

China's Arctic Policy and the "Polar Silk Road" Initiative

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Distinguished participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce briefly China's Arctic policy and the "Polar Silk Road" initiative.

1. China is a stakeholder in the Arctic affairs and has been involved in the Arctic affairs for a long time.

Geographically, China is a "Near-Arctic State", one of the continental States that are closest to the Arctic Circle. The natural conditions of the Arctic and their changes have a direct impact on China's climate system and ecological environment. China has long been involved in Arctic affairs. In 1925, China joined the Spitsbergen Treaty and started its participation. China's membership in the International Arctic Science Committee in 1996 marked its more active participation in scientific research in the Arctic. In 2004, China built the Arctic Yellow River Station in the Spitsbergen Archipelago.

China-Iceland Arctic Science Observatory officially inaugurated in northern Iceland in October last year. Up to now, China has successfully carried out nine scientific expeditions in the Arctic Ocean, and conducted research for 15 years with the Yellow River Station as the base. In 2013, China became an accredited observer to the Arctic Council. In recent years, Chinese companies have begun to explore the commercial opportunities associated with Arctic shipping routes. China's activities in the Arctic have gone beyond mere scientific research, and expanded into diverse areas. And also, China has played a constructive role in the formulation of Arctic-related international rules.

2. China is willing to work with the international community to better understand, protect, and develop the Arctic.

In January 2018, China released the first white paper on China's Arctic Policy, clarifying that China's policy goals on the Arctic are: to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic. When participating in Arctic affairs, China prioritizes scientific research, underscores the importance of environmental protection and addressing climate change, utilizing Arctic resources in a lawful and rational manner, actively participate in Arctic governance and international cooperation, and commits itself to

maintaining a peaceful, secure and stable Arctic order. China attaches great importance to the active role of the Arctic Council in the Arctic affairs, and abides by its commitment to become an observer of the Arctic Council and fully supports the work of the Council.

3. China is willing to build the “Polar Silk Road” with all parties.

The “Polar Silk Road” refers to the shipping routes that crosses the Arctic Circle and connects the three economic centers of North America, East Asia and Western Europe. In June 2017, China released the document *Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative*. It emphasized that China will make efforts to promote “a blue economic passage leading up to Europe via the Arctic Ocean”. In 2018, the White Paper on China's Arctic Policy further pointed out that China is willing to rely on the development and utilization of the Arctic shipping routes to build the “Polar Silk Road” with all parties.

In fact, the “Polar Silk Road” comes from the joint initiative of China and Russia, and has also received positive responses from other Arctic countries. In 2015, the Sino-Russian Prime Minister’s meeting reached a consensus on “strengthening the development and utilization of the North Sea Route and conducting research on Arctic shipping”. During the Belt and Road Forum in May 2017, President

Putin made it clear that he hoped to connect the Arctic shipping routes with the “Belt and Road”. In July of the same year, China and Russia decided to "develop the Arctic shipping routes cooperation and jointly build the 'Polar Silk Road'". The Yamal LNG project was officially put into production in December 2017. Russia, China, France and other countries are involved in this project. The first ship of LNG produced by Yamal was transported to Jiangsu, China through the Arctic Northeast Passage in last July, reflecting the superposition effect of the project plus shipping route. In addition, the China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) has completed 22 voyages through the Arctic Northeast Passage, saving a total of more than 90,000 nautical miles and more than 7,000 hours of voyage times, reducing fuel consumption by nearly 9000 tons, and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by nearly 30,000 Kilotons, has achieved good environmental and economic benefits.

What I want to emphasize is that China supports the current Arctic governance system, would like to strengthen its connection with the development strategy of the Arctic countries, and promote jointly building the blue economic passage leading up to Europe via the Arctic Ocean.

The current Sino-Finnish relationship has developed smoothly.

One month ago, President Niinistö successfully paid a state visit to China. The two heads of state jointly launched the 2019 China-Finland Year of Winter Sports. The two sides also jointly issued the "Joint Action Plan between China and Finland on Promoting the Future-oriented New-type Cooperative Partnership (2019-2023)", which includes "Research Cooperation on the Arctic". The exchange of high-level visits has provided new momentum for Sino-Finnish Arctic cooperation.

Nowadays, the sustainable development of the Arctic is witnessing a rare opportunity. The development of the Arctic needs passion, and it needs a sustainable vision and unremitting efforts. China is willing to cooperate with the Arctic countries and other stakeholders for the sustainable development of the Arctic.

Thank you.