **Multilateralism of ICAPP**

International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP) was established and its first meeting held in Manila in the year 2000. The author sees ICAPP an important forum where both bilateral and multilateral discussions take place. The ICAPP brings parties from different political systems together as seen through the representations from Iran to Australia, from Russia to Myanmar, from Kazakhstan to India.

Published in 2020 by Foreign Language Press, Beijing, the book penned by acclaimed diplomat is a treasure that can be read as a personal biography or the stories of China's recent engagement with Africa and Asia. Many of the diplomatic methods described in the book can be considered while dealing with similar situations. Expression of his keen perceptions, such as Indian parties and leaders are more occupied with elections at home over their interactions and relations with foreign countries, bring unexpected insights to the reader.

*(Balmukunda Regmi, Professor of Tribhuvan University in Nepal)*

