

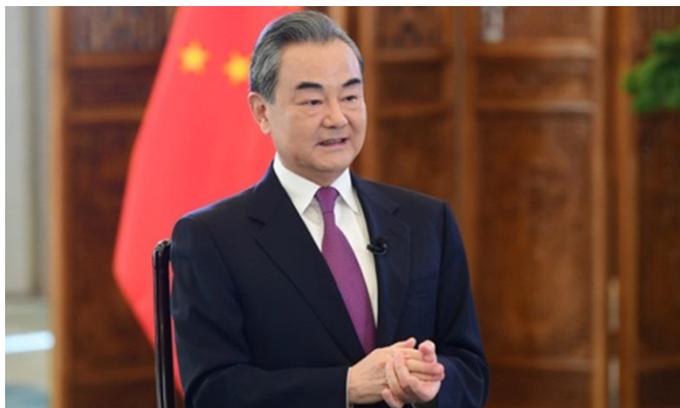
State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Gives Interview To Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group On International Situation and China's Diplomacy in 2020

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China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi

The following is a transcript of a recent interview given by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Xinhua News Agency and China Media Group on the international situation and China's diplomacy in 2020

Question: COVID-19 hit the world with unprecedented impact. What is your assessment of the international situation and China's diplomacy in 2020?



Wang Yi

It has been an extraordinary year for China and the world. The sudden onslaught of COVID-19 has accelerated the once-in-a-century transformation in an increasingly fluid and changing world. The devastating virus, economic recession and governance difficulties are clear challenges facing humanity. On the other hand, unilateralism, protectionism and power politics are standing in the way of international cooperation. People across the world have increasingly come to see that all countries share a common stake and need to stand together in the face of difficulties. The vision of a community with a shared future for mankind thus enjoys stronger support. More and more members of the international community now choose solidarity over division, openness over isolation and cooperation over confrontation.

Here in China, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core has rallied the nation behind a common purpose, and secured major strategic gains in the fight against COVID-19. We have also scored decisive successes in the three critical battles against poverty, pollution and potential risks. The whole country is on course to fully build a moderately prosperous society. The recent Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee set a great vision for China's development in the coming years and charted the course for national rejuvenation. The unity and perseverance of the Chinese people have impressed the world. The resilience and dynamism of China's development have won global recognition.

In 2020, we in the foreign service have forged ahead and tackled the challenges head on. Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and following Xi Jinping Thought on

Diplomacy, we have advanced China's foreign relations by taking into account both domestic needs and the international context. Guided by President Xi's leadership and personal engagement and focusing on forging a joint response to COVID-19, we have worked tirelessly to serve the country and contribute to the world. Fighting the coronavirus and the "political virus" at the same time, we have done our best to safeguard national interests and global stability.

We have built a strong defense against the virus at our borders. We have made utmost efforts to facilitate COVID-19 response and safe reopening of economy at home, and provide consular assistance and protection to Chinese nationals abroad. We piloted "fast tracks" and "green lanes" to speed up the flow of essential personnel and goods, and helped keep industrial and supply chains stable and open, contributing to the full establishment of a moderately prosperous society in China.

We have helped erect an international bulwark against the coronavirus. Having actively engaged in the international response to COVID-19, China launched an emergency global humanitarian campaign of a scale unseen since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, and helped build consensus on a global response to COVID-19, contributing to the building of a global community of health for all.

We have made more friends in the world. China has deepened friendship and cooperation with all countries, making active efforts to develop relations with major powers, achieving solid progress in building a community with a shared future with neighbors, protecting and advancing the shared interests of the developing world, and working for a new type of international relations.

We have shared benefits generated by China's opening-up with the world. China has signed the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and concluded negotiations on a China-EU investment agreement. We have vigorously advanced high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, and highlighted public health, green development and digital transformation in advancing the Belt and Road Initiative. All these efforts have injected much needed impetus into the global recovery.

We have been firm in safeguarding our national interests. We have responded resolutely and rationally to unjustified moves by the United States. We have handled issues relating to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet with justified, strong and proportionate countermeasures and won one fierce battle after another in international organizations, vigorously safeguarding China's sovereignty, dignity and development interests.

We have spearheaded multilateral cooperation. Unswerving in advocating multilateralism, China has supported international cooperation on climate change. We have announced our ambitious goal to peak carbon dioxide emissions and achieve carbon neutrality in the upgraded Nationally Determined Contributions. We have put forward a Global Initiative on Data Security to advance the reform of the global governance system.

In challenging times like this, one's mettle is tested. We are confident that through concerted efforts, the people in China and across the world will prevail over the virus, end the crisis and win an ultimate victory. China, on course toward national rejuvenation, is generating global opportunities and embracing openness and cooperation. We will make greater contributions to world peace and development.

Question

The pandemic has made "cloud diplomacy" a major form of interactions between countries.

Through this virtual platform, President Xi Jinping has communicated with many foreign leaders and heads of international organizations and attended multiple important international conferences. What role has "cloud diplomacy" played in China's foreign relations in 2020?

Wang Yi

COVID-19, which caught everyone by surprise, has hit the "pause" button on face-to-face interactions between countries. But China's diplomacy has not paused in the face of the difficulties. We have neither shied away from any challenges, nor fallen silent on any major issues.

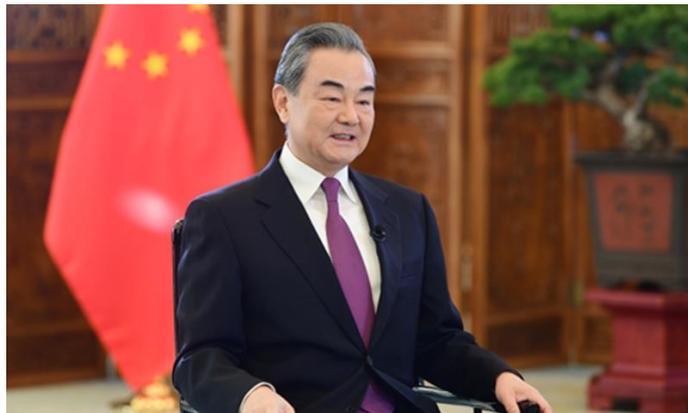
The biggest highlight in China's foreign relations has been the "cloud diplomacy" conducted at the head-of-state level. Summit diplomacy, which is the highest form of diplomacy, has been the compass guiding China's external relations. In 2020, President Xi Jinping personally planned, oversaw and engaged in "cloud diplomacy", having 87 meetings and phone calls with foreign leaders and heads of international organizations and attending 22 important bilateral or multilateral events.

Through "cloud diplomacy", President Xi Jinping has championed solidarity in the world's fight against COVID-19. At the height of this global battle, President Xi sent out this clear message: virus respects no borders and disease doesn't distinguish between races; humankind is a community with a shared future; solidarity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon to defeat the virus. Advocating science-based response, he called for joint efforts to enhance global prevention and control, develop vaccines, build a strong line of defense against the virus, and oppose politicization and stigmatization. This has helped galvanize international anti-COVID-19 cooperation.

Through "cloud diplomacy", President Xi Jinping has boosted confidence in world economic recovery. As the world economy slid toward recession, President Xi offered a series of proposals in light of China's experience in coordinating pandemic response and economic and social development, including maintaining the smooth functioning of the world economy, leveraging the digital economy, making development more inclusive and beneficial for all, and building an open world economy. This has brought hope for the world economy to step out of the doldrums.

Through "cloud diplomacy", President Xi Jinping has pointed the way forward for reforming the global governance system. As global governance was severely impacted, President Xi, with his keen grasp of the trend of the times, laid out China's vision for global governance featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, and articulated China's unequivocal commitment to multilateralism and to fairer and more equitable global governance.

All in all, with "cloud diplomacy", China has demonstrated its sense of responsibility, contributed its wisdom and expanded the ways it conducts foreign relations.



Question: How has China contributed to and supported the global COVID-19 response?

Wang Yi

■ The coronavirus is a common enemy of humanity. To defeat it is the shared responsibility of the international community. Facing this global health crisis, China has called for global cooperation since the start and worked with other countries to fight the pandemic, giving meaning to the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind.

■ China's contributions and support to the global response are best seen in the following six respects:

- We raced against time and were the first country to report cases to the world. More and more research suggests that the pandemic was likely to have been caused by separate outbreaks in multiple places in the world. When hit by an unknown coronavirus, China took immediate actions to carry out epidemiological investigation, identify the pathogen and publicize key information including the genome sequencing of the virus. All this sounded alarm bells across the world.

We took the most rigorous control measures to fight the virus. Putting people and life first, we effectively controlled the virus within the shortest possible time, and steadily resumed economic and social activities in our country. We made an early contribution to building a strong global line of defense against the virus.

We conducted the largest-scale online exchanges on epidemic response with the support of science and technology. We organized over 100 video meetings with experts from other countries, opened an online knowledge center to share China's experiences with all countries, and published eight updated versions of diagnosis and therapeutic solutions and seven updated versions of prevention and control protocols. We shared our experience with other countries without any reservation.

We provided urgently needed assistance by launching the largest global emergency humanitarian campaign since the founding of New China. We provided assistance to over 150 countries and 10 international organizations, sent 36 medical teams to 34 countries in need and provided funding to WHO and other relevant UN agencies. We stood with other countries and peoples to help them prevail over the virus.

We did our best as the largest manufacturer of medical supplies. We provided countries around the world with over 220 billion masks, 2.25 billion protective suits and over 1 billion testing kits. "Made in China" products became a key source of supply for the global fight against the pandemic.

We were the first to pledge to make vaccines a global public good, bearing in mind the greater good of humanity. To help other developing countries access affordable vaccines, we engaged in active collaboration on the R&D of drugs and vaccines, which brings hope to heavily-hit developing countries.

As the pandemic is far from over, we must never slacken our joint response. China will continue to advance global cooperation on epidemic response, strengthen joint prevention and control, and assist countries and regions in need. We will never slacken such efforts until humanity secures a final victory against COVID-19.

Question: What role has the Foreign Ministry played during the nation's battle against COVID-19 and how has the Ministry put its people-centered philosophy into action?

Wang Yi

The principle of for the people and by the people has been a source of strength for the Communist Party of China.

It is also the defining feature of China's diplomacy. This human touch of China's diplomacy has been further demonstrated during the test of COVID-19. Throughout the year 2020, we have pooled every resource available and lost no time in delivering people-centered diplomacy. We have defied risks and danger to put up a firm line of defense for our fellow Chinese in every corner of the world.

We have stood at the forefront of preventing imported cases, doing everything we could to lock in the hard-won gains in controlling the coronavirus at home. We have stood at the forefront of serving domestic development, giving diplomatic support to the national endeavor of finishing building a moderately prosperous society in all respects and securing victory against extreme poverty. We have stood at the forefront of advocating international cooperation against COVID-19, making our contribution to forging a global synergy in this battle. We have stood at the forefront of fighting misinformation, rebutting attempts of politicization and stigmatization. We were determined to make sure that the objective narrative and collective memory of the battle against the pandemic would not be distorted by lies.

COVID-19 may have suspended flights, yet it has not hindered the solicitude of the motherland for the well-being of its sons and daughters abroad.

COVID-19 has brought challenges to our consular work, yet the safety of overseas Chinese has remained our priority no matter what. Consular services have continued uninterrupted, so has our consular work in general.

In the early stage of the pandemic, we mobilized all resources possible to meet the pressing needs of Wuhan and the whole country, sourcing, buying and receiving all kinds of medical supplies from around the world to address the urgent demand at home.

When COVID-19 struck other parts of the world, we kept the safety and well-being of overseas Chinese citizens very much on our mind. We urged more attention from the governments of host countries to the hardships of Chinese nationals, and offered prompt support to those infected, including targeted telemedicine services. We overcame various difficulties to deliver more than 1.2 million health kits to overseas Chinese students, sent emergency medical supplies to overseas Chinese in 100-plus countries, and arranged over 350 special flights to bring home stranded Chinese nationals. Our consular protection hotline 12308 has operated 24/7 to provide dedicated services and assistance to overseas citizens, bringing the care and solicitude of the Party and the country to every one of them. Our diplomats abroad said this to their fellow countrymen and women in affected countries, "The embassy will always be here with you. We will get through this together".

With COVID-19 still ravaging the world, the risk of case import continues to rise and consular protection remains a formidable task. We in the diplomatic service will firmly implement the decisions of the CPC Central Committee and make solid efforts to prevent imported cases and protect and assist overseas Chinese citizens. We will press ahead against all difficulties to live up to the trust and fulfill the mission placed upon us.

Question: China and Russia have been supporting and helping each other since the outbreak of COVID-19. How would you describe the current China-Russia relations?

Wang Yi

In 2020, China-Russia relations have stood the test of a once-in-a-century pandemic and unprecedented global changes, and reached a historic high in all respects.

Intensive interactions between the two heads of state. President Xi Jinping and President Vladimir Putin have had five phone calls and exchanged correspondence on multiple occasions, providing the most important strategic guidance for the steady growth of the bilateral relations.

Mutual support between the two peoples. Russia was the first country to send medical and other supplies to China, and China was one of the strongest supporters of Russia's COVID-19 response efforts. The two countries have also worked closely on joint epidemic response and development of vaccines and drugs.

Growing practical cooperation despite challenges. The two countries have vigorously facilitated economic reopening, safeguarded the functioning of industrial and supply chains, and made steady progress in several major projects. The Year of Scientific and Technological Innovation was launched, and bilateral cooperation on the digital economy, e-commerce and other new business forms and models was advanced at a fast pace.

Closer coordination on international affairs. The year 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the victory of World War II and the founding of the UN. China and Russia have worked in concert to defend the victorious outcomes of World War II and uphold international fairness and justice. The two countries have extended mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests and stood side by side against power politics, which further underscores the global significance of China-Russia relations.

The year 2021 is a year of special importance for China-Russia relations, as both countries will enter a new development stage. In developing China-Russia strategic cooperation, we see no limit, no forbidden zone and no ceiling to how far this cooperation can go. Focusing on the central task of implementing the common understandings of the two Presidents, the two countries will use the opportunity of the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Good-neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation to renew their shared commitment to ever-lasting peace and win-win cooperation. Being each other's strategic anchor, diplomatic priority, development opportunity and global partner, the two countries will expand and deepen cooperation from a higher starting point. Together, China and Russia will continue to be the example of good-neighborly and friendly relations between major countries, add impetus to global recovery, and underpin global strategic stability.

Question: China-US relations are going through a period of difficulties rarely seen since the establishment of diplomatic ties.

This relationship has once again come to a major historical juncture. How do you see the future of this bilateral relationship?

Wang Yi

In recent years, China-US relations have run into unprecedented difficulties.

Fundamentally, it all comes down to the serious misconceptions of US policymakers about China. Some see China as the so-called biggest threat and their China policy based on this misperception is simply wrong. What has happened proves that the US attempt to suppress China and start a new Cold War has not just seriously harmed the interests of the two peoples, but also caused severe disruptions to the world. Such a policy will find no support and is doomed to fail.

China-US relations have come to a new crossroads, and a new window of hope is opening. We hope that the next US administration will return to a sensible approach, resume dialogue with China, restore normalcy to the bilateral relations and restart cooperation.

China's policy toward the United States is consistent and stable. We are ready to develop with the United States a relationship based on coordination, cooperation and stability.

China never meddles in the internal affairs of the United States and values peaceful co-existence and mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States. Likewise, the United States also needs to respect the social system and development path chosen by the Chinese people and respect their legitimate rights to pursue a better life.

We know that some in the United States are uneasy about China's rapid development. However, the best way to keep one's lead is through constant self-improvement, not by blocking others' development. We don't need a world where China becomes another United States. This is neither rational nor feasible. Rather, the United States should try to make itself a better country, and China will surely become its better self. We believe that as long as the United States can draw lessons from the past and work with China in the same direction, the two countries are capable of resolving differences through dialogue and expanding converging interests by cooperation. This will allow the two major countries to establish a model of coexistence that benefits both countries and the world, and open up new development prospects in line with the trend of history.

Question:

China and the EU marked the 45th anniversary of their diplomatic ties in 2020. Within Europe, there is a debate on maintaining strategic autonomy versus seeking closer ties with the United States.

What experience have China and the EU gained in growing their relations? How would you characterize the EU's role in the process toward a multi-polar world and the future of China-EU ties?

Wang Yi

As you mentioned, the year 2020 marked the 45th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between China and the EU. Throughout the years, our relationship with the EU has withstood the profound changes in the world. It has on the whole focused on dialogue, cooperation and mutual benefit, and demonstrated strong vitality by progressing with the times. For the two sides:

The most important experience is to stay committed to peaceful coexistence, open cooperation, multilateralism, and dialogue and consultation. The most important conclusion is that our cooperation and common understandings far outweigh competition and differences. China and the EU are comprehensive strategic partners, not systemic rivals. The most important mission is to jointly tackle global challenges, promote a multi-polar world, economic globalization and greater democracy in international relations, and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world.

In 2020, China and the EU made new progress in their relations despite COVID-19. China became the EU's largest trading partner for the first time. The two sides signed the agreement on geographical indications, and decided to establish two new high-level dialogue mechanisms on environment and climate and on digital cooperation, and build partnerships for green and digital cooperation.

President Xi Jinping and European leaders have jointly announced the conclusion of negotiations on a China-EU investment treaty, adding fresh, strong impetus to China-EU cooperation. It is also great news for the struggling global economy. This is a clear example of how, by working together in the spirit of mutual understanding, mutual accommodation and equal consultation, the two sides can open up broad prospects for China-EU cooperation.

In this volatile and changing world, China will remain a supporter of European integration, greater strategic autonomy of the EU, and a bigger role of the EU in international affairs. The multilateralism that our two sides advocate must be dedicated to unity and cooperation rather than group politics. It needs to transcend systemic difference rather than draw lines along ideology. China is prepared to enhance coordination with the EU to keep our relations on the right track.

Question:

The year 2021 marks the 30th anniversary of China-ASEAN dialogue relations. What hopes do you have for the future development of China-ASEAN relations?

Wang Yi

The ASEAN member states are China's friends and close neighbors. We are connected by mountains, rivers and seas, and we share close affinity. Since its launch, China-ASEAN cooperation has always been results-oriented, pioneering and responsive to the trend of the times. It has become the most successful and vibrant example of regional cooperation.

Over the years, China-ASEAN relations have created many "firsts".

China was the first major country to join the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and establish a strategic partnership with ASEAN, and the first major economy to form a free trade area with ASEAN. The two sides became each other's largest trading partners for the first time in 2020. We jointly pushed for the signing of RCEP, which gave birth to the world's most promising free trade area with the largest population and biggest economic aggregate. This is a historic breakthrough in China-ASEAN cooperation.

Facing the onslaught of COVID-19, China and ASEAN came to each other's aid and took the lead in joint COVID-19 response and cooperation on reopening the economy. We helped turn East Asia into an example in the global fight against the virus and an early bird in achieving economic recovery.

China and ASEAN will celebrate the 30th anniversary of their dialogue relations in 2021. We look forward to the new opportunities it will bring for enhancing China-ASEAN ties and stand ready to work with ASEAN to further enrich our strategic partnership and usher in a new era of peace, development and cooperation for the region.

■ First, we need to work together to defeat COVID-19. We must continue to step up collective response and cooperation on vaccines, upgrade our public health cooperation, and jointly set up a regional reserve of emergency medical supplies and a liaison mechanism for public health emergencies to strengthen crisis response capacities.

■ Second, we need to do our best to bolster regional economic recovery. Here is what we can do: expand the scope of "fast tracks" for travel and "green lanes" for cargo transportation in a well-thought-out way; work for an early entry into force of RCEP to deepen regional economic integration; and seize the opportunities for developing new forms and models of business and cultivate new growth drivers such as tech-innovation, e-commerce and smart cities.

■ Third, we need to stay committed to sustainable development. Further steps will be taken to implement the Strategic Partnership Vision 2030, with priority given to cooperation in poverty reduction, disaster prevention and relief, climate change and environmental protection. We also need to make the China-ASEAN Year of Sustainable Development Cooperation a success, promote people-to-people exchanges, and advance the building of a Partnership on Blue Economy.

■ The 30th anniversary is a milestone for China-ASEAN relations.

We believe that the relationship will demonstrate greater maturity and confidence in the years ahead, and together we will take more solid steps toward a China-ASEAN community with a shared future.

Question:

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2020. This year, it will have meetings in Senegal. What would you say to describe the current China-Africa relations?

Wang Yi

China is the biggest developing country, and Africa is home to the largest number of developing countries. With our shared identity as part of the developing world, China and Africa have the responsibility of advancing the interests of developing countries.

China and Africa have always shared weal and woe. This friendship emerged still stronger from the test of COVID-19 in 2020. President Xi Jinping and African leaders had a successful Extraordinary China-Africa Summit on Solidarity Against COVID-19, and the fine tradition of mutual assistance was further strengthened. China has sent medical teams, paired up Chinese and African hospitals, provided much-needed medical supplies, and worked with Africa on vaccines. The Africa CDC headquarters as an assistance project by China has just had its groundbreaking ceremony. It will stand as a historic witness of China-Africa solidarity in fighting the pandemic.

China and Africa have scaled up the implementation of follow-ups to the FOCAC Beijing Summit, with the health care initiative as a top priority. China has signed debt service suspension agreements with 12 African countries and provided waivers of matured interest-free loan for 15 African countries. China has suspended more debt service than any other G20 member.

Twenty years ago, FOCAC entered a new era of political mutual trust and all-round cooperation between China and Africa. Twenty years on, FOCAC has become a new model of friendship, cooperation and common development among developing countries. Together, we have drafted and implemented the 10 cooperation plans and the eight major initiatives. With China's help, over 6,000 kilometers of railways, 6,000 kilometers of roads, nearly 20 ports and over 80 large power plants have been built in Africa. Two-way trade has grown by 20-fold and China's direct investment in Africa 100-fold. We have expanded cooperation with Africa in new business forms like digital economy, smart city, clean energy and 5G, thus boosting high-quality development of Belt and Road cooperation between the two sides. FOCAC has become a propeller of Africa's leapfrogging development, a new symbol of South-South cooperation, and an example of China's conduct of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics.

In 2021, China and Africa will have FOCAC meetings in Senegal. In this context, China will work with Africa on the three priority areas of vaccine cooperation, economic recovery and transformative development to build new consensus on solidarity, break new ground for cooperation, and deliver new benefits to the people. China and Africa will stay good brothers supporting each other, good partners pursuing common development, and good comrades-in-arms standing together through thick and thin. I believe we will make new progress in building the China-Africa community with a shared future.

Question:

Security in places like the Middle East and Afghanistan is still a cause for concern to the international community.

The future of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) remains uncertain.

Would you elaborate on the role China has played in settling international hotspots and the efforts China has made in promoting peace and stability in relevant regions?

Wang Yi

Peace is an eternal aspiration of humankind. As a permanent member of the Security Council and a responsible major country, China has been exploring a distinctive Chinese way of resolving hotspot issues. We follow a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security for the world. We maintain that regional disputes should be addressed through dialogue and consultation. We uphold non-interference in internal affairs, which is a basic norm governing international relations. We speak for justice from an objective and sensible perspective. We seek solutions that suit the regional reality and accommodate the interests of all parties. We have done what we can to safeguard peace and tranquility in the world.

Over the past year, while firmly upholding the JCPOA, we have joined the international community in opposing moves inconsistent with Security Council resolutions. We have put forward a constructive proposal of building a new platform for multilateral dialogue for the Gulf region. We have given steadfast support to Palestine's just cause and firmly upheld the right direction of the "two-state solution". We have continued to advocate the phased and synchronized approach to achieve the two goals of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and establishment of a peace mechanism. We have facilitated consensus-building on Afghanistan's national reconciliation and that among regional players, and supported intra-Afghan talks. We have mediated between Bangladesh and Myanmar in addressing their disagreements, and assisted in maintaining overall stability in northern Myanmar.

Having been torn by wars and conflicts in the past, we Chinese know too well the scourge of turmoil and the value of peace. We hope that hotspot issues will be made to cool down and that peace talks will bring true peace. As for major countries that play a key role in various hotspot issues, we hope that instead of anyone's own selfish interests, they can bear in mind the real interests of regional countries and the well-being of all people in the world, and shoulder due responsibilities and play a constructive role in settling disputes.

Question:

Chinese diplomats have fought back at attempts of smearing, scapegoating and interference on international occasions, and fought several tough battles at multilateral fora. China's diplomacy is thus labeled by some and seen as more assertive. What is your view?

Wang Yi

China's diplomacy shoulders the important responsibilities of safeguarding national interests, defending national dignity, facilitating international cooperation, and promoting world peace. Under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee and with the full support of the Chinese people, we have worked all out to fulfill these responsibilities in an open and thorough way.

China's diplomacy is rooted in the 5,000-year Chinese civilization, and follows the proud tradition of independence and self-perfection fostered since the founding of the People's Republic. We pursue the path of peaceful development and an independent foreign policy of peace.

We advocate international law and basic norms of international relations in the conduct of state-to-state exchanges. We uphold equity, justice and other shared values of humanity in handling international affairs. China's diplomacy has acquired a distinct Chinese feature, style and vision.

We accord friends with hospitality and partners with cooperation. But we also have to stand our ground when dealing with those who are not so friendly. We are happy to take well-intentioned criticism and go with helpful suggestions. But we have to respond to defamations and attacks. And more important, we are obliged to speak up for justice when faced with power politics and bullying. This is the responsibility of China's diplomacy and the national character of the Chinese people.

Question

How has COVID-19 affected Belt and Road cooperation? What will China do to restart the cooperation and take it forward?

Wang Yi

COVID-19 has dealt a heavy blow to the world economy and brought challenges to Belt and Road cooperation. That said, instead of stalling altogether, cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has bucked the trend to make new progress. It has demonstrated a strong resilience.

In his important message to the High-Level Video Conference on Belt and Road International Cooperation held in June last year, President Xi Jinping proposed developing the Belt and Road into a model of cooperation, health, recovery and growth. This reflects the shared aspiration of the international community and charts the course for high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

The year 2020 witnessed BRI partners supporting each other and forging a "bond of solidarity" to control the coronavirus and pursue common development. The China-Europe Railway Express has completed more than 10,000 services, transporting more freight in the first 10 months of 2020 than the whole of 2019. Hailed as a "steel camel fleet", it has helped countries with their COVID-19 response. The Silk Road in the Air has enabled shipments of over 1,700 tons of medical

supplies from China, opening up a lifeline in the air. In the first three quarters of 2020, China's non-financial direct investment in countries along the Belt and Road reached 13 billion US dollars, an increase of nearly 30% year-on-year. Most BRI projects have continued uninterrupted and without layoffs, and a number of new projects have been launched as scheduled. This has brought much-needed warmth to this harsh winter in the world economy and contributed to the efforts of partner countries in fighting the coronavirus, stabilizing the economy, and protecting livelihoods.

Facts abound to show the strong vitality of the BRI. The pandemic has not shaken the commitment of participating countries. Instead, it has highlighted the role of Belt and Road cooperation in powering global development in a post-COVID era.

China is fostering a new development paradigm with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other. These efforts will not only boost the high-quality development of the Chinese economy but also provide stronger impetus, more opportunities and more effective pathways for Belt and Road cooperation.

China will work with all parties to deepen the synergy between the BRI and the development strategies of other countries, keeping in mind their needs for COVID-19 response and economic recovery. We believe that by bolstering connectivity and economic reopening and by tapping into the potential of new growth drivers such as health care, digital economy and green development, we will be able to achieve higher-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

Question

The year 2021 will mark the centenary of the CPC and the launch of the 14th Five-Year Plan. China will enter a new development stage and embark on a new journey. In this context, how will China's diplomatic work better serve the national development agenda? How do you envision China's diplomacy in 2021?

Wang Yi

The year 2021 will be of historic significance to China's national rejuvenation. We will celebrate the CPC's centenary and embark on a new journey of fully building a modern socialist country. The centenary is just the first chapter of the Party's great cause. We in the foreign service will rally closely around the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core and follow the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Diplomacy. We will continue to advance our major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, safeguard China's sovereignty, security and development interests, and focus our work on the following six areas:

We will make our best efforts to serve China's development strategies. While ensuring effective COVID-19 control, we will promote better integration of the domestic and international markets and greater complementarity between domestic and global resources. We will endeavor to create a favorable external environment for fostering a new development paradigm and implementing the 14th Five-Year Plan at home.

We will continue to build a new type of international relations. Guided by President Xi's personal involvement in diplomacy, we will work for steady progress in China's relations with major powers, cement solidarity and friendship with neighbors and other developing countries, and further deepen international and regional cooperation.

We will further upgrade opening-up and cooperation. We will advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, tap into the strength of China's enormous market and its potential of domestic demand, boost global recovery with our own growth, and share with the world China's "development dividends".

We will proactively engage in the reform of global governance. The year 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the restoration of China's lawful seat at the UN and the 20th anniversary of its accession to the WTO. We will continue to practice multilateralism, host a successful UN Biodiversity Conference, meet global challenges in partnership with others, and promote a more equitable and sound global governance system.

We will actively facilitate mutual understanding between countries. We will better communicate to the world the CPC's strong record of governance, our people's extraordinary journey toward the Chinese dream and China's commitment to peaceful development. We call on all countries to overcome differences, seek common development and embrace exchanges, mutual learning and harmony between civilizations.

We will continue to work for a community with a shared future for mankind. In this context, we will seek to realize a global community of health for all and a community with a shared future in the Asia-Pacific. We will uphold the shared values of humanity - peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, and work with all countries to build an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security and common prosperity.