

# NPC



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National People's Congress of China

庆祝全国人民代表大会成立70周年大会



**PEOPLE'S CONGRESS SYSTEM  
A PROVEN CORNERSTONE  
OF CHINESE DEMOCRACY**

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The third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee is presided over by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee in Beijing, capital of China. The plenary session was held from July 15 to 18, 2024. Wang Ye

# 中央委员会第三次全体会议





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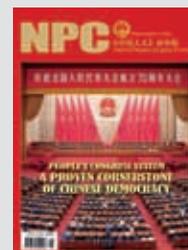
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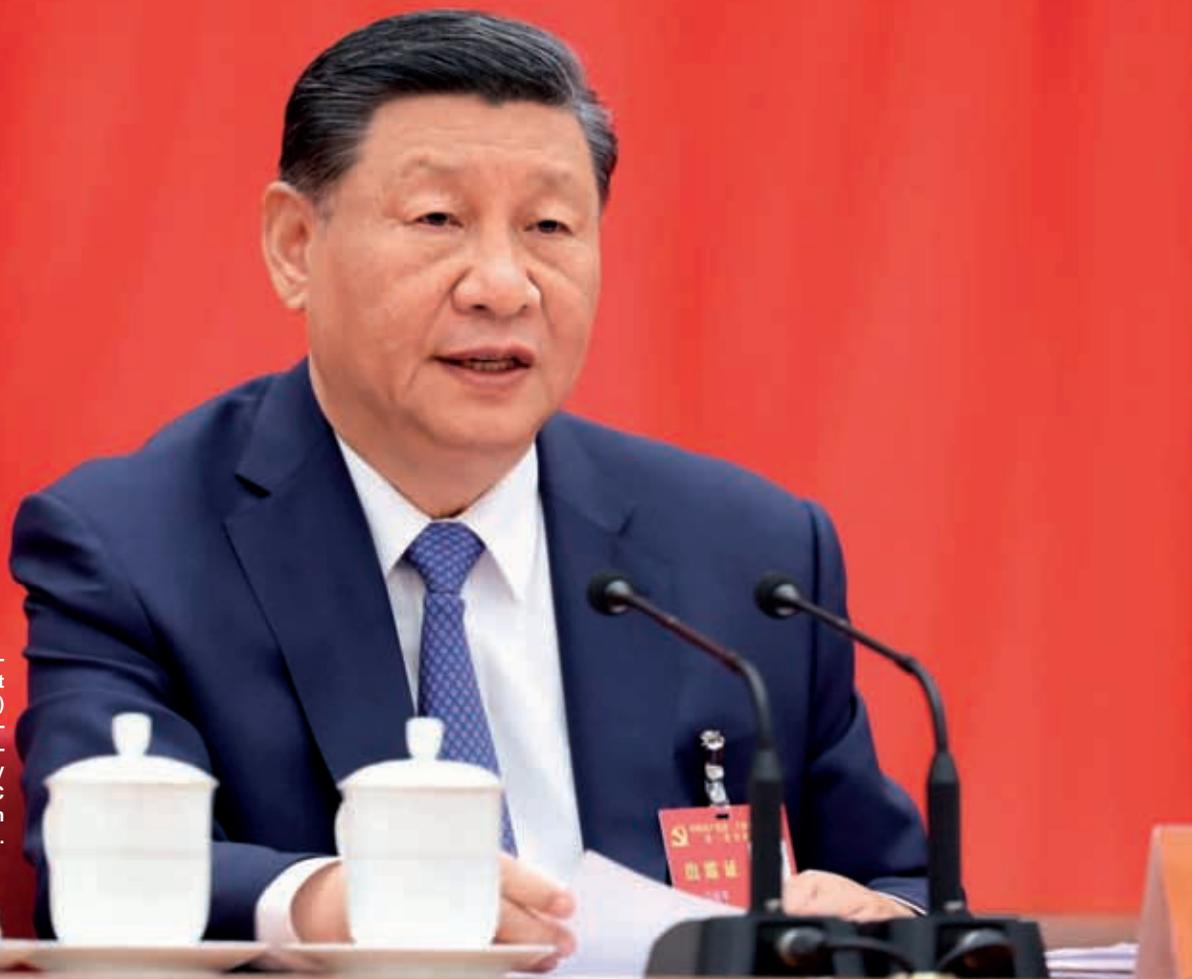
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**COVER:** A meeting is held to celebrate the 70th founding anniversary of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 14, 2024. *Zhai Jianlan*

# CPC Central Committee adopts resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, delivers an important address at the third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee in Beijing, capital of China.  
*Ju Peng*



**T**he 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) adopted a resolution on further deepening reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization at its third plenary session held from July 15 to 18.

The Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee presided over the meeting. General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping delivered important addresses, according to a communiqué released July 18.

At the session, the Central Committee heard and discussed a report on the work of the Political Bureau, presented by Xi on behalf of the Political Bureau, and considered and adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization. Xi delivered explanatory remarks on the draft version of the resolution.

The overall objectives of further deepening reform comprehensively are to continue improving and developing the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics and modernize China's system and capacity for governance, according to the statement.

“By 2035, we will have finished building a high-standard socialist market economy in all respects, further improved the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, generally modernized our system and capacity for governance, and basically realized socialist modernization,” it said.

All of this will lay a solid foundation for building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects by the middle of this century, it noted.

The reform tasks laid out in the resolution shall be completed by the time the People's Republic of China celebrates its 80th founding anniversary in 2029, said the communiqué.

The Central Committee made systematic plans for further deepening reform comprehensively, it detailed.

In building a high-standard socialist market economy, the role of the market must be better leveraged, a fairer and more dynamic market environment must be fostered and resource allocation should be made as efficient and productive as possible. Restrictions on the market will be lifted while effective regulation will be ensured to better maintain order in the market and remedy market failures, the statement continued.

In promoting high-quality development, the communiqué urged deepening supply-side structural reform, improving incentive and constraint mechanisms for promoting high-quality development, and creating new drivers and strengths for realizing growth.

“We will improve the institutions and mechanisms for fostering new quality productive forces in line with local conditions, promoting full integration between the real economy and the digital economy, developing the service sector, modernizing infrastructure and enhancing the resilience and security of industrial and supply chains,” it stated.

In supporting all-around innovation, the Party will deepen comprehensive reform in education, structural scientific and technological reform, and institutional reforms for talent development.

In improving macroeconomic governance, the com-

munique urged the pursuit of coordinated reforms in the fiscal, tax, financial and other major sectors, as well as enhancing the consistency of macro policy orientation, with the national strategic planning system and policy coordination mechanisms to be improved.

On integrated urban and rural development, the Party will promote equal exchanges and two-way flows of production factors between the cities and the countryside, so as to narrow the disparities between the two and promote their common prosperity and development, according to the communiqué. Reform of the land system will also be deepened.

Describing opening up as a “defining feature of Chinese modernization,” the statement said the Party will “steadily expand institutional opening up, deepen the foreign trade structural reform, further reform the management systems for inward and outward investment, improve planning for regional opening up and refine the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.”

On developing whole-process people's democracy, it said, “We must firmly stay on the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics and uphold and

**We must firmly stay on the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics and uphold and improve our country's foundational, basic and important political systems.**

improve our country's foundational, basic and important political systems.”

On the rule of law, efforts must be made to ensure full implementation of the Constitution and uphold its authority; coordinate reforms to promote sound legislation, law enforcement, administration of justice and observance of the law; and improve the mechanisms for ensuring that all are equal before the law.

The communiqué urged boosting cultural confidence and working to develop advanced socialist culture, promote revolutionary culture and carry forward the fine traditional Chinese culture.

In ensuring and enhancing the people's wellbeing, the Party will improve the income distribution system, the employment-first policy and the social security system; it will further reform the medical and healthcare systems, and improve the systems for facilitating population development and providing related services.

On ecological conservation, the communiqué said, “We must improve ecological conservation systems; take a coordinated approach to carbon cutting, pollution reduction, green development and economic growth; actively respond to climate change; and move faster to improve the systems

and mechanisms for applying the principle of ‘green is gold.’”

On national security, it noted that the Party will apply a holistic approach to national security, improve the institutions and mechanisms for safeguarding national security, and ensure that high-quality development and greater security reinforce each other, so as to effectively safeguard the country’s stability and security over the long term.

On national defense, the communique urged maintaining the Party’s absolute leadership over the people’s armed forces and fully implementing the strategy of strengthening the military through reform in order to provide a strong guarantee for realizing the goals for the centenary of the People’s Liberation Army in 2027 and achieving basic modernization of national defense and the armed forces.

In improving the Party’s leadership, it said, “We must acquire a deep understanding of the decisive significance of establishing Comrade Xi Jinping’s core position on the Party Central Committee and in the Party as a whole, and the guiding role of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.”

The communique stressed that Chinese modernization is the modernization of peaceful development. “In foreign relations, China remains firmly committed to pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace and is dedicated to promoting a human community with a shared future.”

## **China remains firmly committed to pursuing an independent foreign policy of peace and is dedicated to promoting a human community with a shared future.**

Studying and implementing the guiding principles from the session represent a major political task for the entire Party and nation, both at the present and for some time to come, according to the statement.

The session conducted an analysis of the present situation and the tasks the Party faces, urging firm commitment to accomplishing the goals for this year’s economic and social development.

Both development and security must be ensured, with various measures to be implemented for preventing and defusing risks in real estate, local government debt, small and medium-sized financial institutions, and other key areas.

According to the communique, the session decided to accept Comrade Qin Gang’s resignation from the Central Committee, and confirmed the Political Bureau’s earlier decision to expel Li Shangfu, Li Yuchao and Sun Jinming from the Party.

A total of 199 members and 165 alternate members of the Central Committee attended the session. (Xinhua) ■

# **China earnest, steadfast in further deepening reforms**

**A**s the world’s second-largest economy arrives at a new critical juncture of reform, the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) demonstrates that China means business in further deepening reforms comprehensively.

The resolution adopted at the landmark meeting, held from July 15 to 18, unveiled more than 300 reform measures in various fields such as economy, politics, culture, society, ecological civilization and Party building, covering all aspects of advancing Chinese modernization.

Drawing on a vast pool of wisdom, the document has clear priorities, concrete policies and feasible measures, charting the course for China’s future reform and opening up. It sends a strong signal that China is earnest and steadfast in reform and opening up. The resolution serves as an overall plan and call to action for comprehensively advancing broader and deeper reform on the new journey in the new era.

The new round of reforms will be complex and challenging, as they aim to tackle the major institutional problems that are holding back China’s modernization. For example, the market system still needs improvement; the dependency on foreign countries for key and core technologies has not fundamentally changed; wide gaps persist in development and income distribution between urban and rural areas and between regions.

By clarifying why, where and how to carry out reform on the new journey, the document guides the reforms in a pragmatic way, combining both problem-oriented and goal-oriented approaches.

The more complex the reform agenda, the greater the demand for precise orientation, careful deployment and solid implementation. It makes the third plenary and the resolution adopted so much more significant. The new reform measures are distinctly targeted, aiming to address the most pressing issues with great intensity and high quality.

In building a high-standard socialist market economy, the resolution reaffirms that the market will play the decisive role in resource allocation and that the government will better fulfill its role. It also underscores that “the role of the market must be better leveraged, with a fairer and more dynamic market environment to be fostered and resource allocation to be made as efficient and productive as possible.”



Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang and Li Xi attend the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee in Beijing, capital of China. *Xie Huanchi*

## The more complex the reform agenda, the greater the demand for precise orientation, careful deployment and solid implementation.

“Restrictions on the market will be lifted while effective regulation will be ensured to better maintain order in the market and remedy market failures,” it said. This indicates that the policies aim to strike a balance between efficiency and fairness.

On reforming the fiscal and tax system, the resolution says the country will place more fiscal resources at the disposal of local governments, expand the sources of tax revenue at the local level and grant greater authority for tax management to local governments as appropriate.

Describing opening up as a “defining feature of Chinese modernization,” the resolution reaffirms that China will “steadily expand institutional opening up, deepen the foreign trade structural reform, further reform the management systems for inward and outward investment, improve planning for regional opening up, and refine the mechanisms for high-quality cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.”

“New quality productive forces” is a buzzword in China’s

economy. The resolution states, “We will improve the institutions and mechanisms for fostering new quality productive forces in line with local conditions, for promoting full integration between the real economy and the digital economy, for developing the service sector, for modernizing infrastructure, and for enhancing the resilience and security of industrial and supply chains.”

Meanwhile, to boost innovation, China will deepen comprehensive reform in education, structural scientific and technological reform, and institutional reforms for talent development. It will refine the mechanisms to push for breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields.

Fulfilling these reform tasks will determine China’s future development. The sustainable growth of China hinges on a range of factors, including domestic demand and technological innovation.

China’s leadership has attached great importance to the methodology behind deepening reform. A more systematic, across-the-board and coordinated approach will ensure that reform measures in all sectors could reinforce each other, with their “chemistry” fully released. Thus, the reform agenda could gain steam.

The message is clear: Reform and opening up is the key to solving problems in development and addressing risks and challenges on the road ahead. As the CPC responds to people’s needs, the success of reform will not only benefit China, but also contribute to the prosperity of the world. (Xinhua) ■

# Xi addresses conference marking 70th anniversary of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence



President Xi Jinping attends the conference marking the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and delivers an important speech titled “Carrying Forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind” at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, June 28, 2024. *Zhang Ling*

Chinese President Xi Jinping attended and delivered an important speech at the Conference Marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence on June 28 in Beijing.

Xi said 70 years ago, national independence and liberation movements swept across the globe, and the colonial system around the world crumbled and collapsed. At the same time, the world was overshadowed by the dark clouds of the Cold War and menaced by the rampant clamors that “might is right.” Newly independent countries aspired to safeguard their sovereignty and grow their national economy.

During that period of time, the Chinese leadership specified the Five Principles in their entirety for the first time, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. They included the Five Principles in the China-India and China-Myanmar joint statements, which jointly called for making them basic norms for state-to-state relations, Xi said.

“Over the past 70 years, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have transcended time and space and overcome estrangement, showing robust resilience and everlasting relevance. They have become open, inclusive, and universally applicable basic norms for international relations and fundamental principles of international law,” Xi said.

He added that they have set a historic benchmark for international relations and international rule of law, served as the prime guidance for the establishment and development of relations between countries with different social systems, been a powerful rallying force behind the efforts of developing countries to pursue cooperation and self-strength through unity, contributed historic wisdom to the reform and improvement of the international order, and made indelible historic contributions to the cause of human progress.

Xi stressed that today, challenged by the historic question of “what kind of world to build and how to build it,” China has answered the call of the times by proposing a community with a shared future for mankind.

Noting that the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind carries forward the same spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Xi said it is the most effective move to sustain, promote and upgrade the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence in the new circumstances.

“At this historic moment when mankind have to choose between peace and war, prosperity and recession, unity and confrontation, we must champion more than ever the essence of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and we must always strive tirelessly for the lofty goal of building a community with a shared future for mankind,” he said.

Xi called on the world to uphold the principle of sovereign equality, cement the foundation of mutual respect, turn the vision for peace and security into reality, unite all forces to achieve prosperity, commit to fairness and justice, and embrace an open and inclusive mindset.

Of all the forces in the world, the Global South stands out with a strong momentum, playing a vital role in promoting human progress, Xi said, adding that standing at a new his-

torical starting point, the Global South should be more open and more inclusive, and join hands together to take the lead in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

He called on the Global South to be the staunch force for peace, the core driving force for open development, the construction team of global governance, and the advocates for exchange among civilizations.

To better support Global South cooperation, Xi announced that China will establish a Global South research center, provide 1,000 scholarships under the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Scholarship of Excellence and 100,000 training opportunities to Global South countries in the coming five years, and also launch a Global South youth leaders program.

Noting that the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have been written into China’s Constitution long before, and are the bedrock of China’s independent foreign policy of peace, Xi said that China will continue to champion the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, work with all countries to build a community with a shared future for mankind, and make new and greater contributions to safeguarding world peace and promoting common development.

Around 600 people including former leaders of Viet Nam, Myanmar and other countries, representatives of international and regional organizations, diplomatic envoys from more than 100 countries, Chinese and foreign experts and scholars, and media and business representatives attended the conference. (Xinhua) ■

## Xi Quotes

“ China’s resolve to promote common development across the world will not change.

Every increase of China’s strength is an increase of the prospects of world peace.

World affairs should be handled through extensive consultation, not dictated by those with more muscles.

In the era of economic globalization, what is needed is not gaps of division but bridges of communication, not iron curtains of confrontation but highways of cooperation.

Standing at a new historical starting point, the Global South should be more open and more inclusive, and join hands together to take the lead in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

“Small yard with high fences”, decoupling, and severing industrial and supply chains simply run counter to the tide of history. ”

**Xi Jinping**

Address at the Conference Marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence  
June 28, 2024



Chinese President Xi Jinping attends a group photo session during a welcome banquet held by Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev ahead of the expanded meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), or SCO+, in Astana, Kazakhstan, July 4, 2024. Xi attended the SCO+ meeting and delivered an important speech titled “Joining Hands to Build a More Beautiful Home of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. *Ju Peng*

# Joining hands to build a more beautiful home of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

Statement by H.E. Xi Jinping  
President of the People’s Republic of China  
At the “Shanghai Cooperation Organization Plus” Meeting in Astana

Astana, July 4, 2024

Your Excellency President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,  
Your Excellency President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev,  
Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to be with you in beautiful Astana. I would like to thank President Tokayev for the warm hospitality and thoughtful arrangements. Kazakhstan has

done an excellent job as President of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) over the past year, and the SCO has made new progress.

As a Chinese saying goes, “No mountain or ocean can distance people who have shared aspirations.” Today, we get together for our first “SCO Plus” Meeting with good



friends and new partners in the same room, to hold important discussions. This shows that under the new circumstances of the new era, the vision of our organization is widely popular and that SCO member states have friends across the world.

At present, changes of historical significance across the world during our times are unfolding in ways like never before. The international landscape is undergoing rapid transformation. A new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation is advancing fast. As human civilization marches forward in big strides, factors of insecurity, instability and uncertainty are evidently increasing.

To cope with this major transformation, the key is to have the wisdom to see the changes, the ability to deal with the changes, and the courage to make changes. We need to bear in mind that we live in a community with a shared future and to always uphold the Shanghai Spirit. We need to stay firmly on the development paths that suit our respective national conditions and regional realities, and jointly build a more promising home of the SCO so that our peoples can live a peaceful, successful and happy life. To that end, I wish to propose the following.

First, we should build a common home of solidarity and mutual trust. A few days ago, China held the Conference Marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles

**To cope with this major transformation, the key is to have the wisdom to see the changes, the ability to deal with the changes, and the courage to make changes.**

of Peaceful Coexistence. The Shanghai Spirit is consistent with the essence of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. It is the shared value of our organization, and should be all the more cherished and faithfully observed at all times.

We need to respect the development path of respective, independent choosing and support each other in safeguarding core interests. We need to bridge our differences, build more consensus and enhance mutual trust through strategic communication. China proposes that SCO member states do more to share their experience on governance and hold the SCO Political Parties Forum at an appropriate time.

Second, we should build a common home of peace and tranquility. Security is a prerequisite for national development and safety is the lifeline to the happiness of the people. No matter how the international landscape changes, our organization must hold the bottom line of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security. Real security is premised on the security of all countries.

We need to have a complete set of measures under the security cooperation mechanisms, because more lines of defense will give us more protection. The SCO should move faster to build a universal center and its branches to address the challenges and threats to the security of SCO member states and the Anti-Drug Center. It should strengthen intelligence sharing and conduct joint operations to jointly safeguard security in our part of the world. As the current chair of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure, China will do what it can to ensure the success of the Interaction-2024 joint counterterrorism exercise and other events.

Afghanistan is indispensable for the security in the region. We need to make best use of the mechanism of coordination and cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbors and other platforms to increase humanitarian support to Afghanistan, encourage Afghanistan to establish a broad-based and inclusive political structure, and embark on a path of peace and reconstruction.

Third, we should build a common home of prosperity and development. Modernization is the shared goal of all countries in the SCO. China proposes that 2025 be designated as the SCO Year of Sustainable Development so as to help us focus on fostering new forces for growth. China is ready to work with all parties to fully implement the eight major steps under high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. We will promote regional cooperation through platforms such as the demonstration base for agricultural technology exchange and training, the local economic and trade cooperation demonstration area, and the ecology and environment innovation base. We will also expand local currency settlement and actively promote the establishment of an

SCO financing platform.

China welcomes all parties to use the Beidou Satellite Navigation System and participate in the development of the International Lunar Research Station. China proposes establishing an SCO digital education alliance and is willing to provide at least 1,000 training opportunities on digital technology to fellow SCO countries in the next three years. We should also modernize the governance system of our organization, improve its operation mechanisms and boost its effectiveness.

Fourth, we should build a common home of good-neighborliness and friendship. Dialogue among civilizations is ever more important for world peace and harmony. China is ready to provide quality platforms for countries in the SCO to engage in such dialogues. It will give full play to the role of non-official organizations such as the SCO Committee on Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. It will continue to organize events under signature programs such as the Forum on Traditional Medicine, the Forum on People-to-People Friendship, the Youth Campus and the Youth Development Forum. It will hold a green development forum and a women's forum in Qingdao, the tourism and cultural capital of the SCO. We welcome all parties to take an active part in these events.

In the next five years, China will host 1,000 young people from SCO countries for exchange opportunities in China. I believe that with our joint efforts, there will be more robust interactions and mutual learning among regional countries, as well as deeper understanding and friendship among our peoples.

Fifth, we should build a common home of fairness and justice. The current SCO Summit has issued the Astana Declaration; the SCO initiative on world unity for justice, harmony and development; and the statement on the principles of good-neighborliness, trust and partnership. It is a strong message of the new era, one that calls for solidarity, cooperation and justice rather than division, confrontation and hegemonism.

We should jointly advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, practice true multilateralism and make global governance more just and equitable. The SCO should make its important contribution to eliminating the deficits in peace, development, security and governance.

Colleagues,

A Chinese adage reads, "Victory is ensured when people pool their strength together; success is secured when people put their heads together." The SCO owes its success to solidarity and cooperation throughout the years. This is also naturally the inevitable way for us to respond to the changing world and open new horizons on the new journey ahead.

China will take the rotating presidency after the Astana Summit. We will work with SCO partners in the spirit of solidarity and cooperation, and join hands with more countries and international organizations that identify with the Shanghai Spirit to strive for common progress and foster brighter prospects for a community with a shared future for humanity.

Thank you. (Xinhua) ■

## Xi proposes partnership actions to jointly advance modernization with Africa

China and Africa have been more closely bonded in their pursuit of modernization as Chinese President Xi Jinping announced on September 5 an upgrade of China-Africa relations and unveiled 10 partnership actions.

In his keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), Xi proposed that bilateral relations between China and all African countries having diplomatic ties with China be elevated to the level of strategic relations.

He also proposed that the overall characterization of China-Africa relations be elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era.

### Modernization vision for Global South

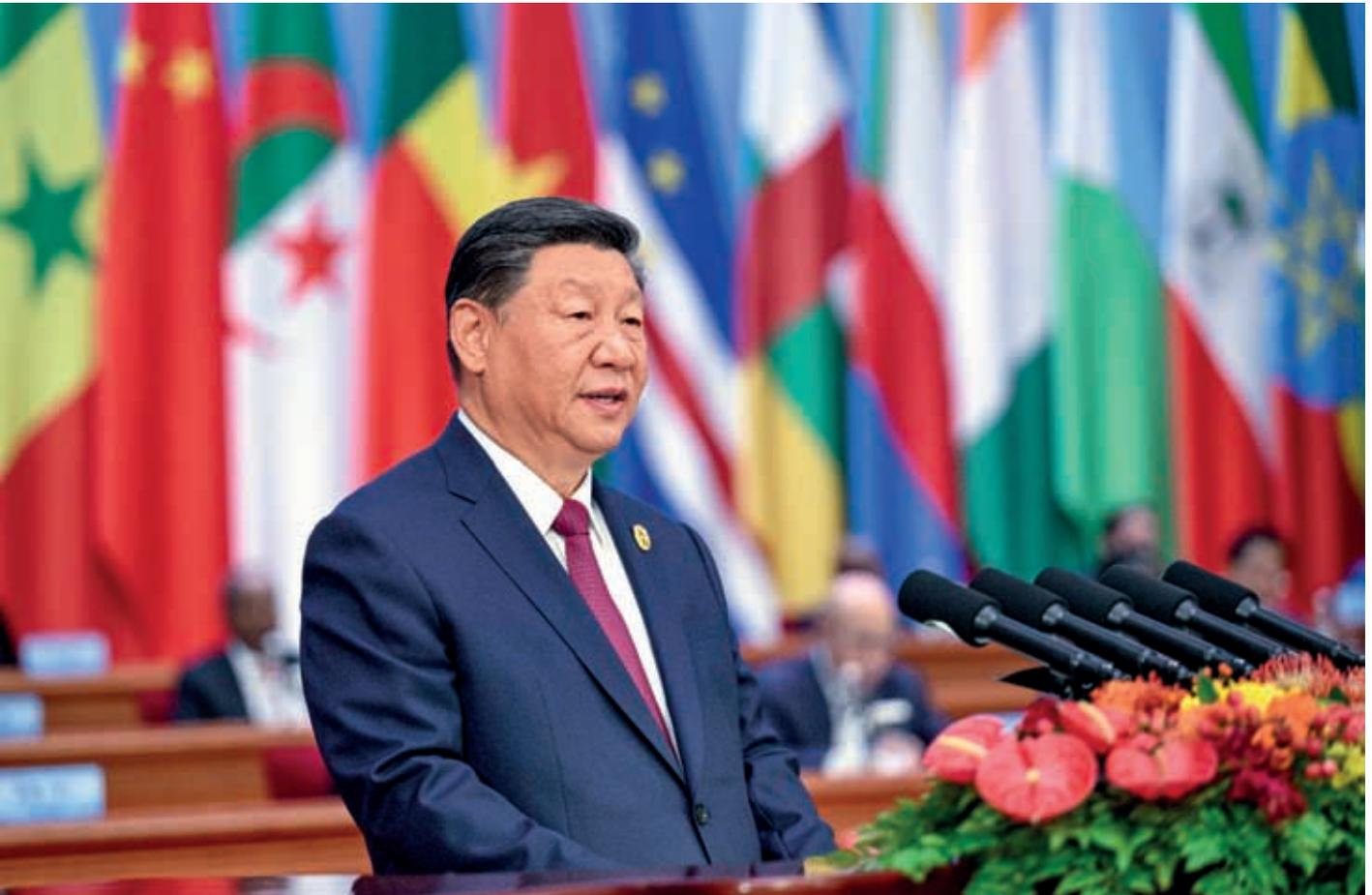
Xi underlined modernization as "an inalienable right of all countries" in his speech, saying there will be no global modernization without the modernization of China and Africa.

Xi said that the joint pursuit of modernization by China and Africa will set off a wave of modernization in the Global South and open a new chapter for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

He stressed jointly advancing modernization that is just and equitable, is open and win-win, puts the people first, features diversity and inclusiveness, is eco-friendly, and is underpinned by peace and security.

Xi's remarks were well received by the audience. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasized the need for China and Africa to work in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration.

"China has a long history of friendship and solidarity with the people of Africa over many centuries. And we thank China for continuing to expand and develop this spirit of cooperation and collaboration with our continent," he said.



Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a keynote speech titled “Joining Hands to Advance Modernization and Build a Community with a Shared Future” while attending the opening ceremony of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 5, 2024. *Li Xueren*

## **Xi underlined modernization as an inalienable right of all countries and there will be no global modernization without the modernization of China and Africa.**

United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres said China’s partnerships with the African continent are a main pillar of South-South cooperation.

“China’s remarkable rapid development, including eradicating poverty, provides a wealth of experience and expertise. Africa can maximize the potential of China’s support in areas from trade to finance and technology,” said Guterres.

### **Concrete partnership actions**

To materialize the modernization vision, Xi proposed 10 partnership actions to be implemented in the next three years, which cover areas of mutual learning among civilizations, trade, industrial chain cooperation, connectivity, de-

velopment cooperation, health, agriculture and livelihoods, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, green development and common security.

For mutual learning among civilizations, Xi said China stands ready to work with Africa to build a platform for governance experience sharing, a China-Africa knowledge network for development, and 25 centers on China and Africa studies. China will invite 1,000 members of African political parties to China to deepen exchanges of experience in party and state governance.

For trade, Xi said China will voluntarily and unilaterally open its market wider and has decided to give all the least developed countries having diplomatic relations with China, including 33 countries in Africa, zero-tariff treatment for 100 percent tariff lines. This has made China the first major developing country and the first major economy to take such a step, which will help turn China’s big market into Africa’s big opportunity.

To strengthen industrial chain cooperation, China is willing to push forward the Pilot Zone for In-depth China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation, and launch an empowerment program for African small and medium-sized enterprises. A China-Africa digital technology cooperation center will be jointly built, and 20 digital demonstration projects

will be initiated to embrace the latest round of technological revolution and industrial transformation, Xi said.

In terms of partnership action for connectivity, China plans to carry out 30 infrastructure connectivity projects in Africa and promote together high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, he said.

As for development cooperation, China is ready to release a joint statement on deepening cooperation within the framework of the Global Development Initiative with Africa, and implement 1,000 “small and beautiful” livelihood projects, said Xi.

Regarding the partnership action for health, Xi said China is ready to work with Africa to establish a hospital alliance and joint medical centers, send 2,000 medical personnel to Africa, and launch 20 programs of health facilities and malaria treatment.

To improve agriculture and livelihoods, China will provide Africa with 1 billion yuan (about 140 million U.S. dollars) in emergency food aid, send 500 agricultural experts, and establish a China-Africa agricultural innovation alli-

## The joint pursuit of modernization by China and Africa will open a new chapter for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

ance. Efforts will be made to encourage two-way investment for new business operations by Chinese and African companies, enable Africa to retain added value, and create at least 1 million jobs for Africa.

In terms of people-to-people exchanges, China will establish an engineering technology academy and build 10 Luban Workshops with Africa. About 60,000 training opportunities will be provided to the African people, mainly for women and young people, Xi said.

As for green development, China is ready to launch 30 clean energy projects in Africa, create a China-Africa forum on peaceful use of nuclear technology, establish 30 joint laboratories, and collaborate on satellite remote sensing and lunar and deep-space exploration.

To ensure common security, China is willing to build with Africa a partnership for implementing the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and make it a fine example of the GSI cooperation. It will also give Africa 1 billion yuan of grants in military assistance, Xi said.

To implement the 10 partnership actions, the Chinese government will provide 360 billion yuan (50 billion U.S. dollars) of financial support through the next three years, he said.

A declaration on jointly building an all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era and an action plan of the FOCAC for the next three years were adopted at the summit on September 5.

These new measures announced by President Xi are further proof of his constant determination to raise China-Africa cooperation to a higher level, said Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye. (Xinhua) ■

# Xi says China to continue to support NPC in deepening exchanges with IPU

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on August 20 that China will, as always, support the National People's Congress (NPC) in deepening exchanges and cooperation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Xi made the remarks while meeting with foreign parliamentary leaders attending the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the NPC's affiliation to the IPU, as well as the 2024 interregional seminar on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for parliaments of developing countries in Beijing.

Xi welcomed the speakers' visit to China, noting that they come from countries on different continents. “We are all members of the Global South,” he said.

Despite different national conditions, China and the countries are all good brothers and good partners with a shared vision, Xi added.

Noting that the current global landscape is rapidly evolving, Xi said China is willing to work with other countries to advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and an inclusive economic globalization that benefits all, promote the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and build Earth into a harmonious family.

Exchanges between legislative bodies are an important part of state-to-state relations, Xi stressed, adding that legislative bodies should and are capable of playing an active role in forming state-to-state relations based on equality and mutual trust, expanding mutually beneficial cooperation for development, promoting open and inclusive exchanges and mutual learning, advancing global governance featuring fairness and equity, and making unique contributions to the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

Xi briefed the foreign parliamentary leaders on the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, which was held in mid-July.

He stressed that China's unswerving commitment to high-level opening up will inject new momentum into the development of the world economy, provide new opportunities for deepening mutually beneficial cooperation, and open up new prospects for the common development of



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with foreign parliamentary leaders attending the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of China's National People's Congress' affiliation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as the 2024 interregional seminar on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals for parliaments of developing countries, at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Aug. 20, 2024. *Liu Weibing*

developing countries.

China is ready to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with the legislative bodies of other countries to jointly explore modernization paths suited to their own national conditions, Xi added.

He described the adherence to the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics under the leadership of the CPC and the commitment to developing whole-process people's democracy as "major experience of China in achieving remarkable progress in governance."

The true essence of people's democracy lies in the principle that matters should be discussed openly, with collective issues deliberated by the public to accommodate aspirations and demands of the whole society, Xi noted.

Whole-process people's democracy not only has a complete set of institutional procedures, but also involves comprehensive participation and practices, making it extensive, authentic and effective, he said.

China will, as always, support the NPC in deepening exchanges and cooperation with the IPU, Xi stressed.

He added that on the basis of mutual respect for each other's development paths and institutional models, efforts should be made to strengthen the exchange of legislative and governance experience, jointly enhance the capacity to perform duties and foster a favorable legal environment and a solid foundation of public opinion for deepening friendly cooperation among the Global South.

Tulia Ackson, IPU president and Tanzania's National

Assembly speaker, Peter Katjavivi, Namibia's National Assembly speaker, and Marinus Bee, chairman of Suriname's National Assembly, addressed the meeting on behalf of the foreign speakers.

They said the IPU has maintained long-term friendly and close cooperation with the NPC of China, and thanked the Chinese side for its commitment to promoting unity, mutual trust, friendship and cooperation among parliaments of all countries, as well as its contribution to the development of various undertakings of the IPU and the implementation of the SDGs.

As the largest developing country in the world, China has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and made remarkable achievements in development, setting an example and providing important opportunities for other developing countries, they said.

The IPU appreciates China's stance of upholding fairness and justice in international affairs, advocacy of equality for all countries regardless of size, and significant contributions to world peace, stability and common development, they said.

All parties expressed appreciation for the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilizations Initiative proposed by China, pledging commitment to strengthening friendly partnerships, adhering to the one-China principle and jointly safeguarding multilateralism through close cooperation with China. (Xinhua) ■

# Xi urges continuous efforts to run people's congresses to good effect





Xi Jinping, Li Qiang, Zhao Leji, Wang Huning, Cai Qi, Ding Xuexiang, Li Xi and Han Zheng attend a meeting to celebrate the 70th founding anniversary of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 14, 2024. *Ju Peng*

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) held a meeting at the Great Hall of the People on the morning of September 14 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the NPC. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, attended the meeting and delivered an important speech. He stressed the need to further firm up confidence in the path, theory, system and culture, develop whole-process people's democracy, and continuously uphold, improve and run the system of people's congresses to good effect to provide a solid institutional guarantee for the Party and the people to achieve their goals on the new journey in the new era.

The meeting was presided over by Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the NPC Standing Committee.

The meeting commenced amidst the national anthem. Xi delivered an important speech in which he pointed out that the system of people's congresses is the result of the arduous exploration and long-term struggles of the Chinese people under the CPC leadership. It is an entirely new political system that has grown from the Chinese soil and a great invention in the evolution of political institutions. The establishment of this system marked a great transformation in China's political system, signifying a great shift from a power structure where the power was concentrated in the hands of a few while the majority faced oppression and exploitation, to one that is led by the Party and empowers the people to govern the country as its masters.

Xi emphasized that over the past 70 years, the system of people's congresses has, under the Party's leadership, effectively ensured that our country continues to advance along the socialist path. It has demonstrated significant political advantages in guaranteeing that the Party leads the people in governing the country according to law, ensuring that the people are the masters of the country, maintaining political life that is both vibrant and orderly, promoting the rule of law in all aspects of national governance, and safeguarding long-term stability and peace. This system has provided an important institutional guarantee for creating miracles of rapid economic development and long-term social stability. Practice has proven that the people's congress system is a sound system that accords with China's national conditions and realities, embodies the nature of socialist countries, and effectively rallies the strength of all Chinese people to advance Chinese modernization.

Xi pointed out that since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, our Party has stood at a new historical juncture, gained a deep understanding of the new changes to the principal contradictions in Chinese society, actively responded to the people's new demands and aspirations for democracy and rule of law, and improved the organizational and working systems of people's congresses, making historic achievements in its work. We adhere to adapting the basic tenets of Marxism to China's specific realities and fine traditional Chinese culture, deeply grasp the laws governing the development of socialist democracy, and continuously promote theoretical and practical innovations in the system of people's congresses. Noting that the system of people's congresses is an important institution-

al vehicle for realizing whole-process people's democracy in China, Xi said it is imperative to uphold the CPC's leadership, adhere to the use of a system of institutions to ensure that the people run the country, exercise law-based governance on all fronts, uphold democratic centralism, and stick to the path of socialist political advancement with Chinese characteristics. Efforts must be made to modernize China's system and capacity for governance, give full play to the role of deputies to people's congresses, strengthen the self-improvement efforts of people's congresses at various levels to uphold their four-fold role as political, working, representative institutions, and institutions of state power. This series of new concepts, ideas and requirements form the Party's important thoughts on upholding and improving the system of people's congresses, providing fundamental guidance for the high-quality development of people's congresses in the new era, Xi said.

Xi emphasized the need to give full play to the role of people's congresses in ensuring full and effective implementation of the Constitution and laws. People's congresses at all levels and their standing committees must fully perform their functions, firmly safeguard the unity, dignity, and authority of the country's legal system, ensure effective implementation of the Constitution and laws, and make sure that all state organs fulfill their duties and carry out their work within the scope permitted by the Constitution and laws.

It is important that people's congresses play a leading role in legislative work, Xi said. He urges efforts to improve the legislative framework featuring guidance from Party committees, the leading role played by people's congresses, support from the government, and participation by all parties. Efforts should be made to step up legislation in key, emerging, and foreign-related fields, improve the quality of legislation, and continuously improve the socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics. He also urged efforts to accelerate the improvement of a legal system featuring equal rights, equal opportunities and fair rules for all to ensure that citizens fully enjoy their rights.

Xi emphasized the need to give full play to the key role of the oversight by people's congresses in the Party and state supervision systems. It is imperative to improve the system through which people's congresses oversee the government, the supervisory commissions, the people's courts and the people's procuratorates. Xi urged people's congresses to strengthen oversight of the implementation of the Constitution and laws, and intensify the review and oversight of government budgets and final accounts and the oversight over the management of state-owned assets and government debts. People's congresses should work to promote the implementation of the CPC Central Committee's decisions and plans, and ensure that all state organs exercise their powers by law and that the legitimate rights and interests of the people are safeguarded and realized. Administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and procuratorial organs at various levels should readily accept oversight from people's congresses and effectively fulfill their respective supervisory duties, he said.

Xi pointed out that people's congresses should play an exemplary role in maintaining close ties with the people. All state organs and their employees must foster a strong sense of service to the people, put the people above all else, and maintain close ties with them. Deputies to people's congresses shoulder the honorable duties entrusted to them by the people, Xi noted, urging them to faithfully represent the interests and will of the people, and serve as the bridge that links the Party and the state with the people. He stressed the need for all state organs to provide support for the deputies to the people's congresses to perform their duties in accordance with the law, improve the systems and mechanisms for contact with deputies, and ensure that deputies reach out to the public on a greater variety of issues and in more diversified ways.

Xi emphasized that party committees at all levels should strengthen their overall leadership over the work of the people's congresses, and support the people's congresses and their standing committees in exercising their powers and carrying out their work in accordance with the law. The leading Party members groups of the standing committees of the people's congresses at all levels should always adhere to the centralized and unified leadership of the Party Central Committee, fulfill their main responsibilities for comprehensively and strictly governing the Party, and strengthen the political, ideological, organizational, work style, and disciplinary construction of the people's congresses in line with the requirement to uphold the four-fold role. They should train personnel that maintain political resolve, serve the people, respect the rule of law, promote democracy, and are diligent and responsible, and continuously improve the quality and level of the people's congress work in the new era and on the new journey.

Approximately 3,000 people attended the meeting, including leaders from various departments of the CPC Central Committee, government, military and people's organizations as well as leading officials from Beijing, leaders of the central committees of democratic parties and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, representatives of non-party personages, members of the NPC Standing Committee and various special committees, senior officials from the standing committees of people's congresses at the provincial, regional and municipal levels, some NPC deputies, representatives from all walks of life in the capital, and foreign envoys in China. (Xinhua) ■



A meeting is held to celebrate the 70th founding anniversary of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 14, 2024. Zhai Jianlan



Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, addresses a symposium in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 14, 2024. *Pang Xinglei*

## Zhao Leji stresses breaking new ground in work of people's congresses

China's top legislator, Zhao Leji, stresses efforts to uphold, improve and run the system of people's congresses to good effect and break new ground in the work of people's congresses.

Zhao is a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature. He made the remarks at a symposium on September 14.

Zhao pointed out that it is important to fully leverage the characteristics and strengths of the system of people's congresses, China's fundamental political system, and ensure the prosperity and long-term stability of the country.

Zhao urged efforts to advance the high-quality development of the work of people's congresses and ensure people's rights to be informed, participate, be heard, and oversee are realized in all aspects of the work of people's congresses. (Xinhua) ■

# People's congress system a proven cornerstone of Chinese democracy

Zhou Hongyu, who had served as a national lawmaker for 20 years, saw many of his 200-plus proposals adopted and implemented. Among these proposals was free compulsory education in all urban and rural areas in China.

Such input in shaping national policies and laws is made possible by China's foundational political system--the system of people's congresses.

This system, established in 1954, has evolved over 70 years into a more functional and efficient institution, underpinning China's rapid economic development and long-term stability.

Observers note that the political order existing in China stands in stark contrast with the political disorder found in the West, as it integrates the diverse interests of over 1.4 billion people into national decision-making, governance and oversight, ensuring that power remains with the people through unique democratic practices.

## Representation: from 8:1 to 1:1

Zhou, a professor in the field of education, was elected as a deputy to China's National People's Congress (NPC) in 2002. In 2003, after conducting research in rural schools, he proposed a fully free compulsory education system for rural areas, outlining its necessity as well as a detailed implementation plan.

During his first decade as an NPC deputy, Zhou submitted numerous proposals, primarily focusing on education, including free vocational education, schooling for migrant children, and school bus safety, with around 70 percent of his suggestions adopted.

By 2012, China had extended free compulsory education nationwide.

Zhou attributes his success to passion, perseverance, rationality, a people-centered perspective and his professional experiences. "Unlike full-time Western lawmakers, China's part-time NPC deputies are deeply connected to their fields, offering genuine insights into critical issues."

In September 1954, the first session of the first NPC convened, marking the formal establishment of China's people's congress system. The system features a multi-tiered structure, with the NPC at the top and congresses at provincial, municipal, county and township levels. Deputies are elected at each level every five years to represent the people's interests.

Of the 2.77 million deputies in service now, 94.7 percent are from the county and township levels, and they are elected on a one-person-one-vote basis. China's election of people's congress deputies, the world's largest democratic election, involves over a billion voters.



Deputies to the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) leave the Great Hall of the People after the closing meeting of the second session of the 14th NPC in Beijing, on March 11, 2024. *Li He*

The election system has evolved over the decades, moving from an 8:1 rural-to-urban population ratio in 1953 to equal representation in 2010.

Women and grassroots workers, including migrant workers, are increasingly represented in the NPC. In 2007, a minimum threshold of 22-percent women deputies was introduced and the proportion exceeded 26 percent in 2023. The number of migrant worker deputies had grown from three in 2008 to 56 in 2023.

"Chinese democracy is not a formality, nor a 'one-time' show. Deputies to various levels of people's congresses are accountable to the public," said Zhang Shuhua, head of the Institute of Political Science, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

## Legislation: from "have it or not" to "good or not"

In Weidong village, Guangdong province, accessible facilities like ramps, toilet handrails and blind-friendly pathways can be easily found, largely due to suggestions from Wu Tengxin, a village shopkeeper with leg disability. His proposal to enhance barrier-free facilities in rural areas was incorporated into a national law governing the development of barrier-free environments.

At the entrances to multiple special schools in Shanghai, new devices with crossing prompts have been installed to help students safely navigate the pedestrian crossings. This initiative stemmed from a teacher's contribution during a legislative consultation meeting last year, with the teacher suggesting the standardizing of crossing prompt sounds and Braille available on traffic signal facilities near special schools.

Over the past 70 years, China's legislation has shifted from addressing basic and urgent needs to creating a more holistic legal system that includes laws catering to the specific needs of disadvantaged groups.

As China's highest state organ of power, the NPC and its Standing Committee exercise legislative authority.

On July 1, 1979, the second session of the fifth NPC adopted seven laws, including the criminal law and the law on Chinese-foreign equity joint ventures, putting the country back on the track of effective legislation. Over the next 30-plus years, China developed a socialist legal system with unique characteristics.

China has since accelerated its legislative processes and enhanced the quality of its laws, most notably with the enactment of its inaugural Civil Code in 2020. In 2024, a significant milestone is expected with the development of an environmental code.

This year, the top legislature plans to advance this environmental code, integrating and revising existing laws and regulations pertaining to the environment. The aim for now is to create a high-quality draft for deliberation by year-end.

China has more than 300 laws in effect, 35 of which specifically address environmental issues, making the compilation of the environmental code a well-developed endeavor.

A key reform resolution adopted at the third plenary session of the 20th Communist Party of China Central Committee in July has set clear guidelines for legislative reforms, specifying key objectives including the formulation of laws to support private sector development, finance, ethnic solidarity and progress, and combating transnational corruption, alongside amendments to existing oversight laws.

"The focus of these reforms is on the effectiveness and quality of legislation," said Shen Chunyao, director of the top legislature's Legislative Affairs Commission. He compared this pursuit to leading an Olympic race, where higher standards and greater responsibilities are paramount.

To enhance national development and support major reforms, Shen underlines better alignment between legislative decision-making and reform efforts to ensure that the rule of law facilitates development and innovation across all sectors.

## Pooling wisdom: from stools to Great Hall

Every Saturday morning, residents in Mengyuan community in the eastern Chinese city of Jining gather around Wu Hansen, a local district people's congress deputy, for their weekly "meeting on stools."

"A streetlight is out." "Some residents walk their dogs without using leashes." "Cooking fumes of a restaurant often seep into residential buildings." Seated on stools, they discuss pressing community issues such as these.

Wu records these concerns and advocates for solutions, often inviting local authorities, including police, law enforcers, community workers and property managers to join in discuss-

ing issues of community concern. Over the past year, more than 140 issues have been resolved through these meetings.

This grassroots initiative exemplifies how China's people's congresses engage with the public. Across the country, residents voice concerns to deputies through various platforms, ranging from in-person gatherings like those in tea-houses and under banyan trees to online forums.

As an important institutional vehicle for realizing whole-process people's democracy, people's congresses provide platforms for the people to amplify their voices and participate in decision-making processes concerning both everyday matters and state affairs.

At the national level, thousands of NPC deputies meet every year at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to review laws, shape development plans, and oversee the country's administrative, supervisory, adjudicatory and procuratorial organs.

On this platform of China's highest state power, critical laws like the Civil Code and the Foreign Investment Law were introduced.

Over the past decade, the creation and expansion of legislation outreach offices have brought ordinary people closer to the top legislature.

Iranian trader Hamid Dehghani, operating a company in the bustling city of Yiwu in eastern China, has been actively engaged in the legislative process of the country, contributing suggestions for law drafts alongside other foreign residents.

During a community meeting held by a legislation outreach initiative, he suggested that restaurants should provide free packaging services to their customers, when discussing the draft law on combating food wastage.

"I find it incredible that they allow foreigners to give suggestions on a Chinese law draft," Hamid said. "Chinese democracy is highly authentic. Even the smallest voices are heard and conveyed to the top legislative body."

Since 2015, outreach offices have expanded nationwide, reaching out from major cities to remote areas, snow-covered plateaus, and ethnic communities, allowing individuals, including foreign residents like Hamid, to contribute to law drafts.

Currently, China has 45 national and over 7,300 provincial and municipal outreach offices, while more than 3,200 ideas collected via national legislation outreach have been incorporated into over 180 law drafts and revisions.

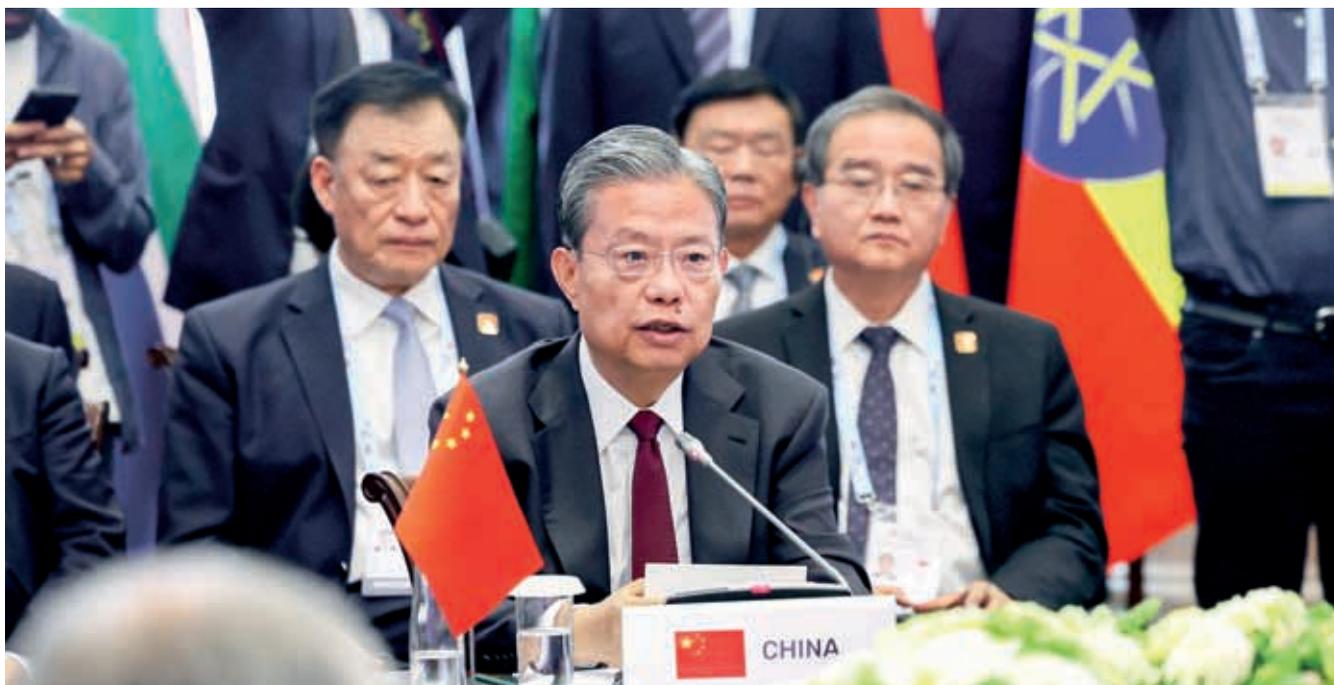
Proposals from NPC deputies and national advisors at last year's annual sessions have led to in excess of 2,000 government policies, such as recruiting more graduates in rural health centers and building more electric vehicle charging stations.

The Chinese people value the effectiveness of democracy more than the form it takes, believing true democracy leads to good governance.

According to the 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer, China has the highest trust index among all surveyed countries.

Stephen Perry, president emeritus of Britain's 48 Group Club, noted that China has a sound system for hearing and responding to its people, calling it simpler than what is prevalent in the West.

"The people's congress system provides a convenient channel for the public to participate in decision-making on public affairs, ensuring that the people are the masters of their own country," said lawyer Fang Yan, an NPC deputy. (Xinhua) ■



Zhao Leji, chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, delivers a speech while attending the plenary session of the 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia, July 11, 2024. *Liu Weibing*

## Zhao Leji attends 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum

China's top legislator Zhao Leji attended the 10th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in St. Petersburg, Russia and delivered speeches at the event.

Zhao, chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said at the plenary session of the forum on July 11 that the legislative bodies of the BRICS countries have maintained long-term friendly cooperation and played an important role in deepening the BRICS strategic partnership.

This year's forum, which ran from July 11 to 12, is the first parliamentary forum held after the expansion of BRICS membership, which reflects the strong momentum of seeking strength through unity among members of the Global South and their firm will to seek common development, he said.

Zhao stressed that the legislative bodies of BRICS should, based on their functions, promote the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation; consolidate BRICS unity; promote pragmatic cooperation; and promote the high-quality development of the BRICS cooperation mechanism.

During his speech at the plenary session in the expanded format of the forum on July 12, Zhao said that Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilizations Initiative and the building of a community with

a shared future for humanity, which have been widely praised and supported by the international community.

"In the face of opportunities and challenges, we must uphold fairness and justice to safeguard world peace and security, uphold the sharing of results to promote common prosperity among countries, uphold openness and inclusiveness to promote exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations," Zhao said.

He added that China is willing to work with BRICS partners and other developing countries to carry forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and shoulder the mission of the times in building a community with a shared future for humanity.

The theme of this year's forum was The Role of Parliaments in Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security. Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered a keynote speech at the plenary session in the expanded format of the forum on July 11.

The forum approved the Protocol to the Memorandum of Understanding on the BRICS Parliamentary Forum and adopted a joint declaration.

Zhao also met with Egyptian House of Representatives speaker Hanafy Ali al-Gebaly and Maulen Ashimbayev, Kazakhstan's Senate Chairperson on the sideline of the forum. (Xinhua) ■

# Chinese, African leaders call for enhanced cooperation on state governance

Chinese and African leaders on September 5 called for enhanced cooperation on state governance at a high-level meeting held during the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC).

China's top legislator Zhao Leji and Rwandan President Paul Kagame co-chaired the meeting.

Zhao, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, said President Xi Jinping's speech at the summit has opened a new chapter in the China-Africa joint efforts to lead modernization in the Global South.

Zhao emphasized the importance of drawing wisdom from the China-Africa traditional friendship.

He called for supporting each other in exploring development paths suited to their own national conditions, and sharing the outcomes and experience of deepening reforms, expanding opening-up, promoting development and improving livelihoods.

He also proposed the establishment of a platform within the FOCAC framework for exchanging state governance experience between China and Africa.

African leaders applauded the proposal, and expressed their dedication to carrying out mutually beneficial cooperation across various sectors. (Xinhua) ■



A high-level meeting on state governance of the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation was held at the China National Convention Center in Beijing, capital of China, Sept. 5, 2024. Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame co-chair the meeting. *Pang Xinglei*

# Top legislator calls for enhanced cooperation with IPU, foreign legislative bodies



Zhao Leji, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, addresses a commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the NPC's affiliation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the opening ceremony of the 2024 interregional seminar on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for parliaments of developing countries at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, Aug. 20, 2024.

Liu Weibing

China stands ready to work with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and legislative bodies of other countries to expand forms of exchange, enrich the content of cooperation and constantly work toward fruitful results, top Chinese legislator Zhao Leji said on August 20.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, made the remarks in Beijing while addressing a commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the NPC's affiliation with the IPU and the opening ceremony of the 2024 interregional seminar on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for parliaments of developing countries.

Zhao said the IPU is the most influential international parliamentary organization with a long history and large

scale in the world today. It is an important platform for the legislative bodies of various countries to communicate and seek cooperation. Since the NPC joined the IPU 40 years ago, its cooperation with the IPU and legislatures of other countries has deepened and been strengthened, he noted.

He said that to deepen cooperation and implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the Global Civilization Initiative, legislative bodies should treat one another as equals, respect and trust one another, respect the development paths and institutional models chosen independently by the people of each country, respect one another's core interests and major concerns, oppose interference in other countries' internal affairs, oppose camp confrontation and exclusive circles, and practice common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security concepts.

Zhao urged all sides to facilitate common development, implement the sustainable development agenda and promote economic globalization that benefits all. He said all parties need to strengthen exchange and mutual learning, respect the diversity of world civilizations and increase their sharing of governance experience.

He also called on all sides to strengthen multilateral coordination; practice genuine multilateralism; promote an equal, orderly, multipolar world; and make the global governance system more just and equitable.

Tulia Ackson, IPU president and Tanzania's National Assembly speaker, IPU secretary general Martin Chungong and parliamentary leaders and representatives of 32 developing countries attended the opening ceremony.

During his talks with Ackson prior to the ceremony, Zhao said that China is willing to continue working with the IPU to organize seminars for parliamentarians from developing countries, support the IPU in preparing for the sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament scheduled for next year, strengthen bilateral cooperation, and make contributions to promoting world peace and development.

Ackson said the IPU is willing to deepen cooperation with the NPC and will continue to adhere to the one-China principle, noting that the IPU welcomes China to play a greater role in the organization.

At a meeting attended by Ackson, Chungong and the heads of delegations, Zhao said that as this year marks the 70th anniversary of the publication of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, China is willing to enhance cooperation with the IPU and the legislative bodies of other countries to safeguard the interests of developing countries. (Xinhua) ■



The parliamentarians visit the Sunward Equipment Group in Changsha, Central China's Hunan Province. Zhou Yudong

# Program enhances understanding of China's development among parliamentarians from Central American and Caribbean countries

By Lu Yan

**F**rom June 18 to 27, the National People's Congress (NPC) held the first exchange program for lawmakers from Central American and Caribbean nations. Twenty-three lawmakers and senior parliamentary officials from seven countries—Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama—visited China and traveled to Hunan and Fujian provinces to learn about the country's agricultural development, technological manufacturing and cultural heritage preservation. They also had discussions on topics such as China's modernization path, whole-pro-

cess people's democracy and the China-Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) community with a shared future. Themed "Enhancing mutual understanding and working together for common development," the program left the delegation with an unforgettable journey.

Zhang Qingwei, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, said at the opening ceremony that the NPC attaches great importance to developing friendly and co-operative relations with the parliaments of LAC countries, including Central American countries. He hoped that by strengthening ties between legislative institutions, they

could enhance mutual understanding between the peoples, promote the sharing of cultures and inject strong impetus into building a China-LAC community with a shared future.

### The source of modernization

Hunan is a pioneer province in agriculture, with the largest rice cultivation area and rice production in China for years. It is said that one out of every nine bowls of rice consumed nationwide comes from Hunan. In this crucial granary of China, parliamentarians noted the progress in agricultural modernization, which is an important component of China's path to modernization. Through the onsite visits, the delegation was able to observe China's achievements and experiences in advancing agricultural technology by focusing on rice cultivation.

They also learned about the development of hybrid rice. Yuan Longping, the late academician known as the "father of hybrid rice," spent a long time conducting research in different localities in Hunan, as well as other places in the country. Yuan and his research team successfully cultivated the world's first high-yield hybrid rice strain in 1973.

More than 17 million hectares of hybrid rice are planted in China each year, helping boost rice output by about 2.5 million tons and feed 80 million more people annually, official data showed in late 2023.

Chinese hybrid rice has also been introduced in various parts of the world, including regions of Asia, Africa, the Americas and the South Pacific, since 1979. This has led to increased local rice yields and helped relieve food shortages.

"Eradicating hunger should be a common cause for all humanity," the visiting parliamentarians remarked after learning the story. "With only about 9 percent of the world's arable land, China feeds about 20 percent of the global population—this is a miracle," they noted.

To further explore China's modernization, the international guests also visited Xiamen in Fujian, where a batch of mega projects in the new energy and new materials industries with total investment exceeding 100 billion yuan (\$13.8 billion) have settled. They visited the Tan Kah Kee Innovation Laboratory, or the Fujian Science and Technology Innovation Laboratory for Energy Materials of China, a pioneering provincial-level innovation laboratory, jointly established by the Xiamen municipal government and Xiamen University.

Oriented toward the national energy strategy and future industrial development needs, the laboratory has laid out over 80 technology commercialization research and development projects in areas such as hydrogen energy, semiconductors, future display and instrumentation equipment. It has already incubated more than 20 hi-tech enterprises.

Upon arriving at the core area of the laboratory—Asia's first noise-free laboratory—the delegation learned about the latest research achievements and applications of cutting-edge technologies, and experienced the powerful driving force brought by technological innovation.

"We have seen firsthand how China has fostered technological progress and economic development through a

## Chinese democracy emphasizes extensive public participation, policy consultations and the pursuit of good governance.

comprehensive transformation system, spanning from the national level to universities and individuals," the parliamentarians said.

### Democracy for the people

In a lecture on the theme of the practice and effectiveness of China's whole-process people's democracy, Zhai Wei, deputy director of the Research Office of the NPC Standing Committee's General Office, elaborated on the concept and how Chinese democracy and governance work.

Chinese democracy diverges from the Western model that is centered around multi-party rotation and universal suffrage. It emphasizes extensive public participation, policy consultations and the pursuit of good governance.

The concept of whole-process people's democracy is a result of the creative evolution and development of the wisdom of political philosophy in the fine traditional Chinese culture. In contrast to the Western model, where democracy and elections are frequently equated, whole-process people's democracy integrates law-based democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management and oversight through a series of legal and institutional arrangements.

The essence of people's democracy is that people get to discuss their own affairs to reach the greatest common ground based on society's collective wishes and needs.

For example, local legislative outreach offices serve as a direct conduit and bridge between the people and their deputies. The public can use these offices to participate



The parliamentarians visit the Yuhua Intangible Cultural Heritage Exhibition Hall in Changsha, Central China's Hunan Province. Zhou Yudong



The parliamentarians attend a special seminar in Beijing. *Sun Mengshuang*

in the legislative process, such as providing input and feedback during the revision of laws. The concerns and opinions of the people are directly channeled and communicated through various means in these offices, including meetings and discussions. Social media and other online platforms are also utilized for collecting opinions.

In 2015, the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee established its first batch of local legislative outreach offices, starting in Shanghai and the provinces of Hubei, Jiangxi and Gansu. So far, the number has reached 45. As of April, primary-level legislative outreach offices set up by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee have gathered nearly 27,900 public opinions on draft laws, according to the commission.

Over the past nine years, this practice has expanded significantly, with some 6,500 local outreach offices across China at the provincial, city and district levels.

“I believe this is an extremely efficient way that can quickly, directly and comprehensively reflect the sentiments and opinions of the people,” a Salvadoran legislator said after learning about the primary-level legislative outreach offices in China.

“We understand that China’s democratic system enables the people to participate extensively in politics, which is an experience we need to learn from. China’s democratic system is proof that everyone can participate in the governance of the country,” a Panamanian legislator echoed.

## A shared community

On July 17, 2014, President Xi Jinping attended the China-LAC Countries Leaders’ Meeting in Brazil’s capital Brasilia, and delivered a keynote speech titled “Build a Community of Shared Destiny for Common Progress.” In

the speech, President Xi made the proposition for the first time of building a China-LAC community with a shared future, which pointed the way forward for China-LAC relations in the new era.

Over the past decade, thanks to the joint efforts of both sides, continuous progress has been made and the China-LAC relationship has ushered in a new era characterized by equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and more benefits for the people.

Through the program, parliamentarians see more fields for further communication and cooperation. “We have seen how China has achieved such tremendous modernization and development, and witnessed China’s outstanding achievements in economic development, improving people’s livelihoods and promoting harmonious coexistence between man and nature,” a Guatemalan legislator said. “I now better understand that China’s economic miracle cannot be separated from the leadership of the Communist Party of China.”

China has achieved outstanding results in infrastructure and modernization, and China and LAC countries can strengthen cooperation in many fields, and they can develop together and achieve mutually-beneficial results, a Nicaraguan legislator stated.

The Panamanian legislator said that through the program, they have come to understand the history and reasons behind China’s development, and have particularly seen the uniqueness of China’s development path from its history and culture.

“We did not come in vain and were greatly inspired. The speed of China’s modernization development is truly astonishing,” a Costa Rican legislator remarked. “We will bring the experiences we have learned here back to our country to promote economic development.” ■



Children have an outdoor activity class at a kindergarten in Huangyuan county in Xining, Northwest China's Qinghai Province, on Nov 29, 2023. Zhang Long

## Bill to ensure preschool access for all

**L**egislators are considering a law to ensure that preschool education is accessible to all children.

The draft preschool education law was submitted on June 25 to a session of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the top legislature, for a second reading.

Among the highlights of the draft are provisions to pro-

mote free preschool education and facilitate easier kindergarten admission for children with disabilities.

"This is good news. It indicates more national input and greater attention to preschool education," said a young mother surnamed Tang.

China's population slightly declined over the past two years. The number of children enrolled in kindergartens

has been decreasing, leading to reduced class sizes and the shutdown of some kindergartens. Despite this, government spending on preschool education has maintained a rising trend.

Experts believe such a trend is beneficial for enhancing the quality of preschool education. With smaller class sizes, children are expected to receive better education.

Last year, 40.93 million children were enrolled in kindergartens in China, accounting for 91.1 percent of all preschool-aged children.

## Non-profit kindergartens

The draft stipulates that efforts should be made to gradually implement free preschool education where conditions allow.

Amid a low birth rate, the combination of the country's free preschool education and the three-child policy for all will jointly enhance the quality of the population, said Zhan Zhongle, a professor at Peking University.

In recent years, China has made significant strides in overhauling preschool education, converting many private kindergartens with exorbitant fees into non-profit institutions.

According to the Ministry of Education (MOE), in 2023, a total of 236,000 non-profit kindergartens, both public and private, made up 86.2 percent of all kindergartens and served 90.8 percent of enrolled children in China.

To consolidate this achievement, the draft mandates government support at all levels for the functioning of the non-profit kindergartens.

Apart from making preschool education accessible to all children, China is committed to reducing regional disparities.

The draft stipulates that the country should prioritize directing educational resources to rural, border and underdeveloped areas. It also has plans to establish a financial aid system for preschool children from impoverished households.

"The move underscores the country's and society's care for children, ensuring that the most underprivileged children have equal access to educational opportunities," said lawyer and NPC deputy Fang Yan.

The regional gap is narrowing. From 2013 to 2023, all 17 provincial-level regions with kindergarten enrollment rates that increase by over 20 percentage points were in the country's less-developed central and western parts, according to the MOE.

## Inclusive education

The draft law is also expected to facilitate easier kindergarten admissions for children with disabilities.

Non-profit kindergartens should admit children with disabilities who are capable of adapting to life in kindergarten and provide assistance to these children, according to the draft.

Cai Lei, head of Qisehua Kindergarten in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province, was delighted to learn about the new provisions. "Our suggestions have been incorporated into the draft law more quickly and effectively

than I anticipated."

Cai proposed suggestions for advancing inclusive education when lawmakers sought feedback on the draft law.

Cai believes that inclusive education not only embodies equality among all children, but also nurtures compassion and a sense of social responsibility among children with and without disabilities.

"Admitting children with disabilities is only the beginning; the greater challenge lies in providing adequate teacher training and special equipment," Zhan said.

The draft demands that kindergartens admitting children with disabilities must either be equipped with necessary rehabilitation facilities and personnel or establish cooperation with special education and rehabilitation institutions.

At Qisehua, non-barrier ramps and bathrooms assist children with disabilities to adapt to kindergarten life. Special musical instruments, picture books and chairs are used for the rehabilitation of children with visual impairments, autism and language delay.

Qisehua Kindergarten is one of Henan's 194 pilot kindergartens for inclusive preschool education. Since 2015, nearly 2,000 children with disabilities have been enrolled in these pilot kindergartens, according to the provincial education bureau.

Fang noted that special education training for teachers remains inadequate across China and there is still much room for improvement in inclusive education.

"I hope that following the enactment of the law, more supporting policies will be rolled out to bolster special education training for teachers," Fang said. (Xinhua) ■



Children at a kindergarten in Huangyuan county of Xining, Northwest China's Qinghai Province, have a handicraft class, on Nov 29, 2023. Xie Tongqiang



Foreign passengers enter the border check section of Beijing Capital International Airport, on July 10, 2024. *Li Xin*

## Amendment to improve health, quarantine measures

**L**awmakers on June 28 passed an amendment to China's Frontier Health and Quarantine Law to prevent cross-border transmission of infectious diseases and resolve major public health threats.

The amended law, which will take effect on January 1, 2025, stipulates that customs authorities can mandate body temperature checks and carry out medical inspections for inbound and outbound travelers.

For foreigners who refuse quarantine measures, customs may deny them entry and inform immigration officials.

For travelers who are suspected of contracting infectious diseases, customs may issue a medical card so they will be prioritized when seeking treatment at local hospitals. Local disease control officials should also be notified.

The General Administration of Customs, China's top customs authority, should keep upgrading or streamlining quarantine procedures based on monitoring and risk evaluation of domestic and overseas epidemic situations.

Cross-border travelers who fail to truthfully declare their health status and other relevant information, or refuse quarantine exams will be issued a warning or face a fine up to 10,000 yuan (\$1,380). The maximum penalty for serious violations will be 50,000 yuan (\$7,000), according to the law.

It added that customs shall protect trade secrets, person-

al information and privacy, and shall not infringe upon the rights and interests of institutions and individuals.

Liang Ying, an official of the National People's Congress Standing Committee's Legislative Affairs Commission, said on June 29 that the revision highlights the improving science and precision of quarantine measures, aiming to strike a balance between curbing the spread of infectious diseases and ensuring normal international trade.

New revisions have also incorporated lessons learned during previous epidemics and improved both regular quarantine measures and emergency response action at ports amid major contagious outbreaks, he added.

Also on June 29, the NPC Standing Committee passed an organic law for the rural collective economy. According to the law, the government will support the development of these organizations through fiscal, tax, financial, land, talent and industrial policies, to strengthen the new rural collective economy and safeguard the interests of farmers.

Lawmakers also adopted the newly revised law on emergency response and a decision to amend the accounting law.

Meanwhile, it adopted a decision to appoint Lei Haichao health minister. Lei was former head of the Beijing Municipal Health Commission. (China Daily) ■

# Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

By Lu Yan

**N**ortheast China's Jilin province is a place where the cultures of multiple ethnic groups converge and fuse. It has led to cultural traditions centered around Korean, Manchu and Mongolian ethnic groups, among others, making it a typical region and an important ethnic corridor for the exchange, interaction and integration of the Chinese nation.

On July 1-4, Cai Dafeng, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), led an inspection team from the committee to check on the implementation of the Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Jilin.

The Law has been in effect for 13 years. It has had a profound and far-reaching impact on passing on and promoting

the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation, enhancing the cohesion and creativity of ethnic groups and driving the development and prosperity of Chinese culture.

Intangible cultural heritage is the "living fossil" of the history. Cai emphasized that everyone must further protect, inherit and make good use of intangible cultural heritage, in order to enhance its vitality and influence.

**Intangible cultural heritage is the "living fossil" of the history and culture of ethnic groups.**



An artist guides a pupil to learn shadow puppetry at the First Experimental Primary School in Hejian City, North China's Hebei Province, on July 26, 2024. *Mou Yu*

## Addressing concerns

Baisu Gulang is a 42-year-old horse head fiddle maker in Qian Golos Mongolian autonomous county of Songyuan in Jilin. Following in his father's footsteps, Baisu Gulang developed an ardent love for making and playing horse head fiddles, a traditional musical instrument favored by the Mongolian ethnic group. Horse head fiddle music and the craftsmanship of making the fiddle are both national-level intangible cultural heritage protection projects. Baisu Gulang is a prominent inheritor of the horse head fiddle making techniques at the provincial level.

Baisu Gulang started learning to make horse head fiddles when he was 18 years old. In 2006, Baisu Gulang started his own studio, where he voluntarily teaches enthusiasts to make and play the instrument, along with selling it.

The process of making a horse head fiddle is highly complex and requires careful selection of materials. Each instrument is meticulously handcrafted by veteran artisans. As Baisu Gulang says, "The quality of a horse head fiddle depends entirely on the hands that make it." He explains that making a horse head fiddle requires three key skills: an understanding of music, expertise in woodworking and a mastery of fine craftsmanship.

The horse head fiddles he crafts have a Chinese dragon-shaped carving beneath the horse's head, symbolizing "full of vigor." "The horse-head fiddle does not belong solely to the Mongolian ethnic group, it belongs to the entire Chinese nation, and even the whole world," Baisu Gulang proudly told the inspection team. "My hope is that every nationality can learn to appreciate beauty of the horse head fiddle and its music."

However, Baisu Gulang has his own concerns. Each year, he and his employees collectively produce about 200 adult-sized horse head fiddles. With an average price of 1,500 yuan (\$206) per instrument, the total revenue amounts to around 200,000 yuan (\$27,492). After deducting labor costs, wood materials and other costs, he's left with only 40,000 to 50,000 yuan (\$5,498 to \$6,873) as his personal living expenses, which is not a decent income for an artist and crafts person like him.

"Relevant government departments have recognized my situation and are willing to cover the basic training and some other costs, for which I'm very grateful. I also hope that in the future, the subsidy funding for inheritors can be increased through the assessment of inheritors," Baisu Gulang told the inspection team.

Whenever the inspection team arrived at a site, it thoroughly examined the on-the-ground conditions and challenges faced by intangible cultural heritage practitioners and preservation efforts. By inquiring about essential factors like financial support, tax policies and intellectual property rights, the inspectors sought to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law was being implemented and enforced in Jilin.

The team found that some government entities still lacked adequate understanding and commitment to the legal obligations around intangible cultural heritage preservation. It stressed the need for government departments to strengthen its capacity to enforce the laws and regulations, and to ensure that the proper systems and resources are in place to



Tourists visit the exhibition hall for the intangible cultural heritage of China's Grand Canal, on Aug 2, 2024. *Mou Yu*

effectively protect, pass down and promote these traditional cultural practices.

As of now, Jilin has a total of 3,935 representative intangible cultural heritage projects at all levels. This includes two projects inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, 55 national-level projects, 433 provincial-level projects and 3,445 city or prefecture, as well as county-level projects. These projects span 10 categories, including folk literature, traditional music and traditional theater.

The inspection team also found that for some projects, the inheritors are mostly elderly, as the younger generation is unwilling to learn and carry on the inheritances. This phe-



nomenon of lacking successors is very prominent.

“We need to nurture more inheritors, enhancing the influence of intangible cultural heritage,” the team emphasized, adding that greater support and assistance must be provided to the inheritors. More efforts are needed to cultivate young and middle-aged inheritors. Media platforms like radio, TV and the Internet, as well as institutions like training centers and museums, should be utilized to increase the promotion of intangible cultural heritage.

The team also stressed integrating intangible cultural heritage into the national education system, so as to enable the public, especially the young, to better recognize China’s fine traditional culture and strengthen their cultural confidence.

**We need to strengthen the cultivation of inheritors, continuously enhancing the influence of intangible cultural heritage.**

### **Spreading the story**

Jilin has focused on the revitalization and utilization of intangible cultural heritage, promoting the integrated development of culture and tourism.

This is perfectly illustrated in the China Korean Folk Custom Park, which is located in Yanji, capital of Yanbian, the country’s only autonomous prefecture of the Korean ethnic group in Jilin.

The park consists of 40 small courtyards with Korean-style buildings, and more than 80 customized container houses and festooned vehicles. It integrates the display of ethnic style, hands-on intangible cultural heritage experiences, distinctive catering and homestays, as well as ancient traditional architecture.

Inside the Korean Ethnic Costume Experience Hall in the park, Korean ethnic costumes are on display. In 2008, the costumes were included in the second batch of the National Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Visitors can also enjoy ethnic dances. The Nongak, a form of traditional Korean farmers’ music and dance, has already been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2023, the park received a total of 3.17 million visitors. Its comprehensive tourism revenue exceeded 110 million yuan (\$15 million).

At the Dingrun Cultural and Creative Industry Park in Songyuan, a massive painting made with processed fish skin over five meters long, illustrating fisherman catching fish in winter, stands prominently in the center of the exhibition hall. This is the representative work of Xu Cui, the fourth-generation inheritor of the Chagan Lake fish skin painting tradition.

Fish skin painting is a unique art form of the Hezhe ethnic group. Like many intangible cultural heritage techniques, fish skin painting faces challenges in terms of survival, inheritance and market popularity.

To address these challenges, Xu and his team have designed 10 cultural research and learning travel routes for students focused on the fish-catching culture. Additionally, they have developed over 300 different educational courses, including instruction on fish skin painting.

“Now, more than 15,000 children, both domestic and international, have come to participate,” Xu told the inspection team.

“We are particularly pleased to see that Jilin has brought the display of intangible cultural heritage to tourist attractions, into school classrooms and cultural venues, whether online or offline. Wherever there is a lively atmosphere among the people, that is where the stage for the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage should be built,” the inspection team concluded. ■

# Legacy of Shen Jilan lights up path for more deputies



The statue of Shen Jilan stands at the Model Worker Cultural Square in Pingshun county of Changzhi city in North China's Shanxi province. Zhang Linhu

**S**hen Jilan has been called many things: a lifelong farmer, a voice for the people, China's longest-serving national lawmaker and a pioneer advocating gender equality.

As the only deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC) for 13 consecutive terms, from 1954 when it was established until her passing away in 2020, Shen had journeyed alongside the top legislature for 66 years, witnessing the birth and growth of the system of the people's congresses and China's practice of whole-process people's democracy.

In the Xigou Exhibition Hall located in Xigou village of Changzhi in north China's Shanxi province, there is an old photograph of Shen. In the image, she is adorned with two braided pigtaileds, cradling a heavy load of grain, her eyes brimming with the joy of a bountiful harvest. This historical moment captured in the photograph marks the beginning of Shen's story with Xigou, her hometown.

In 1951, Xigou village established its first agricultural production cooperative. As the deputy head of the cooperative, Shen's first move was to mobilize women to participate.

To boost women's enthusiasm, she proposed equal pay for equal work between men and women, an initiative of epoch-making significance in China's drive to safeguard women's rights. Thanks to media coverage, she gained nationwide fame.

In 1954, at the age of 24, Shen was elected as a deputy to the inaugural NPC, carrying the aspirations of the entire village to Beijing for its first session.

From this session onwards, China's democratic political system, the people's congress system, was officially launched.

"NPC deputies should speak for the people, work for the people and act for the people. As a rural deputy, I must genuinely reflect the immediate interests of rural folks," Shen often said.

Throughout her 66 years of service, Shen never strayed from the countryside, keeping the desires and hopes of farmers in her heart and diligently fulfilling her duties through motions and suggestions.

It is recorded that since becoming an NPC deputy, Shen had submitted over 420 motions and suggestions. From the first NPC session in 1954 to the third session of the 13th NPC in 2020, Shen observed the progression of democracy and development of the rule of law in China.

In June 2020, Shen passed away at the age of 91. Her ordinary yet distinctive image remains etched in people's memories and in the annals of China's history.

Shen embodied a solemn commitment, stating that "the people elected me to stand for them, and I serve as a deputy speaking for the people." Rooting herself deep in the countryside, she dedicated her life to the Party, the nation, the people, and her hometown, and became the sole deputy to serve 13 terms.

In 2019, Shen was awarded the nation's highest honor, Medal of the Republic, for her contributions to the country as the People's Republic of China celebrated the 70th anniversary of its founding. The Standing Com-

mittee of the Shanxi Provincial People's Congress called upon deputies to the people's congresses at all levels in the province to learn from Shen.

"I have heard many stories about Shen," said Cui Lizhi, an NPC deputy and general manager of Lilai Agri-Business and Technology Co. Ltd. in Zhangzi county of Shanxi province. "I am deeply moved by her steadfast ideals and beliefs, her dedication to serving the people, and her leadership in the arduous struggles of the local people. As a rural deputy myself, I will learn from her and become a good NPC deputy for the people," she said.

Zhang Yufei, a deputy to the Shanxi Provincial People's Congress and deputy director of a cultural relics office in Zhangzi county, gained a better understanding of Shen's pursuit at a training session. "Shen has rooted herself in Xigou village for decades, forging better living conditions. She is my role model," he said.

On the 11th of every month, the Huaihai community of Luzhou district in Changzhi holds a reception for voters in its jurisdiction.

"Five days before the monthly reception day, we announce the schedule in our WeChat group and on

**"As a rural deputy, I must genuinely reflect the immediate interests of rural folks," Shen often said.**

community bulletin board, enabling voters in our jurisdiction to know which deputies will be receiving them, to facilitate targeted feedback and suggestions," said Cui Yongming, secretary of the Huaihai community Party committee. "We listen to and respond to every livelihood demand raised by the people."

"Shen always prioritized the concerns of the people. Her unwavering commitment is something every deputy to the people's congresses should learn from. A deputy is like a 'lamp' in the hearts of the people, and fulfilling the duties of representation is not just about words but also actions. Only by addressing the concerns of the people and bringing smiles to their faces can we truly fulfill our responsibilities as deputies," Cui noted.

At present, 136 standardized physical outreach offices of deputies have been established in 12 counties and districts in Changzhi, with 396 outreach stations at the sub-county level serving the people in villages and communities under the jurisdiction of townships. Over 9,100 deputies at various levels have been mixed into groups to ensure full coverage of all outreach offices.

In 2023, the outreach offices in Changzhi held a total of 3,513 online and in-person activities and received 10,300 visits of deputies. Among the 5,342 opinions and suggestions collected, 4,408 have been resolved or implemented. (NPC) ■



This photo collage shows Shi Guangyin embraces the tree planted by him. *Courtesy Photo*

## NPC deputy spends life in sand control

**I**n the arduous battle against desertification, Shi Guangyin, 72, Party chief of Shilisha village of Dingbian county in Yulin city, Northwest China's Shaanxi province, has dedicated over 40 years of his life to combating sandstorms and establishing a "Green Great Wall" in desolate lands.

In Yulin, a key area in China's Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program that was initiated by the Chinese government in the 1970s to improve the ecological environment in northern China, Shi, a deputy to the Yulin Municipal People's Congress, has led his community in planting over 53 million trees across 250,000 mu (17,000 hectares) of barren land, transforming 350,000 mu of land into lush greenery.

Desertification poses a significant global ecological challenge that affects human survival and development. China is one of the most severely affected countries. Historically, Yulin

has suffered extensive ecological degradation, with vast forests being decimated and barren land merging with the Mu Us Desert. In the 100 years prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, Yulin saw six towns, 412 villages, and 2.1 million-mu farmland swallowed by drifting sands.

In such harsh conditions, Shi's father relocated his family nine times to evade the encroaching sands.

Driven by the desire to secure a better future for generations to come, Shi embarked on an anti-desertification mission at a young age. "Combating desertification is for our descendants. We've endured the hardships of desertification too much; we cannot let our children suffer the same fate," he said.

In 1968, 16-year-old Shi was elected as the production team leader of Getatao village in Haiziliang commune. His first task was to mobilize the community in tree planting efforts, resulting in the successful cultivation of 14,000-mu trees in three years, the first green achievement in Haiziliang.

In 1984, encouraged by the policies supporting individual initiatives in combating desertification, Shi resigned from his

**Shi said that the mission of a deputy to the people's congress is to address the people's difficulties and deliver tangible results.**

position as farm manager—a stable government job that guaranteed a living that referred to as an “iron rice bowl”, relocated to the desert, and signed a contract with the local government to curb desertification and soil erosion on 3,000 mu of land, becoming the country’s first farmer to undertake desert control efforts. Shi was convinced that without tackling desertification, poverty would persist; only by restoring the land and improving the environment could the root cause of poverty be addressed.

With the initial funding of 130,000 yuan (\$18,200) for seedlings, which was painstakingly gathered by Shi and his six partner farmers, they planted drought-resistant willows and poplars on the contracted desert land. After a year of hard work and favorable rainfall, the survival rate of the saplings exceeded 85 percent. This initial success bolstered Shi’s confidence.

In 1985, Shi boldly expanded his efforts by signing a contract with Changmaotan Forest Farm to control sand on 58,000-mu land. He set up a sand-control company and collaborated with 482 individuals from 127 households in neighboring areas.

However, the survival rate of the saplings was not as high as he had expected. Facing repeated failure, Shi made up his mind to learn new methods, and finally fixed the drifting sand in the third year.

Where trees thrived, drifting sands surrendered, and fertile farmlands, once buried under sand dunes, were reclaimed. Crop yields soared, farmers’ incomes increased, and the region was transformed into a bountiful granary.

Shi’s unwavering commitment to desert control and afforestation has seen desert land recede and lush land flourish, inspiring more people to join the cause of desert control. Today, nearly 80 percent of the Mu Us Desert in Yulin is covered in vegetation, soil erosion has been effectively prevented and the desert is likely to become China’s first “vanished” desert.

Under the efforts of Shi and his community, 250,000 mu of barren land have been reclaimed over the past four decades. What was once a desert landscape now blooms with fertile fields, serving as a prosperous granary in the region, and the income of local residents has been increased too.

For Shi, desert control not only means to survive, it is also for development. He and his team have pioneered an integrated development model encompassing anti-desertification, sapling cultivation, livestock farming, and eco-tourism. They have also established over 10 economic entities such as a forest farm, a demonstration cattle ranch, a feed processing plant, a forestry training center, and a lake-themed tourist attraction. These initiatives have significantly boosted the average income of local farmers.

In 2018, Shi was elected as a deputy to the 13th National People’s Congress, a testament to his dedication of serving the people. In the following five years, he proposed suggestions on forestry industry development, desertification control, and the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, with a steadfast commitment to environmental improvement.

Today, as a fifth-term deputy to Yulin Municipal People’s Congress, Shi continues to work on the frontline of public service. He said that the mission of a deputy to the people’s congress is to address the people’s difficulties and deliver tangible results. His words brim with determination and vigor, showcasing his enduring dedication. (NPC) ■

# Agricultural pioneer leads rural vitalization efforts

As a “new farmer” born in the 1980s, Han Fengxiang, head of Fenghuangshan Agricultural Machinery and Farmers Specialized Cooperative in Lishu county in Northeast China’s Jilin province, has spearheaded efforts to promote rural vitalization.

By introducing agricultural equipment, Han’s cooperative has achieved fully-mechanized and large-scale planting. By actively extending the agricultural industrial chain, the cooperative has created a “planting, breeding, processing and marketing” model.

From its humble beginning with five members, the cooperative now has 158 members, managing 15,000 mu (1,000 hectares) of farmland and covering production in nine villages across two townships. With 73 units of large agricultural machines, the cooperative achieved a total grain output of over 10 million kilograms in 2023.

Located in the heart of the Songliao Plain’s golden corn belt, Lishu county is one of China’s major grain-producing counties. Making the protection of black soil as a top priority, the cooperative has made continuous efforts to explore

## Han’s suggestions received a positive response from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

innovative cropping model and achieved a yield 30-percent higher than that of traditional farming.

In a promising development, the cooperative has been included in the project of building national bases for innovation and application of digital farming in 2023. Han has keenly felt the tremendous changes that technology has brought to farming.

“By utilizing drones and monitoring stations to collect, monitor, analyze, and provide alerts on environmental and soil data in real time, this ‘smart brain’ helps us identify and solve problems in a timely manner,” Han said.

With the intelligent facilities of the meteorological comprehensive monitoring station, she and her fellow villagers have bid farewell to the days of relying on weather and experience to make farming decisions, transitioning to technolo-



Han Fengxiang (fourth from the right), a deputy to the National People's Congress from Lishu county in Northeast China's Jilin province, interacts with villagers in a field. *Courtesy Photo*

gy-driven agriculture.

In order to extend the industrial chain, the cooperative focuses on three sectors,—increasing yield per unit area with new seeds and the reasonable use of fertilizers, intercropping corn and beans and cultivating high-value economic crops for the establishment of unique products for each village.

Taking part in the province's "Straw to Meat" program, the cooperative integrates farming with animal husbandry, raising 160 heads of beef cattle and planning to develop a small-scale circular economy.

By bridging online and offline sales channels, Han said that a livestreaming sales platform is in the pipeline, with plans for cooperative members to become live streamers. When introducing agricultural products, the display screen behind the streamer will showcase the entire process from planting to production, allowing viewers to scan QR codes for more information.

"At present, the crops in the three sectors are thriving," Han said. "In the northern regions, crops are typically planted once a year. This year, after harvesting the winter wheat, we will try to plant early soybeans in small quantities. This is for experimental exploration, and I believe we will make it."

Since 2015, Han has participated in various training programs for new professional farmers, young farm owners, and agricultural managers in Jilin.

In 2023, after being elected as a deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC), Han felt a greater sense of responsibility. She has since visited numerous agricultural cooper-

atives across the county, engaged in deep conversations with farmers and conducted detailed and extensive surveys.

At the annual NPC session last year, she proposed increasing investment in rural infrastructure. Her suggestions, particularly on addressing the issue of clearing drainage ditches to reduce flood damage, received a positive response from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. Local authorities earmarked funds to repair and construct drainage ditches throughout the county accordingly.

During this year's NPC session in March, she submitted proposals for increasing subsidies for agricultural machinery and enhancing technical training for farmers.

Han, as a member of the NPC youth delegation, visited Russia in May, where she shared the current state of agricultural development in Jilin and her entrepreneurial story with the Russian side. Witnessing their keen interest in her endeavors, she felt greatly inspired and resolved to achieve greater achievements in her career, effectively demonstrating the pioneering role of being an NPC deputy.

"On the one hand, I feel the strength of our motherland. Achieving such development accomplishments in just a few decades is truly remarkable. On the other hand, I see broader market opportunities. Our cooperative's agricultural products should not only reach across the nation but also enter the global market," Han said.

Encouragingly, inspired by Han's story, more and more ambitious youths are returning to rural areas and painting a more magnificent picture of rural vitalization. (NPC) ■

# Village head endeavors to turn farmers' dreams into reality

**L**i Liancheng, a 73-year-old deputy to the National People's Congress (NPC) and Party chief of Xixinzhuang village in Puyang county in central China's Henan province, shows a humble yet determined spirit when talking about his quest for rural development. Behind this is his deep-rooted passion for his community.

For over 30 years, Li has been a dedicated village head, leading Xixinzhuang out of poverty and into a reality where the lives of its residents mirror those of urban dwellers.

The past two decades during which he serves as an NPC deputy have seen him champion rural revitalization, offering valuable insights and recommendations for the betterment of rural areas.

In 2019, when he attended the annual session of the NPC, Li brought the dreams of farmers to the spotlight, presenting them to Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

"In the early days of reform and opening-up, the dream of farmers was to have enough food and clothing. Forty years later, farmers have developed a second dream, which is to provide their children with access to good education. Their third dream is to have access to quality medical care and the fourth dream is to see their village urbanized and they can land a job in the neighborhood. For their fifth and sixth dreams, farmers expect to have high-quality public cultural services and have a clean and tidy living environment in the village. They also want to see national territorial sovereignty well safeguarded," Li said to Xi at a meeting during the session.

These dreams resonate with millions of rural residents and serve as a guiding light for the unwavering efforts of the CPC.

The transformation of Xixinzhuang village stands as a testament to the realization of these dreams.

The dream of good healthcare facilities has been materialized through the inauguration of a community hospital with over 500 beds, providing affordable medical services to tens of thousands of residents in nearby towns and villages.

The dream of employment came to life as various food processing enterprises set up plants in Xixinzhuang's food industrial park, offering employment opportunities at farmers' doorsteps.

As the village is teeming with nature's beauty, with harmonious neighborhoods and residents striving for a better life, the dream for a favorable environment has also blossomed in the village.

Speaking of all these changes, Li's face lights up and his wrinkles turn into smiles, saying that the transformation is not just about Puyang or Henan but about all of China.

Xixinzhuang now hosts over 20 enterprises of various categories, achieving industrial diversification and upgrading towards high-end and intelligent industries. With a workforce of approximately 3,000 individuals and a total output value of 520 million yuan (\$72.3 million), the village stands as a beacon of success in rural development.

Looking ahead, Li exudes even greater confidence than 30 years ago, buoyed by the realization of the dreams and the new dream of technological advancement in rural areas.

When submitting proposals to NPC sessions, he has called for more technological support for rural areas and closely linking technology, professionals and the practical technological needs of rural revitalization to enhance the effective supply of agricultural technology.

When it comes to introducing technology to rural areas, it is crucial to select appropriate course content tailored to the needs of farmers, according to Li. Moreover, choosing competent instructors who can deliver lessons in understandable language is essential, he said, calling for an influx of tech experts to empower rural communities.

Amid the nationwide push for high-quality development and the surge in developing new quality productive forces, high-tech enterprises have taken root in Xixinzhuang. Various smart agriculture and eco-friendly technology companies have set up operations here.

Since the conclusion of this year's NPC session, Li has been busy working to promote technological application in rural areas.

"Accelerating comprehensive rural revitalization and the modernization of agriculture and rural areas is fundamental to comprehensively advance Chinese modernization. It is also the greatest aspiration of farmers," he said. (NPC) ■



Li Liancheng (second from the left) has a chat with his fellow villagers. Under his leadership, Xixinzhuang village has been transformed from a poor and backward remote village into a thriving community. Courtesy Photo



Wang Ling, a volunteer at the 1954 Constitution Archives Exhibition Hall in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang Province, gives a lecture tour to teenagers on the history of the Constitution. *Gong Yixi*

# A volunteer committed to promoting legal awareness

By Lu Yan

**I**n Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, nestled along Beishan street, stands the 1954 Constitution historical data exhibition hall. Here, a volunteer named Wang Ling brings history to life for countless visitors. With her warm smile and enthusiasm, she passionately shares the story of the first Constitution of the People's Republic of China, drafted some 70 years ago under the leadership of late Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

Wang, now 59, has dedicated the past eight years to constitutional awareness and education after retiring from a hospital. As one of the first few volunteers at the exhibition hall, she has become a beloved figure, known for her ability to connect with people of all ages. Each day, she immerses

herself in the stories of the past, recounting how the constitutional drafting group worked for 77 days and nights from December 28, 1953 to May 14, 1954, to create what is known as the draft of the 1954 Constitution, also known as the "West Lake Draft."

## Telling stories

On the Third National Constitution Day on December 4, 2016, to promote the spirit of the Constitution, the 1954 Constitution historical data exhibition hall was opened, becoming the first constitutional memorial venue in the country.

Every day, the exhibition hall welcomes a large number of

visitors. In addition to written and audiovisual archives, the exhibition hall also features many physical displays. The conference table, office desks, bookshelves and even the bedroom where Mao rested have been preserved as closely as possible to their original appearance.

Whenever Wang welcomes a group of visitors, she will start with a quote from Mao he made on a train which departed from Beijing to Hangzhou on the evening of December 24, 1953, carrying the members of the constitutional drafting group. “Everyone, please take a look at the wall in the entrance hall. It is engraved with a quote from Chairman Mao during his train ride to Hangzhou: ‘To govern the country effectively, a comprehensive law is essential. This trip to Hangzhou is to address the critical task of establishing our nation’s legal framework and ensuring its stability.’” Wang introduced. “From that moment, this city and the country’s Constitution became inextricably linked.”

To make her explanations more compelling, Wang places special emphasis on incorporating lesser-known stories and details. She gave an example from June 14, 1954, when the full text of the draft constitution was made public, sparking an unprecedented nationwide discussion. Over 150 million people participated in this discussion, and in just over two months, more than 1.18 million opinions were collected and categorized, covering nearly every article of the draft constitution.

“At that time, the country was in the flood season, and many areas were experiencing devastating floods. The floodwaters damaged roads and railways, so the opinions on the Constitution were wrapped in oil paper and airlifted to Beijing,” Wang explained.

Wang’s commitment goes beyond mere storytelling. She sees her role as vital in fostering a deeper understanding of the Constitution among the public. “I want to use my small efforts to contribute more to constitutional awareness,” she added. Her words reflect a profound sense of purpose; she believes that the Constitution is not just a document but the backbone of the nation, guiding its governance and ensuring justice.

Wang’s days are filled with interactions that inspire both her and the visitors. From schoolchildren to curious tourists, she engages them in discussions about their rights and responsibilities as citizens. The joy she finds in these exchanges is evident, and her passion is contagious. Many visitors leave the hall not only with knowledge but also with a newfound appreciation for the Constitution.

Wang introduces the information and stories catering to the needs of different visitor groups. When explaining to elementary school students, Wang prioritizes interactive methods to deepen their memory of important historical milestones, striving to transform abstract concepts into concrete, relatable details.

For example, when discussing the Constitution as the fundamental law of China, she uses vivid metaphors: “The Constitution is like the roots of a large tree, while other laws and regulations are like the trunk and branches.” When talking about the rights and responsibilities granted to citizens by the Constitution, she connects it to the children’s own experiences: “The Constitution guarantees everyone’s right to education. To uphold the Constitution, you should start by studying hard every day and fulfilling your duties.”

Over the past eight years, she has conducted more than 2,000 volunteer tours at the exhibition hall, serving over 40,000 visitors. Her total service duration has exceeded 20,000 hours.

In summer, Wang welcomed nine university students who had traveled from Henan province, more than 1,200 kilometers from Hangzhou, including Tu Tianjing, a student from the Law School of Henan University of Technology. This was her first time visiting the exhibition hall.

“Wang’s explanations felt like a guide traversing the river of time, recounting the entire process of the 1954 Constitution from drafting and discussion to adoption and implementation. It helped us understand the content, significance and role of the Constitution,” Tu said. “Wang not only taught us history but also connected the spirit of the Constitution to our lives, making me realize that the Constitution is not just text; it carries the hopes of the nation and its people.”

“After listening to Wang’s explanations, I gained a deeper understanding of the profound impact that the spirit of the rule of law has on our country and society, which has strengthened my commitment to pursuing a legal career,” said Liu Yuan, Tu’s schoolmate. “The 1954 Constitution is not only the starting point for the rule of law in the People’s Republic of China but also a treasure that inspires every law student to continue to promote the spirit of the rule of law.”

“Seeing the audience gain insights and feel moved makes

## The constitution is not just a document but the backbone of the nation, guiding its governance and ensuring justice.

me even more aware that this work is incredibly valuable and meaningful,” Wang said.

### The words spread

Wang has also played a crucial role in mentoring and encouraging new volunteers in constitutional awareness education. She provided support and hands-on training to individuals like Zou Hongwei, a 60-something retired dentist who initially felt nervous about becoming a guide. Wang emphasized the importance of interactive engagement with the audience, teaching techniques such as eye contact and question-and-answer interactions.

Wang’s encouragement helped Zou gain confidence. Through her efforts, Wang created a supportive environment that empowered others to engage in constitutional education and advocacy.

“The passion of volunteers is essential,” Wang said, expressing her hope for more people to join the volunteer team, working together to enhance constitutional education and make its principles known and felt by everyone.

The hall currently has over 350 volunteers, who provide more than 3,000 guided tours each year. By the end of July, the exhibition hall had welcomed over 2.35 million visitors from both China and abroad. ■



Deputies to the National People's Congress collect public suggestions on legislation at a legislative outreach office at Jiangxinyuan community in Hanyang District in Wuhan, Central China's Hubei Province. *Chen Yu*

# Stories of democracy: how public voices become important references for legislation in China

By Lu Yan

**Y**u Xiangchen, a 10th grade student at Chongqing Nankai Middle School in Shapingba district, had never imagined that a high school student like him could participate in national legislation.

On the afternoon of May 18, 2023, a legislative opinion solicitation forum targeting high school students was held at the school. As one of the student representatives, Yu attended the forum and shared his opinions.

"In the internet era, we should strengthen patriotic education and create a strong atmosphere of patriotism," Yu said at the forum. The other four student representatives spoke one after another, combining their study and life experience, and collectively proposed 12 legislative suggestions, such as using laws to strengthen patriotic education.

"Patriotic education should start with the youth, but how to do it, and which methods would be more easily understood and accepted by young people, the opinions of the young people themselves are very important," said the person in charge of the grassroots legislative outreach office in Shapingba.

Grassroots legislative outreach offices, established across the country, connect the highest state organ of power with ordinary people at the primary level. Since 2015, the National



A publicity lecture on the rule of law is held at a special meeting hall established at the county market in Caixi township, East China's Fujian Province. Courtesy Photo

## Grassroots legislative outreach offices connect the highest state organ of power with ordinary people at the primary level.

People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee has started setting up community-level legislative outreach offices to listen to opinions and suggestions from local residents on issues of common concern, and involve them in the lawmaking process.

Yu and his schoolmates' suggestions were summarized and compiled by the legislative outreach offices in Shapingba, and the next day they directly reached the NPC Standing Committee, becoming an important reference for legislation.

"This legislative opinion solicitation forum was a vivid ideological and political lesson, allowing everyone to truly feel the people's democracy in action as legislation is opened up to collect public opinions," said Ran Mengkai, secretary of

the Communist Party of China committee of Nankai Middle School.

Adhering to the principle of whole-process people's democracy in legislation, the NPC standing committee has established several channels to boost people's participation in lawmaking, including legislative outreach offices.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the CPC Central Committee's proposal to establish the legislative outreach office system. Over the past 10 years, the grassroots legislative outreach offices have been exploring and advancing in practice, providing an effective channel for people from all walks of life to express their demands and reflect the local situation and public sentiment. The system ensures that every law is filled with public will, close to people's livelihood, and in line with public aspirations.

### Building bridges

The first four legislative outreach offices were established by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee in 2015, and the number has reached 45 so far. There are over 10,630 supporting institutions for these out-

reach offices, including more than 5,630 dedicated to legislative information collection.

On May 30-31, a national conference of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee was held in Yiwu, east China's Zhejiang Province. The conference brought together personnel from the legislative affairs departments of the standing committees of people's congresses in 16 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, as well as 16 grassroots legislative outreach offices.

At the conference, they shared their work experiences, showcased the achievements and innovative measures in building these outreach offices, and promoted the high-quality development of the legislative outreach office system.

As of April, primary-level legislative outreach offices set up by the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee have gathered nearly 27,900 public opinions on draft laws, the commission said at the conference. Of these, more than 3,200 suggestions were adopted in the legislative research and drafting process.

The grassroots legislative outreach office of Jiangxinyuan residential community in Wuhan, Hubei province, established in March, has information collecting officers from diverse backgrounds in the community, including delivery workers, volunteers and cultural heritage inheritors. Through them and the office, Jiangxinyuan residents have so far proposed over 900 legislative suggestions, with more than 180 being adopted by relevant legislative bodies.

"Our voices are reflected in the laws," said Ke Dan, a resident serving as a community legislative information collecting officer.

Like in Jiangxinyuan, legislative outreach offices in different localities highlight an innovative model for bridging the gap between top-level policymaking and on-the-ground realities through strong community engagement and a systematized information collection network.

For example, the legislative outreach office in Jingdezhen, east China's Jiangxi province, has invited the deputies to the people's congresses and local residents to participate in leg-

islative discussions, research and hearings. The Bayi district People's Congress in Nyingchi, southwest China's Xizang autonomous region, has invited legal aid lawyers and legislative experts to provide lectures, with the aim of enhancing the professional capabilities of information collecting officers. This helps equip them to better fulfill their role in bridging the local community and the legislative process, further ensuring the voices and needs of the people are effectively conveyed to lawmakers.

Moreover, the legislative outreach offices play an important role in the popularization of legal affairs and knowledge, as well as improving the public's legal awareness. For example, the people's congress of Dali Bai autonomous prefecture in southwest China's Yunnan province has organized publicity and education activities centered on the Constitution and other laws to promote the rule of law.

As part of these activities, the local authorities invited inheritors of the intangible cultural heritage of the Bai folk music to adapt the newly revised Erhai Lake protection and management regulations into a traditional Bai folk song, known as the "Da Ben Qu." This adapted song, titled Protecting Erhai Lake, was then performed on a village opera stage. The performance was warmly welcomed by the people of the local Bai ethnic group, and significantly enhanced their awareness of protecting the Erhai Lake.

## Window to the world

As international exchanges become increasingly closer, grassroots legislative outreach offices are becoming an important platform for people from all around the world to know about China's development path, governance and democracy. Many such offices have established specialized teams of foreign personnel legislative information officers, publicity of laws related to foreign affairs, and mediation of foreign-related disputes.

Yiwu is known as a production hub for small commodities and a fertile ground for entrepreneurship and innovation. This county-level city spanning just over 1,100 square km has attracted 27,000 foreign businesspeople from more than 100 countries and regions to set up permanent presence, with over 8,000 foreign-invested entities. Statistics show that Yiwu welcomes over 560,000 overseas buyers annually.

Aku, a businessman from Pakistan, has been living in China for 24 years and is currently running a trading company in Yiwu. Initially, he was engaged in foreign-related mediation work in the Jimingshan community in Yiwu. Now, he serves as a legislative information officer at the community's legislative outreach office, and has participated in many consultation activities.

"At the legislative consultation session for the anti-telecom and online fraud law, Aku proposed that targeted measures should be taken for different potential groups of fraud victims," said the person in charge of the Jimingshan community. "While participating in consultation, the foreign information collecting officers have also actively engaged in community governance. They not only witness China's democracy up close, but have also become promoters of China's democratic stories." ■



The Shapingba outreach office of the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People's Congress Standing Committee holds a consultation meeting on patriotic education legislation at Nankai Middle School in Southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, on May 18, 2023. Courtesy Photo

# Origin of the people's congress system

By Wan Qigang

**T**he people's congress system is a great creation of the people under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in the history of human political systems.

Through the lens of history, one can gain a profound understanding of the arduous birth of this system.

After the Opium War in 1840, China was gradually reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, facing unprecedented political and national crises. Where was China headed? What kind of political system should China establish? The CPC, upon its establishment, took on the historical responsibility of liberating the Chinese people and making them masters of the country. By integrating the basic tenets of Marxism with China's specific realities, it engaged in long-term exploration and practice of people's democratic government and the fundamental political system of the state.

During the Great Revolution period (1924-27), the CPC led the movement of workers and peasants, established striking workers' congresses and citizens' congresses in cities and formed peasant associations in rural areas, which were initial explorations of building state power.

During the Agrarian Revolutionary War (1927-37), the CPC led the people in establishing Soviet political power. "Soviet" is a transliteration of the Russian term into Chinese, meaning "representative assembly." It is the organizational form of proletarian dictatorship established after the October Revolution in Russia. Members of the CPC, primarily represented by comrade Mao Zedong, pioneered a path of localizing and adapting the Soviet system in China. Zhou Enlai pointed out in the Research on the Sixth National Congress of the Communist Party of China that "with respect to the Soviet, regardless of the appropriateness of the term, it is a representative assembly of workers and peasants, fundamentally different from the parliamentary system of the bourgeoisie. Vladimir Lenin said that Soviet power can be used not only in capitalist countries but also in colonial countries. Comrade Mao Zedong developed this idea, turning it into China's system of representative assembly." Innovations were also made to the Soviet system in Chinese practice. For example, some grassroots Soviet representatives were elected by competitive voting; and an audit supervision system was established, where the audit committee effectively performed their duty.

According to the Outline of the Constitution of the Chinese Soviet Republic, the Chinese Soviet Republic implemented a polity of people's congresses composed of workers, peasants and soldiers. By convening people's congresses at all levels, the masses of workers and peasants gained participation in the political power and were able to exercise their democratic rights. The Central Soviet Area successively conducted three large-scale democratic elections, electing Soviet representatives and Soviet governments at the township (city), district, county, province and national levels. This embodied the basic characteristics of the people's congress system.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), the CPC led the establishment of a political power characterized by the Anti-Japanese National United Front. The Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan border region and the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia border region successively implemented a senate system where CPC members, progressive non-CPC figures and centrists each accounted for one-third in the composition of senators and government officials at all levels. This marks the beginning of consultative democracy in China. In terms of the establishment of governmental institutions, the border areas, counties, and districts adopted a repre-

sentative system, with each level having a senate, a government and a court, where the senate served as both the body of public opinion and the highest political authority.

During the War of Liberation (1946-49), the Liberated Areas gradually implemented the system of people's representative conferences. In April 1945, Mao Zedong stated in On Coalition Government: "The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history." This view of the people was deeply embedded in the organizational form of the new democratic state. This meant that "the organizational principle of the new democratic state should be democratic centralism, with the people's congresses at all levels making major policy decisions and electing governments." In 1948, Mao further articulated that the state's power organs "are the people's congresses at all levels and the governments elected by them." He emphasized, "We are a country of people's democratic dictatorship, and the word 'people' should be included in the name of governments and state organs at all levels, for example, the People's Court and the People's Liberation Army." This was intended to use the word "people" to define the nature of the state power, a practice that has been upheld ever since.

The North China Provisional People's Congress held in August 1948, the only institution and meeting under the name "People's Congress" prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, later became the prelude and prototype for the National People's Congress (NPC). The meeting was undoubtedly of national significance.

After the preparatory meeting for the new political consultative conference and before the first plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), a Meeting for Representatives from All Sectors of Beijing (now Beijing) was held from August 9 to 14, 1949. The CPC Central Committee attached great importance to this meeting, with key leaders including Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and Dong Biwu attending and delivering speeches. This meeting served as an exemplary model for the nation.

In September 1949, the first plenary session of the CPPCC was convened in Beijing. During this historic meeting, the CPPCC adopted the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, which served as a provisional constitution for the newly established PRC. This document solemnly declared that the New China would implement the people's congress system.

At that time, conditions for implementing a nationwide system of universal suffrage for the people's congresses were not yet mature. Therefore, the approach of having the plenary session of the CPPCC exercise the powers of the NPC and having local representatives' meetings act on behalf of the people's congresses was adopted to gradually effectuate the transition.

In the second half of 1953, China experienced an unprecedented electoral enthusiasm, marking the first large-scale election in history. Over 5.66 million grassroots deputies were elected, and people's congress meetings were convened at successive levels. Based on this, 1,226 deputies were elected to the first NPC.

In September 1954, the first session of the first NPC was held in Beijing. The session adopted the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which explicitly stated: "All power in the PRC belongs to the people. The organs through which the people exercise power are the NPC and local people's congresses at various levels." This officially established the people's congress system across the country. ■

*The author is the director of the National People's Congress Library.*

# Picturesque and Dynamic Zhejiang

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