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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Letter dated 8 April 2020 from the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to bring to your attention the attached non-paper, entitled “Fighting the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: China in action”, which provides a detailed explanation of China’s efforts to contain and control the COVID-19 pandemic in China and around the world (see annex).

It is kindly requested that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 123.

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Annex to the letter dated 8 April 2020 from the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Fighting the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic: China in action

The world is seeing multiple outbreaks and the fast spread of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which poses a serious threat to people's lives and health in all countries and a formidable challenge to global public health security.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, under the strong leadership of President Xi Jinping, the Chinese Government has taken the most comprehensive, strictest and most thorough prevention and control measures to combat the outbreak. In their tenacious fight against COVID-19, 1.4 billion Chinese people have united together and made tremendous sacrifices during the present difficult times. From the first discovery of a suspected case on 27 December 2019 to the report of no new confirmed cases in mainland China for the first time on 18 March 2020, China achieved important periodic results in the fight against the pandemic in 83 days. While maintaining rigorous prevention and control measures at home, China is helping other countries in its full capacity and promoting international cooperation against the outbreak.

Facts speak louder than words. By taking strong measures, China has effectively protected the safety of the lives of people in China, bought valuable time for the rest of the world and provided concrete assistance to other countries.

- On 27 December 2019, cases of pneumonia of unknown cause were first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province. China's National Health Commission, Hubei Province and Wuhan City immediately conducted investigations.
- On 30 December, the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission issued an urgent notification to medical institutions under its jurisdiction, ordering efforts to appropriately treat patients with pneumonia of unknown cause.
- On 31 December, the National Health Commission sent a working group and an expert team to Wuhan to guide the epidemic response and conduct on-site investigations. The Wuhan Municipal Health Commission released a briefing about the pneumonia outbreak in the city, confirming 27 cases and advising the public not to go to enclosed public places or to gather. It suggested wearing face masks when going out.
- On 1 January 2020, the National Health Commission set up a leading group to determine the emergency response to the epidemic. The group has convened meetings on a daily basis since then.
- On 2 January, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences received the first batch of samples from four patients from Hubei Province and began pathogen identification.
- Starting from 3 January, China has been promptly and actively informing the World Health Organization (WHO) and all countries, including the United States, about the pneumonia outbreak.
- On 4 January, the head of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in China spoke over the phone with the director of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention about the pneumonia outbreak. The two sides agreed to keep in close contact for information-sharing and technological cooperation. As of 3 February, China had given the United States briefings on

the epidemic and on control measures in China 30 times, including sharing information with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention project manager in China about China's diagnosis and treatment guidelines, prevention and control guidelines and the linkage of the novel coronavirus database that China shares with the world in real time.

- On 5 January, WHO released its first briefing on cases of pneumonia of unknown causes in Wuhan.
- On 7 January, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, provided instructions on the epidemic response when presiding over a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee. Since then, General Secretary Xi has presided over 12 meetings on the epidemic response.
- On 7 January, the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention succeeded in isolating the first novel coronavirus strain. On 8 January, an expert evaluation team from the National Health Commission initially identified a new coronavirus as the cause of the epidemic. On 9 January, China informed WHO about the epidemic, sharing with WHO the initial progress in determining the cause of the viral pneumonia in Wuhan. WHO released on its website a statement regarding a cluster of pneumonia cases in Wuhan, saying that preliminary identification of a novel coronavirus in a short period of time was a notable achievement.
- On 10 January, research institutions, including the Wuhan Institute of Virology, developed testing kits. Wuhan City organized tests of all relevant cases admitted to hospitals in the city.
- On 12 January, the China Center for Disease Control and Prevention submitted to WHO the genome sequence of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV), which was published by the Global Initiative on Sharing All Influenza Data (GISAID) and shared globally. On 13 January, WHO issued, on its official website, a statement on the discovery of novel coronavirus cases in Thailand, pointing out that China's sharing of the genome sequence had enabled more countries to quickly diagnose patients.
- On 15 January, the National Health Commission unveiled the first version of guidelines on diagnosis and treatment for pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus, along with guidelines on prevention and control measures. So far, it has been updated to the seventh version.
- On 16 January, after the optimization of polymerase chain reaction diagnostic reagents was complete, Wuhan City took proactive measures to screen all patients treated in fever clinics or under medical observation in 69 secondary or higher-level hospitals.
- On 20 January, Premier Li Keqiang chaired an executive meeting of the State Council to make further arrangements for the prevention and control of the pneumonia outbreak caused by the novel coronavirus. As of 31 March, Premier Li had chaired 22 meetings on such prevention and control work.
- On 20 and 21 January, a WHO delegation conducted a field visit to Wuhan and visited the Wuhan Tianhe airport, the Zhongnan hospital and the Hubei provincial Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Chinese experts shared with Gauden Galea, the WHO representative in China, Babatunde Olowokure, Chief of Event Management of the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, and other members of the delegation a range of protocols that would be

used in developing international guidelines, including case definitions, clinical management and infection control.

- As from 21 January, the National Health Commission started to update, via its official website and its social media platform, the epidemic information from the previous day on a daily basis. It had updated that information 71 times by 31 March. Starting on 3 February, the official English website of the NHC started releasing epidemic information simultaneously, updating the data 58 times by 31 March.¹
- On 22 January, President Xi Jinping spoke over the phone with the French President, Emmanuel Macron, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, at their request. As of 31 March, President Xi had spoken over the phone with foreign leaders and Secretary-General António Guterres 34 times and had met with the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Samdech Techo Hun Sen, the President of Mongolia, Battulga Khaltmaa, the President of Pakistan, Arif Alvi, and the Director General of WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in Beijing.
- On 22 January, China's National Health Commission received a notification from the United States saying the first confirmed case had been reported in the United States.
- On 23 January, Wuhan was put under lockdown and unprecedented, comprehensive, thorough and rigorous measures were adopted.
- On 24 January, Shanghai sent its first medical team to Wuhan. Since then, China has mobilized medical workers across the country to support Hubei. Local provinces and cities have sent 346 medical teams to Hubei, with a total of more than 42,600 medical workers.
- On 28 January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China held a briefing for foreign embassies and missions in China on the prevention and control of the novel coronavirus outbreak.
- On 1 February, Premier Li Keqiang spoke over the phone with the European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen. As of 31 March, Premier Li has spoken with foreign leaders eight times.
- On 2 and 5 February, two special hospitals that had been built within 10 days each were put into use. Starting from 3 February, 16 temporary hospitals converted from public venues were built in Wuhan. On 10 March, the 16 temporary hospitals were closed, as all patients had recovered and had been discharged.
- On 10 February, President Xi Jinping conducted an inspection tour in Beijing on epidemic prevention and control.
- On 15 February, the State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, spoke at the fifty-sixth Munich Security Conference, introducing China's decisive measures to combat the COVID-19 epidemic and the notable results it had achieved.²
- As of 15 February, the proportion of severe and critical cases among all confirmed COVID-19 cases had dropped significantly in China (including in Wuhan and Hubei Province).
- On 16 February, the joint China-WHO expert team started a nine-day field visit in China. The team released the report of the WHO-China joint mission on

¹ See <http://en.nhc.gov.cn/DailyBriefing.html>.

² See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1746135.shtml.

coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19),³ recognizing that China had adopted unprecedented public health response measures and had achieved obvious results in slowing the spread of the epidemic and blocking the human transmission of the virus, avoiding or at least delaying hundreds of thousands of infected cases.

The team consisted of 25 experts from China, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Singapore, the United States and WHO. Foreign experts included Bruce Aylward, a senior WHO adviser; Tim Eckmanns, a researcher with the Robert Koch Institute; Dale Fisher, a professor at the National University of Singapore; Chikwe Ihekweazu, head of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control; Cliff Lane, a researcher with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the United States; Jong-Koo Lee, an associate professor at the Seoul National University College of Medicine; Natalia Pshenichnaya, head of the International Department and a consultant with the Center of Infectious Diseases of the National Medical Research Center for Phthisiopulmonology and Infectious Diseases of the Russian Federation; Aleksandr Semenov, Deputy Director of the Saint Petersburg Pasteur Institute of the Russian Federation; Hitoshi Takahashi, a scientist with the National Institute of Infectious Diseases of Japan; Maria van Kerkhove, head of the emerging diseases and zoonoses unit of WHO; and Weigong Zhou, a medical officer with the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases of the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- On 20 February, President Xi Jinping replied, in a letter, to Bill Gates, Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, expressing his appreciation toward the Foundation's actions in supporting China's prevention and control work against the COVID-19 epidemic.⁴ President Xi called for unity and cooperation in the international community to fight the disease.
- On 20 February, the State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi, attended a special China-ASEAN meeting of foreign ministers, presenting China's progress in epidemic prevention and control.⁵
- On 29 February, voluntary medical experts from the Red Cross Society of China arrived in Iran. On 7 March, a Chinese medical team dispatched by the Red Cross Society of China arrived in Iraq, carrying COVID-19 prevention supplies provided by China.
- On 7 March, China announced a donation of \$20 million to WHO to support its international cooperation in the fight against COVID-19.
- On 10 March, President Xi Jinping went to Wuhan to inspect the prevention and control work at the critical moment of fighting COVID-19.
- On 12 March, the first batch of Chinese medical experts arrived in Italy with medical supplies provided by China to help with its epidemic prevention and control efforts. The second and third groups of Chinese medical experts arrived in Italy on 18 and 26 March, carrying medical supplies donated by China, including ventilators, infusion pumps, monitors, testing reagents and face masks.
- On 18 March, no new confirmed COVID-19 cases were reported for the first time on the Chinese mainland.
- On 20 March, upon the initiative of China, the State Councilor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of China, Wang Yi, held a special video conference on

³ See www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/who-china-joint-mission-on-covid-19-final-report.pdf.

⁴ See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1748335.shtml.

⁵ See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/wjbz_663308/activities_663312/t1748009.shtml.

COVID-19 with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, Kang Kyung-wha, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Motegi Toshimitsu.⁶ They had an in-depth exchange of views on the joint response to the epidemic.

- On 26 March, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech, entitled “Working together to defeat the COVID-19 outbreak”,⁷ at the Extraordinary Group of 20 Leaders’ Summit. Stressing that the outbreak was spreading worldwide and that the situation was disturbing and unsettling, President Xi said that it was imperative for the international community to strengthen confidence, act with unity and work together in a collective response to win the battle against such a major infectious disease for humanity. Guided by the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, China would be more than ready to provide assistance in its full capacity to countries hit by the growing outbreak and to contribute to the stability of the world economy.
- On 26 March, President Xi Jinping wrote in reply to the WHO Director General, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,⁸ saying that China had always supported the global COVID-19 containment efforts with concrete actions and had offered assistance to WHO and other international organizations, as well as more than 80 countries. President Xi said China would continue to provide support for the international community in combating COVID-19 epidemic.
- From 29 March 29 to 1 April, President Xi Jinping conducted an inspection tour for coordinating efforts for COVID-19 prevention and control and for economic and social development in Zhejiang Province.
- Since the outbreak, China has mobilized the whole nation, established joint prevention and control mechanisms and introduced “early detection, early reporting, early isolation and early treatment” as the guidelines for prevention and control and the approach of admitting patients in severe conditions to facilities where the best resources and professionals are pooled, the effectiveness of which have been proven. China’s experience has been highly recognized by the WHO and has been adopted in various countries.
- China has been actively providing assistance to countries in need. As of 31 March, the Chinese government had provided material assistance including medical masks, N95 masks, protective suits, nucleic acid testing reagent and ventilators to 120 countries and four international organizations. Local governments have donated medical supplies to more than 50 countries, and Chinese businesses have donated medical supplies to more than 100 countries and international organizations.
- China is sharing all of its experience with the international community. China established an online knowledge centre on COVID-19 and a pool of experts for international cooperation. Since the outbreak, China has held more than 40 virtual technical meetings with over 100 countries and regions. Chinese medical teams aiding 56 countries have conducted over 200 online or offline training sessions on COVID-19 prevention for developing countries.
- In order to help other countries to respond to the outbreak, as of 7 April, China had sent 11 medical expert teams to nine countries, namely, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Serbia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Laos, Venezuela and the Philippines. Some provinces of China also sent medical expert teams abroad.

⁶ See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1759142.shtml.

⁷ See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1761899.shtml.

⁸ See www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1762604.shtml.

- As of 31 March, 65 press conferences under the joint prevention and control mechanism of the State Council of China had been held on a wide range of topics, including epidemic prevention and control, treatment and scientific research. Officials from 69 departments answered 779 questions raised by Chinese and foreign correspondents. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs held briefings and provided updates to diplomatic missions in China.

The Virus knows no borders, and the pandemic distinguishes no races. Defeating COVID-19 requires all Member States to strengthen confidence, take concrete actions in a responsible manner, respect science and facts and address the challenge with solidarity and collaboration. Any discrimination or stigmatization against States, peoples or individuals should be resolutely rejected. In the face of this tremendous test on humankind, the international community must collectively fight the pandemic to ensure a better future shared by all.
