

BELT AND ROAD HIGH LEVEL MEETING FOR HEALTH COOPERATION: TOWARDS A HEALTH SILK ROAD

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It is an honour and privilege to be with you today.

This Belt and Road High-level Meeting for Health Cooperation: towards a Health Silk Road is timely and topical.

Thank you Vice Premier Liu Yandong for your leadership. We were recently together in South Africa for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) meeting on health. And I know that the Belt and Road initiative is strong in your heart.

This meeting is topical because we live in unprecedented times. We have never seen such growing inequality and inequities in our history. As a recent Oxfam report highlighted, just eight people own the same wealth as the 3.6 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity. Across the world, people are being left behind.

The Belt and Road is about inclusiveness and connecting the dots across borders, issues and agendas for mutual benefit and development. It is a people-centred approach. Without this, there can be no transformation in health. The beauty of the Belt and Road is that it is about mutual respect and mutual benefit.

As United Nations Secretary-General Guterres has said, President Xi's ambitious and timely development agenda is in full harmony with the Sustainable Development Goals. At Davos and at the United Nations in Geneva, President Xi described the challenges and opportunities ahead in our new sustainable development paradigm. He encouraged us to leverage the advantages of globalization for people who are left behind and warned against exclusion.



Major health challenges remain. Only 3% of medicines consumed in Africa are produced in Africa. We will never sustain our health gains if we do not advance local production of pharmaceuticals. More than 70% of world's population cannot get adequate medical care as they cannot afford it. Globally, 2 billion people remain outside the reach of modern healthcare services.

That is why I am pleased to see many Ministers of Health with us today. You have a key role in helping transform the Belt and Road vision into concrete actions.

As President Xi said at the summit in May:

It is a road for peace.

A road for economic integration.

A road for innovation, research and development, including vaccines.

A road for inclusiveness and reducing poverty.

And a road for people to people connections.

All these roads lead to better health.

Let me close by saying that UNAIDS is committed to being a strategic partner for the Belt and Road initiative. Now is the time for quickening the pace of action and implementation.

My friends, there is an African proverb that says: difficult roads often lead to beautiful destinations. And what could be more beautiful than a healthy world.

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