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Xi Jinping: Fighting COVID-19 through solidarity and cooperation

written by Xi Jinping
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Chinese doctor fights against COVID-19.
Artwork by Shen Chen

Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China
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Fighting COVID-19 Through Solidarity and Cooperation

Building a Global Community of Health for All

President of the World Health Assembly,
Director General of the World Health Organization,
Dear Delegates,

To begin with, I wish to say that it is of significant importance for this World Health Assembly to be held at such a critical moment as the human race battles this novel coronavirus.

What we are facing is the most serious global public health emergency since the end of World War II. Catching the world by surprise, COVID-19 has hit over 210 countries and regions, affected more than seven billion people around the world and claimed over 300,000 precious lives. I mourn for every life lost and express condolences to the bereaved families.

The history of human civilization is one of fighting diseases and tiding over disasters. The virus does not respect borders. Nor is race or nationality relevant in the face of the disease. Confronted by the ravages of COVID-19, the international community has not flinched. The people of all countries have tackled the virus head on. Around the world, people have looked out for each other and pulled together as one. With love and compassion, we have forged extraordinary synergy in the fight against COVID-19.

In China, after making painstaking efforts and enormous sacrifice, we have turned the tide on the virus and protected the life and health of our people. All along, we have acted with openness, transparency and responsibility. We have provided information to WHO and relevant countries in a most timely fashion. We have released the genome sequence at the earliest possible time. We have shared control and treatment experience with the world without reservation. We have done everything in our power to support and assist countries in need.

Mr. President,

Even as we meet, the virus is still raging, and more must be done to bring it under control. To this end, I want to make the following proposals:

First, we must do everything we can for COVID-19 control and treatment.

This is a most urgent task. We must always put the people first, for nothing in the world is more precious than people's lives. We need to deploy medical expertise and critical supplies to places where they are needed the most. We need to take strong steps in such key areas as prevention, quarantine, detection, treatment and tracing. We need to move as fast as we can to curb the global spread of the virus and do our best to stem cross-border transmission. We need to step up information sharing, exchange experience and best practice, and pursue international cooperation on testing methods, clinical treatment, and vaccine and medicine research and development. We also need to continue supporting global research by scientists on the source and transmission routes of the virus.

Second, the World Health Organization should lead the global response.

Under the leadership of Dr. Tedros, WHO has made a major contribution in leading and advancing the global response to COVID-19. Its good work is applauded by the international community. At this crucial juncture, to support WHO is to support international cooperation and the battle for saving lives as well. China calls on the international community to increase political and financial support for WHO so as to mobilize resources worldwide to defeat the virus.

Third, we must provide greater support for Africa. Developing countries, African countries in particular, have weaker public health systems. Helping them build capacity must be our top priority in COVID-19 response. The world needs to provide more material, technological and personnel support for African countries. China has sent a tremendous amount of medical supplies and assistance to over 50 African countries and the African Union. Five Chinese medical expert teams have also been sent to the African continent. In total, in the past seven decades, over 200

million people in Africa have received care and treatment from Chinese medical teams. At present, 46 resident Chinese medical teams are in Africa helping with COVID-19 containment efforts locally.

Fourth, we must strengthen global governance in the area of public health.

We human beings will eventually prevail over the coronavirus. Yet this may not be the last time a major health emergency comes knocking at our door. In view of the weaknesses and deficiencies exposed by COVID-19, we need to improve the governance system for public health security. We need to respond more quickly to public health emergencies and establish global and regional reserve centers of anti-epidemic supplies. China supports the idea of a comprehensive review of the global response to COVID-19 after it is brought under control to sum up experience and address deficiencies. This work should be based on science and professionalism, led by WHO and conducted in an objective and impartial manner.

Fifth, we must restore economic and social development. While working on an ongoing basis to contain the virus, countries where conditions permit may reopen businesses and schools in an orderly fashion in observance of WHO's professional recommendations. In the meantime, international macroeconomic policy coordination should be stepped up and the global industrial and supply chains be kept stable and unclogged if we are to restore growth to the world economy.

Sixth, we must strengthen international cooperation. Mankind is a community with a shared future. Solidarity and cooperation is our most powerful weapon for defeating the virus. This is the key lesson the world has learned from fighting HIV/AIDS, Ebola, avian influenza, influenza A (H1N1) and other major epidemics. And solidarity and cooperation is a sure way through which we, the people of the world, can defeat this novel coronavirus.

Mr. President,

China stands for the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind. China takes it as its responsibility to ensure not just the life and health of its own citizens, but also global public health. For the sake of boosting international cooperation against COVID-19, I would like to announce the following:

- China will provide US\$2 billion over two years to help with COVID-19 response and with economic and social development in affected countries, especially developing countries.

- China will work with the U.N. to set up a global humanitarian response depot and hub in China, ensure the operation of anti-epidemic supply chains and foster “green corridors” for fast-track transportation and customs clearance.

- China will establish a cooperation mechanism for its hospitals to pair up with 30 African hospitals and accelerate the building of the Africa CDC headquarters to help the continent ramp up its disease preparedness and control capacity.

- COVID-19 vaccine development and deployment in China, when available, will be made a global public good. This will be China’s contribution to ensuring vaccine accessibility and affordability in developing countries.

- China will work with other G20 members to implement the Debt Service Suspension Initiative for the poorest countries. China is also ready to work with the international community to bolster support for the hardest-hit countries under the greatest strain of debt service, so that they could tide over the current difficulties.

To conclude, I call on all of us to come together and work as one. Let’s make concerted efforts to protect the life and health of people in all countries. Let’s work together to safeguard planet Earth, our common home. Let’s work together to build a global community of health for all!

I thank you.

