

APRIL 2020



上海國際問題研究院
SHANGHAI INSTITUTES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Working Together with One Heart
*People-to-People Diplomacy
in the Coronavirus Crisis*

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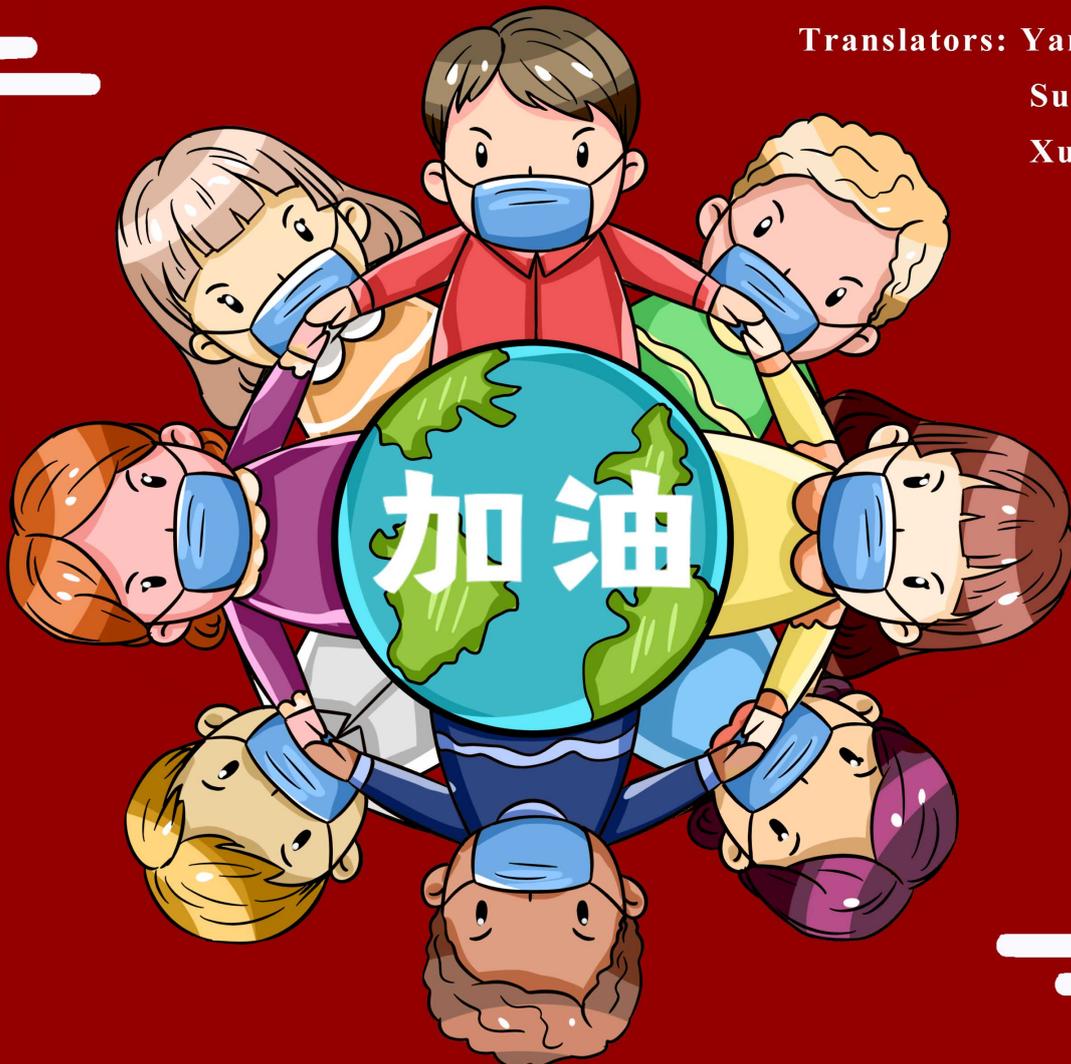
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Unlocking the Vast Potential of People-to-People Diplomacy in the Global Coronavirus Combat

One after another national governments have waged all-out wars against an unprecedented coronavirus pandemic that is rampaging across the world. People have come to realize that claiming a victory against the most devastating disease of the new century will not be possible unless the nations of the world act on a sense of global solidarity.

Large amounts of international assistance, moral as well as material, flew into China in the early stages of the outbreak, helping its people weather through the most difficult times. Now, as the coronavirus is spreading faster throughout the rest of the world, the whole Chinese society is being mobilized once again, this time for providing Chinese aid, in the form of medical supplies and anti-virus experience, to other hot spots and the most vulnerable regions in this growing health crisis. According to preliminary estimates, Chinese charities and enterprises, most notably Alibaba Foundation, Jack Ma Foundation, Huawei, Xiaomi, Suning, and Bank of China, have made donations and organized medical supplies through their well-established logistical networks for nearly 100 countries and regions.

These acts of goodwill and humanitarianism all reflect long-cherished Chinese values as expressed in such sayings as “Love has no boundaries” and “A favor, however trivial, should be returned with much greater kindness.” The acts have also shown that people-to-people diplomacy has a unique role to play in the global coronavirus combat. As the outbreak continues unabated against a shifting global economic and political landscape, what can non-state actors do to boost international anti-virus cooperation? How can people-to-people

diplomacy help promote greater empathy, solidarity, and coordination as counterforces against virus-induced politicization and stigmatization? And how can the international community establish and improve a global network of anti-virus resources with robust people-to-people diplomacy? These are the questions that a research team at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies---drawing on China's anti-coronavirus practices---attempts to answer in this latest report.

It points out that non-state actors, as extra-governmental resources, have displayed immeasurable capabilities in terms of pooling anti-virus material supplies, promoting international solidarity and coordination, and innovating prevention and control mechanisms. Robust people-to-people diplomacy complements government efforts by providing additional channels for communication and coordination. The report also presents some recommendations on how to integrate scattered foreign sources of aid into a single unitary relief platform; how to strengthen international cooperation by promoting a vision of humanity as a community with a shared future; and how to advance international scientific collaboration through experience and knowledge sharing.

If the quest for closer international anti-virus collaboration is compared to a continuous and systematic endeavor and a growing global network, then international non-state actor cooperation and people-to-people diplomacy should be seen as essential subsystems and vital links whose integrity underpins the robustness of the whole structure. International non-state actor cooperation not only yields tangible results, such as the cross-border mobilization of materials and manpower, but, more important, raises awareness

of humanity as a large community sharing weal and woe. Such a heightened awareness can help counteract the recent global resurgence of nationalism and populism.

Chen Dongxiao

President, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

March 30, 2020

Working Together with One Heart: People-to-People Diplomacy in the Coronavirus Crisis

Confirmed cases of COVID-19 continue to rise at a fast pace in the United States, Italy, Spain, Iran, Germany, and other hot spots, moving the world past one grim milestone after another in this growing public health crisis. According to the WHO, nearly 700, 000 cases had been reported in 204 countries and territories as of March 31. More than 40 countries have now declared a state of emergency over the coronavirus crisis. Crude oil prices have once plunged to as low as below 20 dollars a barrel and circuit breakers have been triggered several times on the global stock markets. The fast-spreading pandemic has evolved into an unprecedented compound crisis, affecting hundreds of millions of people and sending political as well as economic shock waves throughout the world. A global pandemic requires coordinated global responses that involve not only the collective action of national governments and leading international organizations but also concerted efforts by enterprises, social groups, and ordinary citizens.

In China, the battlefield of the global coronavirus war, apart from the government's swift and decisive action, enterprises and citizens have also pitched in, bringing their unique resources and advantages to bear in this unprecedented crisis. China's anti-coronavirus fight has shown that a combination of forceful government interventions and private-sector initiatives is essential in response to a public health emergency. The global coronavirus combat has now become a multi-actor and multi-sector endeavor in which individuals, social organizations, and enterprises have been playing an increasingly important role. Many heartwarming and inspiring stories and anecdotes have shown that people-to-people diplomacy has a unique role to play in this global fight for the welfare of mankind.

Even as China's people-to-people diplomacy has scored remarkable achievements in containing the novel coronavirus, international people's

diplomacy has much room to improve amid the growing health crisis. It is against this backdrop that a research team at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies presents this report in an attempt to answer three questions about people-to-people diplomacy for combating the coronavirus pandemic: first, how to bring nongovernmental efforts to bear in the health crisis; second, how to promote such values as equality, friendship, and solidarity to counteract the negative effects of racism, populism, and xenophobia; and third, how to utilize people-to-people diplomacy to create global resource networks for combating pandemics. Non-state actors not only complement the government's anti-virus efforts by bringing additional resources such as manpower, moral support, and medical supplies, but also contribute to the construction and improvement of a global governance structure for epidemic prevention and control. "Friendship, which derives from close contact between the people, holds the key to sound state-to-state relations." Robust people-to-people diplomacy in a time of crisis helps foster the sense of humanity as a community of shared future.

I. Rallying Nongovernmental Efforts for Coronavirus Combat

Combating a virus that knows no borders requires a sense of humanity as a community of shared future. Ordinary citizens, social organizations, and enterprises are important sources of material and moral public goods which help minimize the damages caused by the global pandemic while amplifying the positive effects of global interdependence. Nongovernmental actors as an extra-governmental resource plays a unique role by meeting the needs of global pandemic prevention and control. On the one hand, public health emergency responses require the participation of all actors of civil power; on the other hand, non-state actors contribute to the construction and improvement of a health governance structure.

First, private citizens have become the daily ambassadors of China's goodwill. Upon learning the severity of the coronavirus outbreak in Iran, many Chinese citizens volunteered to make donations via the Iranian embassy in Beijing. Moved by the timely moral and material assistance, many Iranians

expressed gratitude by leaving messages to the Iranian embassy which wrote on its official blog “Chinese people’s relay of love far exceeds our expectations and our gratitude is beyond words.” Chinese expats acted swiftly when they learned that Italy was becoming the worst-hit hot spot outside China. In late February, the first batch of material supplies donated by Chinese communities living in Italy arrived at the Turin Emergency Operations Center. The Wenzhou Chamber of Commerce has also organized large amounts of donations to Italy through various channels. In Japan, some Chinese students volunteered to hand out face masks in the street, receiving positive media coverage. The sum of these personal donations, although trivial relative to the soaring demands for medical supplies, reflects universal humanistic values. It is the altruism and volunteerism of ordinary citizens that brings the world closer together in this time of crisis.



Photo by Xinhua News Agency

Second, social organizations are playing an increasingly important role by setting up cooperative networks, promoting volunteerism, and providing advisory information. The Shanghai Youth Association, in partnership with the Hongkong-Shanghai Economic Development Association

and the Shanghai-Macau Youth Exchange Promotion Association, purchased 2,000 protective suits and 10,000 KN95 face masks by crowd funding and had them delivered to Shanghai. The Chinese Red Cross Foundation has set up an international humanitarian fund and sent health professionals and medical supplies to hard-hit epidemic areas such as Iran and Iraq. The Beijing-based Peaceland Foundation donated RMB 600,000 worth of medical supplies to Iran on February 25. On March 7, the China Friendship Foundation for Peace and Development in partnership with the Silk Road Global Information Limited made a donation of more than RMB 200,000 to Tehran via the Iranian Consulate in Shanghai. Science and technology holds the key to the containment of the coronavirus pandemic. The scientific community has acted swiftly by focusing on developing vaccines and therapeutics. Many world-renowned scientists have expressed their appreciation of China's anti-virus efforts via the China Association for Science and Technology and called for concerted efforts by scientists around the world to fight off the deadly pandemic. The National Natural Science Foundation of China and the UK Research and Innovation released a joint statement on March 12 highlighting their shared commitment to strengthening global collaborations and encouraging openness and data sharing to help ensure diagnostics, vaccines, and prevention measures are developed rapidly for the benefit of every nation. Teachers of Persian and Persian-major students at the Shanghai International Studies University have volunteered to collect, compile, translate, and share booklets and videos with Iranians through social media on China's prevention and control practices. By providing considerable material and technical assistance to the outside world, social organizations have become an increasingly important actor in the global coronavirus combat.

Third, Chinese enterprises have brought their transnational operations, advanced technology, and capital to bear in the coronavirus combat. Alibaba announced on March 2 that it would donate 1 million face masks to Japan. And later it donated face masks and diagnostic kits to the worst-hit countries in Europe. Jiangsu Chamber of Commerce in Beijing organized material assistance for South Korea. On March 6, Mr. Lei Jun, CEO of Xiaomi Corporation, a Chinese electronics companies, announced that the company

had donated tens of thousands of face masks to Italy. BGI, one of the world's largest genome research organization, and its subsidiary Mammoth Foundation, have donated large amounts of testing kits to the worst-hit countries. Alibaba and BGI made their joint cloud computing platform---Alibaba Genomics Service (AGS)---free online starting from March 13, reducing the time for nucleic acids comparison to as short as 60 seconds. With their vast transnational business networks and abundant capital, large enterprises can help alleviate the financial burdens on national governments especially those in the developing world impacted by public health crises.



Photo from Internet

Non-state actors have been proactive contributors in the global coronavirus combat. Enterprises (state-owned or private), social organizations, and ordinary citizens are all sources of strength and asset. Their assistance, in the form of moral support, material donations, and research findings, are the most valuable public goods in times of need.

II. Greater Global Solidarity through People-to-People Diplomacy

People-to-people diplomacy counteracts racism and populism by promoting the values of equality, friendship, and unity, which has brought

people together in the global fight against the pandemic. The coronavirus does not distinguish between ethnic groups, nor does it respect borders and civilizations. All countries, big or small, are vulnerable to the pandemic, which makes concerted efforts all the more essential. However, it is regrettable to see some people politicizing the coronavirus by relating it to a specific country or ethnic group, which has led to unfair judgments and baseless accusations. Irrational voices will not alleviate the pandemic, but will only exacerbate the crisis. In response to the myths created by certain irresponsible media, especially their racist and discriminatory remarks, many NGOs have taken the initiative to speak out in order to set the record straight. For example, the Federation of German-China Friendship Association issued a statement pointing out that panic would only benefit racists, calling for more support to China rather than estrangement. Mary Patetsos, Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), called on Australia's leaders and citizens to "call out racism whenever and wherever they see it....Anti-Asian language and behaviour make people feel unsafe and as a society we cannot allow it to become normalised. We cannot sit back and let people who hold racist views use the coronavirus as an excuse to vilify members of the community." In addition, a number of Russian NGOs represented by the Sokolniki Exhibition and Convention Centre in Moscow have recorded videos to support China's anti-coronavirus efforts. Russian media outlet *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* published an editorial titled "China and Russia Share Weal and Woe" to praise China's fight against the pandemic and a full-page ad saying "Stay Strong, China! We Stand With You!" In the global fight against COVID-19, we should do more to enhance cooperation, step up rather than stand down, and tear down walls rather than erect barriers. By exerting organizational and individual influence on the media and through other channels, international organizations and foreign friends can help unite the people around the world in the joint efforts to fight for well-being of mankind.



Photo from Internet

Nongovernmental cooperation for pandemic prevention and control between China, Japan, and South Korea has become a model of international cooperation. Both the governments and the people of the three countries have been working closely in the battle against COVID-19. Japan lent a helping hand to China in the latter's most difficult times. The Japanese government and businesses have donated to China masks, goggles, protective suits, and other supplies for pandemic prevention and control. On the packages donated to Wuhan read the words "Though miles apart, we are under the same sky" and "Together we stand, my armors thine." The former comes from an ancient poem that a grandson of the Japanese emperor sent to a high-ranking Chinese monk called Jianzhen 1,300 years ago, which inspired him to go to Japan to spread Buddhism. The latter is quoted from the *Book of Songs*, the oldest existing collection of Chinese poems. There are also touching words on the relief-supply boxes sent from South Korea to China, like "When brothers are of one mind, there is nothing they cannot accomplish. Let's help each other to weather through these difficult times." After more cases were confirmed in Japan and South Korea, China returned the favor by extending aid and support.

While fighting the epidemic at home, various parts of China have shared information and experience with the international community, including Japan and South Korea. The battle against the pandemic concerns all people, which cannot afford to be thwarted by any political or economic interests. People-to-people diplomacy should play its part by pooling resources and making people's voice heard, and help countries get through the difficult times by sharing prevention and control experience.

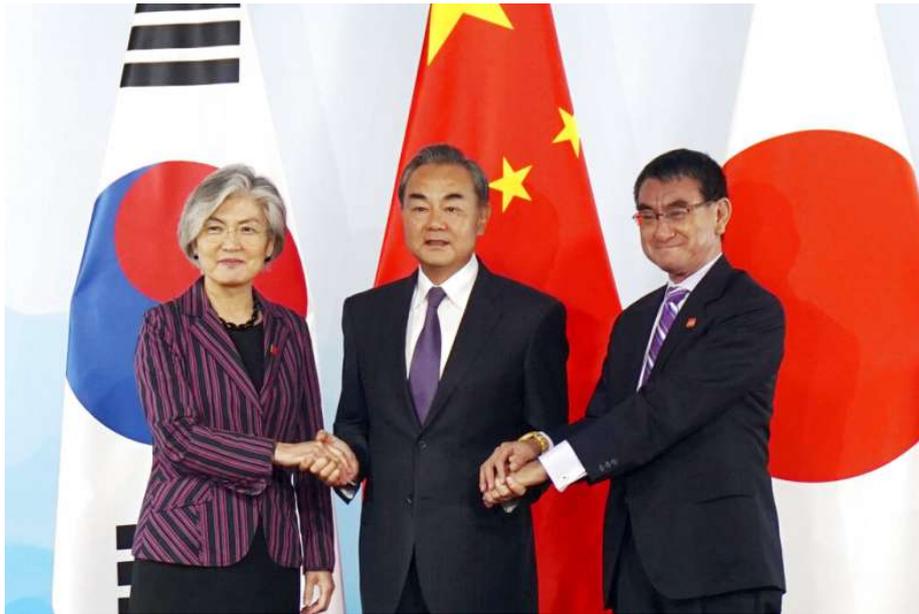


Photo by Associated Press

Refuting “Chinese virus” with “Chinese aid,” robust people-to-people diplomacy is helping China build an image of a responsible power. As the coronavirus is rampaging outside the country, China has sent medical experts to some European and Middle Eastern hot spots or supported other countries' anti-virus efforts remotely. On the evening of March 12, a nine-member Chinese aid team organized by the National Health Commission and the Red Cross Society of China, along with 31 tons of medical supplies, arrived at Rome, to help Italy contain the novel coronavirus outbreak. Italian citizens expressed their gratitude through social media. In addition to donating medical supplies, medical experts at Tongji Hospital Optical Valley Branch in Wuhan, Hubei Province, shared their knowledge and experience in fighting COVID-19 with their counterparts in Italy by teleconferencing. On March 11, five experts from Sichuan left for Italy to provide support. Henan Province delivered aid materials

including 400 protective suits and 2,000 KN95 face masks to Gyeongsangbuk-do and Daegu via South Korean Red Cross. Moreover, Chinese nongovernmental organizations have also sent supplies to the hardest-hit areas, for instance, the Peaceland Foundation and the New Sunshine Charity Foundation have made donations to Iran. Although certain U.S. officials attempted to damage the U.S.-China relationship in this pandemic, California, Indiana, Nebraska, and other states in the United States supported Chinese provinces and cities in various ways, and the state legislature of Utah passed a resolution expressing support for the Chinese people. In return, Chinese enterprises and people also helped their American counterparts as more cases were reported in the United States. These interactions have exhibited China's stance in the global fight against the coronavirus, and are the best response to the doubts and misunderstandings in the international community.

Although racism and populism are hindering the anti-virus efforts, people-to-people diplomacy has encouraged people to embrace equality and friendship but reject politicization in the combat against COVID-19 to push back against anti-globalization sentiments. While the governments are still the leading actors in international relations, nongovernmental actors can influence public opinion and build a common value base for international cooperation.

III. Pooling Nongovernmental Resources and Innovating Prevention Mechanisms

The global fight against COVID-19 is an all-out war for the well-being of mankind. NGOs can play an important role in material support and rescue coordination. Nongovernmental resources include manpower, material supplies, intellectual support, and so on. Thanks to globalization and international migration, the distribution of nongovernmental resources is increasingly transnational. We should learn from this outbreak, and innovate the global epidemic prevention mechanisms by integrating the resources from all sectors, pooling material supplies, and enhancing coordination and networking.

First, securing material supplies. China has fully mobilized foreign friends and Chinese expats to coordinate international material support. On February 13, the third batch of medical supplies donated by the Coordination Council of Chinese American Associations arrived in Wuhan. Liu Maochang, a 95-year-old consultant of the Guangdong Association of Western Australia, donated 2,000 Australian dollars (about 9,300 yuan) when he learned of the COVID-19 outbreak in China. The Philippine Chinese Community Disaster Relief Foundation donated 14.4 million pesos (about 1.99 million yuan) to the hardest-hit areas in China. In addition, the Federation of Khmer Chinese in Cambodia and the Thai Chinese Chamber of Commerce also fully support the Chinese government's anti-epidemic measures. Overseas material support have alleviated the urgent need for medical supplies and helped China weather through the difficult times in the early stages of the outbreak.

Second, implementing coordination and cooperation mechanisms. What kind of international cooperation and coordination mechanism is effective in dealing with a public health emergency of international concern? The answer to this question is critical to not only the current outbreak, but also similar crises in the future. As the Chinese saying goes, "Distance cannot separate true friends who feel so close even when they are thousands of miles apart." Nongovernmental cooperation in various forms has complemented the global epidemic prevention mechanisms. For instance, the Global Partnership against Coronavirus Alliance, a newly formed humanitarian organization, is working to bring rapid medical solutions, preventive care, policy proposals, and public awareness to counter the pandemic. Its founding board members, including Bruno Wu, have wielded their international influence and resources to contribute to the anti-pandemic endeavor. Such nongovernmental cooperation offers valuable lessons for future collaboration.

Third, building networked communication systems. Epidemics spread across borders, and without effective containment measures, are likely to cause collateral damages and crises. In the most understaffed pandemic-stricken areas, qualified NGOs should be allowed to provide material assistance and

best practices of disease control. Putting in place an unofficial network of communication can shore up weak spots where governments' action falls short. The credibility of NGOs is the key to establishing an effective communication system by which they could contribute to a more comprehensive global response mechanism. Moreover, it is necessary to install a two-way risk communication channel among non-state actors based in different countries and set up a communication network linking neighborhoods, NGOs, governments, and enterprises, in order to facilitate the free flow of information and promote coordination among all parties.



Photo by Xinhua News Agency

In short, non-state actors can help alleviate the fiscal burdens on the government by bringing in urgently needed resources. Coordination and collaboration among non-state actors can significantly improve the efficiency of control and preventive measures. Communication networks make it possible to share information with each other swiftly. People-to-people diplomacy can play its due role in any stage, any field, and anywhere in responding to a global public health emergency, assisting the government as the single response body

facing the pandemic. In this regard, China may have some lessons to share with other countries to support their combat against this pandemic.

IV. Policy Recommendations

Non-state actors, with its vast potential to be unlocked, constitute a strong force in support of the government when a public health emergency arises. Non-state actors in China have demonstrated their unique capabilities in the battle against COVID-19 in pooling medical resources, fostering global solidarity, and innovating response mechanisms. Thanks to their contribution, communication and cooperation are strengthened and joint efforts are made in response to the common health security challenge. Based on an analysis of how people-to-people diplomacy work in China during the outbreak of COVID-19, this report presents the following policy recommendations for future health emergencies, with the aim of promoting friendly international relations, mutual understanding and respect, and world peace and stability.

First, assistance from foreign sources at present are still scattered and unorganized. A specialized NGO should be designated, under the guidance of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Civil Affairs, to lead and establish an overseas platform that integrates scattered resources. This multi-functional platform will not only publish timely information to match the need with supply, but also provide logistical support for medical-supply deliveries, oversee material distribution, and collect users' feedback. This platform will optimize planning and allocation of overseas assistance resources and contribute to China's image as a responsible country through people-to-people diplomacy.

Second, people-to-people diplomacy should be a counterforce against populism and racism. The Chinese people have demonstrated great unity in the face of the COVID-19 threat, a manifestation of the shared values of human right, equality, and fraternity, a striking contrast with the virulent forces of populism and anti-globalization. China should welcome the involvement of influential foreign NGOs, such as Médecins Sans Frontières and Greenpeace, and encourage them to work more closely with homegrown NGOs in the coronavirus combat, so that China's anti-virus efforts and lessons can be better understood around the world.

Third, international scientific collaboration should be stepped up to provide expertise and intellectual support. The COVID-19 outbreak presents an opportunity to build a platform of knowledge sharing. Science diplomacy is an important component of people-to-people diplomacy. Transnational scientific collaboration should be strengthened by facilitating data sharing and people-to-people exchanges, especially exchanges between scientists and teams working on vaccines and medicines. A community of epidemiologists should be formed by bringing together leading scientists from China, the United States, Japan, and European countries to conduct joint research on key questions such as origins of the virus, sources of infection, and transmission routes.

Fourth, transparency of information should be improved through people-to-people diplomacy to prevent “Not in My Backyard” phenomenon. Transparency of information remains key throughout the combat against the COVID-19 pandemic. Without transparency, concerted efforts by governments and international organizations will be impossible, and “Not in My Backyard” opposition will probably occur. China should allow its NGOs and enterprises to

play their due roles, especially those that have been recognized abroad, for example, the China Association of Social Welfare and Senior Service (CASWSS), China Federation of Industrial Economics (CFIE), China Entry & Exit Inspection and Quarantine Association (CIQA), Insurance Association of China (IAC), China Social Welfare Foundation (CSWEF), China Charity Alliance, Ramunion, and One Foundation. The COVID-19 outbreak is the first national public health emergency taking place in China after social media has become ubiquitous. Social media gives everyone a voice and it is the place where the public believes that they can acquire “firsthand,” “authoritative,” and “factual” information. So, it is imperative for non-state actors, especially reputable organizations, to be responsible and guarantee their information authenticity, both at home and abroad. Foreign-based NGOs, which have not been actively involved so far, should be encouraged to join and contribute. In addition, the government and Chinese NGOs should work together to cut bureaucratic red tapes and bring NGOs’ operations in line with international standards to strengthen the national emergency response network, improve communication efficiency, and build up credibility in global emergency response practice.

Lastly, a report on people-to-people diplomacy in the 2020 combat against COVID-19 should be compiled and published. Heartwarming stories abound since the pandemic broke out in China. A great many consulates, international organizations, and enterprises showed their support in various ways. To name a few, Consul General of Venezuela in Shanghai wrote “Hang in there China” in Chinese characters to hearten Chinese people. Japanese people donated 1 million face masks and delivered them in no time to the forefront of epidemic-stricken areas in China. Panasonic, Boeing, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Coach, Estée Lauder, Philips-Van-Heusen, Starbucks, and Apple, have all

extended a helping hand. Some foreign media and education institutions conducted surveys on whether overseas Chinese are being subject to discrimination and bias. All these cases should be taken as examples of successful people-to-people diplomacy to consolidate the foundation of friendship in future bilateral and multilateral exchanges.

As a Chinese saying goes, “Enduring friendship is based on an abiding commitment to pursue common goals.” The outbreak of a global pandemic is straining the existing global governance structure and its operating mechanisms. In China, the first line of defense against the global pandemic, NGOs, enterprises, and individuals have proved their capabilities not only in fighting against the pandemic, but also in boosting structural reform of national and global governance. Initial victories in China against the deadly virus would have been impossible without the proactive involvement of non-state actors. China’s experience shows that the synergy developed between national emergency response policy and people-to-people diplomacy can really make a difference in a public health crisis.

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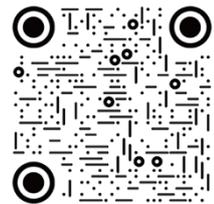
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