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## Accelerating Building of the Belt and Road, Forging China-Afghanistan Community of Common Destiny

Deng Xijun

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In September and October of 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward the initiatives of jointly building a Silk Road Economic Belt and a 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road (hereinafter referred to as the Belt and Road), which has attracted close attention from all over the world. Up to now, more than 60 countries including Afghanistan along the routes and international organizations have shown great interest in taking part in the development of the Belt and Road. In order to promote the implementation of the Initiative, instill vigor and vitality into the ancient Silk Road, the Chinese Government has drafted and published the Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road in recent days. With the nature of white paper, the main contents of this document are as follows,

First, the objectives are more definite. Promoting the initiative to jointly build the Belt and Road, will not only meet the need of China to further expand and deepen its opening-up, but also serve the common interests of countries along the routes, and answer the call of our time for global cooperation. The Belt and Road is designed to uphold the global free trade regime and the open world economy, to carry out broader and more in-depth regional cooperation of higher standards; and to promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their adjacent seas, thus realizing diversified, independent, balanced and sustainable development in these

countries. It will help align the development strategies of the countries along the Belt and Road, and enable peoples of the relevant countries to understand, trust and respect each other and live in harmony, peace and prosperity.

Second, the ideas are much clearer. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on bringing together China, Central Asia, Russia and Europe; linking China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia; and connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean. The 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road is designed to go from China's coast to Europe through the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in one route, and from China's coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific in the other. On land, the Initiative will focus on jointly building a new Eurasian Land Bridge and developing economic corridors by taking advantage of international transport routes, relying on core cities along the Belt and Road and using key economic industrial parks as cooperation platforms. At sea, the Initiative will focus on jointly building smooth, secure and efficient transport routes connecting major sea ports along the Belt and Road.

Third, the contents are more substantial. Strengthening policy coordination, facilities connectivity, unimpeded trade, financial integration and people-to-people bond are major contents of the Belt and Road. For the building of the Belt and Road, enhancing policy coordination is an important guarantee. We should promote intergovernmental cooperation, expand shared interests, and reach new cooperation consensus. Facilities connectivity is a priority area. We should focus on the key passageways, junctions and projects of transportation, energy and communications, forming an infrastructure network connecting all sub-regions in Asia, and between Asia, Europe and Africa step by step. Investment and trade cooperation is a major task. We should strive to improve investment and trade facilitation, and remove investment and trade barriers, so as to unleash the potential for expanded cooperation. Financial integration is an important underpinning. We should expand the scope and scale of bilateral currency swap and settlement with other countries along the Belt and Road, make joint efforts to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank(AIIB), and strengthen financial regulation cooperation. People-to-people bond provides the public support. We should promote extensive cultural and academic exchanges, media cooperation, so as to win public support for deepening bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

Forth, the mechanisms are more pluralistic. In promoting this initiative, China will follow the principle of wide consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits. The programs of development will be open and inclusive, not exclusive. It will be a real chorus comprising all countries along the routes, not a solo for China itself. To develop the Belt and Road is not to replace existing mechanisms or initiatives for regional cooperation. Much to the contrary, we will build on the existing basis to help countries align their development strategies and form complementarities. It respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries , abides by market rules and international norms, and accommodates the interests and concerns of all parties involved. It advocates peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. It promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness.

Fifth, the measures are more pragmatic. For more than a year, Chinese leaders have met with leaders of relevant countries, reaching a broad consensus on the Belt and Road Initiative. China has signed MOUs of cooperation on the joint development of the Belt and Road with some countries, and has promoted a number of key cooperation projects in the fields of infrastructure connectivity, industrial investment, trade and financial cooperation, cultural exchanges and so forth, where the conditions are right. A number of international summits, seminars and expos on the theme of the Belt and Road Initiative have been held. Thanks to the concerted efforts of relevant parties, substantive progress has been made in the establishment of the AIIB, the Silk Road Fund has been launched, and constructions of a number of infrastructure connectivity projects are moving forward. The Belt and Road is bringing and will continue to bring real benefits to the countries along the routes.

Sixth, the prospects are much broader. Belt and Road Initiative is not a private undertaking for China itself, but a common desire and common cause for all the relevant countries. China is willing to carry out joint research, forums and fairs, personnel training, exchanges and visits under the framework of existing bilateral, multilateral, regional and sub-regional cooperation mechanisms, so that all the relevant countries will gain a better understanding and recognition of the contents, objectives and tasks of the Belt and Road Initiative. China will join other countries along the Belt and Road to substantiate and improve the content and mode of the Belt and Road cooperation, work out relevant timetables and roadmaps, and align national development programs and regional cooperation plans. China will work with countries along the Belt and Road to steadily advance demonstration projects, jointly identify programs that accommodate bilateral and multilateral interests, and accelerate the launching of programs that are agreed upon by parties and ready for implementation, so as to ensure early harvest.

Afghanistan is not only one of the important countries along the ancient Silk Road, but also among the first regional countries actively echoed the the Belt and Road strategic concept, which have been highly valued by President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and former President Hamid Karzai. As an important neighboring country to the west of China, Afghanistan used to be the traffic hub connecting central Asia, south Asia and west Asia, and has tremendous geographical potentiality. China wishes to take the opportunity to work together with the Afghan side, to inherit and carry forward the Silk Road Spirit, to write a new chapter of the Silk Road and build the China-Afghanistan community of common destiny, so as to create a happy life for all of us.