

The Belt and Road Blue Cooperation Initiative

On October 18th, 2023, the Thematic Forum on Maritime Cooperation of the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in Beijing. Centering on the theme of “Promoting Blue Cooperation along the Silk Road”, fruitful discussions were conducted among the representatives of the Forum, building further consensus on strengthening maritime cooperation among countries along the Belt and Road.

China recognizes that the ocean is the largest ecosystem on the earth, a common space and invaluable asset for the existence and sustainable development of mankind, as well as the survival of civilization. The ocean is vital to global food production and nutrition supply, employment and well-being of people in coastal communities, as well as global sustainable development and ecological environmental protection. The blue growth is an important area for promoting global economic development.

China recalls that in the past 10 years since the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, especially since the concept of a Community with a Shared Future for Ocean was put forward in 2019, China has been making joint efforts with relevant countries to promote high-level and pragmatic maritime cooperation around the world, which has benefited countries along the Belt and Road, demonstrated the common aspiration for the pursuit of a blue and prosperous ocean by human society.

China believes that the ocean is currently facing multiple challenges, such as biodiversity loss, environmental pollution, climate warming and sea level rise, as well as frequent marine disasters. In the face of the common threats and challenges of all mankind, the United Nations issued the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, calling for strengthening marine cooperation, developing a sustainable blue economy, improving the health and resilience of marine

ecosystems, as well as promoting innovation and utilization of marine science and technology, which provides an important way for all countries around the world to jointly deal with threats and challenges, as well as to promote regional development and stability.

On this basis, China proposes that all countries take concerted actions, in the spirit of maritime cooperation, which is open and mutually beneficial, green and orderly, innovation-driven, and based on dialogue and consultation, to jointly protect and make scientific use of the ocean, sharing blue outcomes and building a blue homeland globally. Specific initiatives are as follows:

——Forge a “Blue Engine” for Sustainable Development

Promote the development of resilient and inclusive blue economy and tap the future potential to strengthen the role of blue economy in post-pandemic global economic recovery and green growth. Deepen maritime cooperation for international development based on clean production, green technologies, and circular economy, and advance the development, transform and upgrade of the marine industries. Accelerate the innovation in blue financial platforms, products, standards and service systems under the framework of green financial system and Green Investment Principles for the Belt and Road. Explore diversified financing modes and utilize financial instruments including blue bonds, insurance and funds, to improve the investment environment of blue industries. Enhance the cooperation in mariculture, fishery processing and coastal tourism, promote mutual recognition of standards among different countries, and lift the unreasonable import/export restrictions to build global industrial and supply chains unimpeded and mutually beneficial, and improve the cooperation in blue industries.

——Promote the sustainable use of marine resources

Conduct surveys and assessments of marine resources together with partner countries of Belt and Road cooperation as well as the international organizations, and explore multiple ways to realize the value of marine resources. Encourage the development of industries such as offshore renewable energy, desalination, marine

equipment manufacturing and marine biology products, support the sustainable fishery and cooperation in fishery conservation, and make the sustainable use of marine resources to benefit all human beings. Enhance the supervision and management of fishing activities. Strictly comply with the conservation and management measures, implement responsible fishing and combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, safeguard the legitimate rights and welfares of the crew.

——Implement marine spatial planning

Support the implementation of the Global Marine Spatial Planning Project to reduce and avoid the adverse impacts of human activities on coastal zones and oceans. Conduct marine spatial planning jointly with partner countries of Belt and Road cooperation, and launch pilot coastal health communities for promoting coordinated and sustainable development between land and ocean. Encourage the exchange of best practices as well as the implementation and evaluation studies, to consolidate the scientific basis of marine management for ecosystems, promoting marine protection and sustainable development.

——Conserve marine biodiversity and resilience

Protect, conserve and restore marine ecosystems, halt and reverse the deterioration of the marine ecosystems and biodiversity. Strengthen the protection of endangered marine species and critical habitats, cooperate in the establishment and effective management of the network of marine protected areas, and maintain the health, functions and values of marine ecosystems. Work jointly to monitor and evaluate the health of typical marine ecosystems such as mangroves, seagrass beds and coral reefs, support the implementation of marine nature-based solutions, conduct the conservation and restoration of typical marine ecosystems, and promote synergy between marine ecology and disaster reduction. Conduct assessments of the functions and values of marine ecosystems, accelerating the realization of the value of ecological products.

——Keep the ocean healthy and clean

Take practical actions to minimize the unnecessary use of disposable plastic

products, enhance the management of marine litter and microplastics. Oppose ocean discharge and call for responsible disposal of radioactive wastewater. Reduce marine pollution caused by land activities, ships and other offshore facilities. Carry out collaborative assessments of the marine environment and release assessment reports. Promote the regulatory transparency on marine pollution, and jointly improve the capacity to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment.

——Strengthen ocean-based climate action

Emphasize the critical role of ocean in the climate system, and unlock the potential and effect of the ocean on climate adaptation and mitigation. Attach importance to the concern of small island states and coastal areas about sea level rise. Strengthen research cooperation on topics such as ocean deoxygenation, ocean acidification, ocean warming and heat waves, melting of polar ice and snow, air-sea exchange as well as global carbon cycle. Jointly conduct researches on mechanisms and standards of marine carbon sink. Promote green transformation of marine industries to achieve Carbon Neutrality in the Ocean.

——Deepen marine science and technology cooperation

Support ocean-related basic science researches, positively take part in the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), enrich the knowledge needed to achieve sustainable development of the ocean, enhance the comprehensive awareness and understanding of ocean, and promote the widespread application of marine knowledge. Build a platform for marine science and technology cooperation, jointly undertake projects in ocean observation, investigation and research, establish a network for shared ocean observation and monitoring results. Support the development of global aquaculture technologies, and conduct scientific research cooperation on sustainable fishing. Promote the development of ocean science and technologies in an innovation-driven and benefit-sharing way, and boost cooperation in harmonization of marine technological standards, as well as technology transfer.

——Provide maritime public services

Implement the plan to jointly build and share maritime public services along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and support the basic maritime capacity for developing countries of the building of Belt and Road cooperation. Promote the construction of critical undersea infrastructure to enhance maritime connectivity. Establish a cooperation mechanism for maritime disaster prevention and mitigation, and launch cooperative researches and application models on maritime disaster risk prevention and response. Jointly promote the sharing of maritime data and information among countries, and build a maritime public information sharing service platform that serves economic and social development. Collectively establish a maritime disaster early warning system for key sea areas, regularly release maritime disaster early warning products, and enhance regional maritime disaster prevention and mitigation capabilities. Actively carry out international cooperation in such areas as maintaining the safety of sea lanes and combating pirates and transnational crimes at sea, to ensure stable and unimpeded maritime transport.

——Improve ocean literacy for all

Incorporate ocean literacy and scientific knowledge into education system, and protect traditional maritime culture and coastal indigenous knowledge, to ensure the long-term effectiveness of science and education for both ocean sustainable development as well as ocean resource and environment protection. Promote exchange for maritime education and culture, appreciate the role of youth and women in ocean-related affairs. Facilitate joint cultivation of maritime talents, establish regional and global maritime educational working networks, share best practices about ocean literacy development, enhance communications among ocean-related think tanks and social groups, promote mutual learning of maritime culture in different countries. Motivate exchange and cooperation in ocean related culture promotion, maritime cultural heritage protection and underwater archaeology and excavation.

——Build the Blue Partnership

Build an open, inclusive, concrete, pragmatic, and mutually beneficial Blue

Partnership based on the “Principles for Blue Partnership” and voluntary cooperation through extensive consultation and joint contribution. Respect the diversified marine development concepts of all countries, and conduct extensive consultations and build consensus. Promote the broad participation of governments, international organizations, the civil society and the businesses of all countries, and make good use of various bilateral and multilateral mechanisms and platforms, to address ocean-related issues of common concern by sharing marine knowledge, best practices, experience and lessons, and engaging in various forms of collaborative actions. Provide technical training and capacity building to developing countries and regions through South-South cooperation and triangular cooperation, to let the outcomes of blue development benefit more people around the world.

Following the principle of openness and inclusiveness, China welcomes and looks forward to the participation of all countries to jointly enrich content of the Initiative, implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, as well as explore new maritime cooperation models. China stands ready to work with all countries and people that are keen on ocean conservation, to make greater contributions for jointly building a blue homeland for the partner countries of the Belt and Road cooperation.