Plenary Speech at the Opening Ceremony of The 2025 Understanding China Conference (Guangzhou)

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It gives me great pleasure to join you in Guangzhou for the 2025 Understanding China Conference. Let me begin by extending, on behalf of the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA), co-host of the conference, a warm welcome to you all. I once had the fortune of living in this city for two and a half years, and have deep affection for this vibrant land. What a heart-warming experience to revisit the place!

Guangdong has long been a pioneer, a forerunner and a testing ground in China's reform and opening-up, and Guangzhou is the permanent venue of the Understanding China Conference. In his recent inspection trip in Guangdong, President Xi Jinping made important instructions on advancing high-quality development by comprehensively deepening reform and opening-up. Today, it is both fitting and meaningful for us to gather at the forefront of China's reform and opening-up and in this hub of its high-quality

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development, to understand China better together.

President Xi Jinping pointed out that to understand China, one needs to understand China's efforts to further deepen reform comprehensively to advance Chinese modernization. This has provided clear guidance for us to write new chapters in advancing the cause of understanding China. Here, based on my work in people-to-people diplomacy and personal experiences, I wish to share with you my observations and reflections about understanding China from four perspectives: China's development, Chinese diplomacy, its people and its future.

First, understanding China is to understand China's development. China is one of the world's largest developing countries. Given this fundamental national condition, the Communist Party of China (CPC) has always taken development as its top priority in governance. Breaking new grounds in both the philosophy and practice of governance at every stage of development, the CPC has led the Chinese people in a persistent effort to turn development blueprint into tangible reality. From solving the problem of subsistence to building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, and to ushering in a new era of high-quality development, China has made leapfrog progress with a scale and speed rarely seen in human history. China has become the world's second-largest economy, and is making strides toward the goal of basically realizing socialist modernization by 2035, and building a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious and beautiful by the middle of this century.

Today, what impresses foreign visitors to China most is that absolute poverty has been made history in the country, and the poverty reduction target in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development met 10 years ahead of schedule. What fascinates

them most are the joy and convenience brought by the innovative products, technologies and applications of high-tech firms, like Huawei, Xiaomi and the Six Little Dragons in Hangzhou. What they most care about is how to be a part of China's high-quality development and share in the dividends of the Chinese market. And the set of books they like most is Xi Jinping: The Governance of China, where they have found the "golden key" to understanding Chinese modernization. Any fair-minded person would recognize that China has all along focused on running its own affairs well, and with its stability and development, brought valuable certainty to a turbulent world, and new opportunities and space for global growth.

Second, understanding China is to understand China's diplomacy. Our world is experiencing transformations unseen in a century, with rising deficits in peace, development, security and governance. Humanity once again stands at a crossroads. With the common interests and practical needs of the global community in mind, President Xi Jinping creatively proposed the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, along with the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative, and made building a community with a shared future for humanity the lofty goal of major-country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, demonstrating a keen sense of responsibility to history, humanity and the world. These Chinese proposals meet the desire of people everywhere for a better life, and are being translated into concrete Chinese solutions, Chinese actions and Chinese contributions. They have received broad-based recognition and support, and are among the global public goods most welcomed in the international community.

One foreign scholar put it well: It is in the context of the well-

being of all humanity that President Xi Jinping, as the leader of a great country, ponders over the question of "what has happened to the world and how we should respond." This is most valuable, and is a blessing for China and for the world. If one asks what holds the key to China's success in its major-country diplomacy, the key is the abiding commitment of the Communist Party of China to a happy life for the Chinese people, to the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, and to the progress of humanity and harmony in the world.

Third, understanding China is to understand the Chinese people. History is created by the people. China's 5,000-year civilization is built by its people with their wisdom and toil, and the Chinese nation is defined by a constant pursuit of self-improvement and great virtue. Eighty years ago, through unyielding struggle and tremendous sacrifice, the Chinese people defeated Japanese militarist invaders, made significant contributions to winning the World Anti-Fascist War, and re-established China's status as a major country in the world. Today, inspired by the great spirit demonstrated in the War Against Japanese Aggression, the Chinese people are forging ahead in unity toward Chinese modernization and national rejuvenation. Both history and reality show that isolation leads to backwardness whereas exchanges foster prosperity. In pursuing modernization, China will draw upon the fine achievements of other civilizations, and also needs the understanding and support of people around the world.

The people of Guangdong are known for their enterprise, pragmatism, openness, and dedication. From the establishment of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone to the development of the Greater Bay Area, from the industrial transformation in Foshan and Shunde to the rise of tech firms like Huawei and DJI, from the enduring success of the Canton Fair to the joint hosting of the

National Games by Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, the people of Guangdong have vividly demonstrated the continuance and elevation of the Chinese spirit in the course of reform, opening-up and modernization. Throughout the historical process of standing up, becoming prosperous and growing strong, the Chinese people have come to a firm conclusion that the Communist Party of China is the most staunch and strong defender, promoter and practitioner of their interests. They sincerely support the Party's leadership and choose to follow it.

Fourth, understanding China is to understand where China is headed. President Xi Jinping stated that realizing national rejuvenation has been the greatest dream of the Chinese people since modern times. The Chinese Dream has become the strongest driving force that inspires the Chinese people to press ahead toward a better future. At its fourth plenary session, the 20th CPC Central Committee outlined China's development blueprint for the next five years, setting economic and social development goals and making strategic arrangements for the 15th Five-Year Plan period. Some foreign friends observed that China is probably the only country that makes public to its people and the world the government priorities, objectives and pathways to follow, at least five years in advance, and has consistently done so for decades. Indeed, China's domestic and foreign policies are transparent; its strategic intentions, straightforward. This is because China pursues development not to challenge or replace anyone, but to see that its people live better and to expand space and create opportunities for cooperation with the world. Hence China's development is predictable, and unstoppable. China will continue to promote global development through its own development, advance the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, and bring certainty and positive energy to this volatile world.

Since the inception of the Understanding China Conference in 2013, the CPIFA has been a big part of the conference every step of the way. Together, with all Chinese and foreign partners and friends, we have witnessed the evolution of Chinese modernization, China's major-country diplomacy, the whole-process people's democracy, and the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, from theory to practice and the much progress made. At the Understanding China Conference, we have made friends, inspired ideas and gained much food for thought. We have developed a deeper understanding not just of China, but also of the world we live in and the future of humanity.

"New Plan, New Development, New Choices" is the theme of this year's conference, a theme that reflects the new context and tasks facing the cause of understanding China. China is now at a new starting point of building on past successes to break new ground in advancing Chinese modernization. The cause of understanding China will continue to advance in step with the country and the times. The CPIFA hopes to work closely with you to build more roads and bridges of communication that connect China and other countries, as Chinese modernization delivers greater benefits to the Chinese people and people across the world.