

China: Democracy That Works

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Preamble

Democracy is a common value of humanity and an ideal that has always been cherished by the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese people.

This year marks the centenary of the CPC. Since its founding in 1921, the Party has taken wellbeing for the Chinese people and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation as its abiding goals, and has made continuous efforts to ensure the people's status as masters of the country. China is a country with a feudal history dating back several thousand years that descended into a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society after the Opium War of 1840. Over the past hundred years, the Party has led the people in realizing people's democracy in China. The Chinese people now truly hold in their hands their own future and that of society and the country.

The people's status as masters of the country is the essence of people's democracy. Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, with a deeper understanding of China's path to democracy and the political system, the Party has developed whole-process people's democracy as a key concept and striven to translate it and relevant democratic values into effective institutions and concrete actions.

Whole-process people's democracy integrates process-oriented democracy with results-oriented democracy, procedural democracy with substantive democracy, direct democracy with indirect democracy, and people's democracy with the will of the state. It is a model of socialist democracy that covers all aspects of the democratic process and all sectors of society. It is a true democracy that works.

Democracy is a concrete phenomenon that is constantly evolving. Rooted in history, culture and tradition, it takes diverse forms and develops along the paths chosen by different peoples based on their exploration and innovation.

The best way to evaluate whether a country's political system is democratic and efficient is to observe whether the succession of its leaders is orderly and in line with the law, whether all the people can manage state and social affairs and economic and cultural undertakings in conformity with legal provisions, whether the public can express their requirements without hindrance, whether all sectors can efficiently participate in the country's political affairs, whether national decision-making can be conducted in a rational and democratic way, whether people of high caliber in all fields can be part of the national leadership and administrative systems through fair competition, whether the governing party is in charge of state affairs in accordance with the Constitution and the law, and whether the exercise of power can be kept under effective restraint and supervision.

Democracy is not a decorative ornament, but an instrument for addressing the issues that concern the people. Whether a country is democratic depends on whether its people are truly the masters of the country; whether the people have the right to vote, and more importantly, the right to participate extensively; whether they have been given verbal promises in elections, and more importantly, how many of these promises are fulfilled after elections; whether there are set political procedures and rules in state systems and laws, and more importantly, whether these systems and laws are truly enforced; whether the rules and procedures for the exercise of power are democratic, and more importantly, whether the exercise of power is genuinely subject to public scrutiny and checks.

Democracy is the right of the people in every country, rather than the prerogative of a few nations. Whether a country is democratic should be judged by its people, not dictated by a handful of outsiders. Whether a country is democratic should be acknowledged by the international community, not arbitrarily decided by a few self-appointed judges. There is no fixed model of democracy; it manifests itself in many forms. Assessing the myriad political systems in the world against a single

yardstick and examining diverse political structures in monochrome are in themselves undemocratic.

In the richly diverse world, democracy comes in many forms. China's democracy is thriving alongside those of other countries in the garden of civilizations. China stands ready to contribute its experience and strength to global political progress through cooperation and mutual learning.

I. Whole-Process People's Democracy Under CPC Leadership

China is a diligent and wise nation with a long history. It has created a brilliant political civilization. All of five thousand years ago, ancient Chinese began to explore the concept that people are the foundation of a state. Their ideas contained the seeds of what we know today as democracy. However, over the centuries of feudal autocracy, the people were always the oppressed and exploited underclass.

After the 1840s, China gradually descended into a semi-feudal and semi-colonial society. There was no popular democracy at all and the country was on the verge of collapse. The people stood up and fought to salvage their country. Revolution and reform were attempted, and many plans for saving the country were introduced, none of which succeeded.

Following the Revolution of 1911, the Chinese people made numerous attempts to introduce the Western political systems, including the parliamentary system, multiparty system, and presidential system, all of which ended in failure.

The rise of the New Culture Movement championing democracy and science, the victory of the October Revolution in Russia, the May 4th Movement, and the spread of Marxism in China, began to awaken the Chinese people, and progressive individuals gained a deeper understanding of democracy and came up with new ideas.

The founding of the CPC in 1921 was like a beacon, illuminating the way towards democracy in China.

During the New Democratic Revolution (1919-1949), the Party led the people in their tenacious fight for democracy, resisting oppression and exploitation in the course of their struggle. Ultimately, victory was secured in the revolution.

On October 1, 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded. This marked the ultimate transformation of the country from the rule of feudal autocracy, which had been in existence for several thousand years, to a people's democracy. It proclaimed that the Chinese people had stood upright. It ushered in a new era for democracy in China. It turned a dream into reality – the people running their own country.

During socialist revolution and reconstruction (1949-1978), the CPC united and led the people in:

- building and consolidating state power;
- completing the socialist transformation of the means of production;
- promulgating the first Constitution of the PRC;
- establishing the system of people's congresses, the system of CPC-led multiparty cooperation and political consultation, and the system of regional ethnic autonomy.

The political structure, economic foundation, legal principles, and institutional framework for the people to run their country were all put in place and have since developed steadily. China's tower of democracy was built on strong foundations and stands tall.

In the years of reform, opening up and socialist modernization after 1978, the Party led the people in advancing socialist democracy and the rule of law, sticking to the path of socialist political progress with Chinese characteristics.

It ensured the Party's leadership, the people's status as masters of the country, and law-based governance, and advanced reform of the political structure in an active and steady manner. The system of people's congresses was consolidated and developed. The system of CPC-led multiparty cooperation and political consultation, the system of regional ethnic autonomy, the system of community-level self-governance, and other basic political systems were improved.

The political and institutional guarantees and material conditions for developing democracy were reinforced.

Since the Party's 18th National Congress in 2012, socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era. The CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at the core has built a keen understanding of how the principal challenge facing Chinese society has changed. It has worked hard to respond to the people's new requirements and expectations for democracy. After drawing on past experience in maintaining order and stability across the world, and reviewing China's progress in democracy, the CPC decided to develop whole-process people's democracy, beginning a new stage of democracy. Some of the most important achievements are:

- strengthening the CPC's overall leadership, reforming Party and government institutions, and reinforcing the Party's leadership over the development of whole-process people's democracy;
- modernizing China's governance system and capacity;
- establishing and upholding the fundamental, basic, and important systems of Chinese socialism, with a more complete institutional framework to ensure the people's status as masters of the country;
- advancing democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management, and oversight, progressing electoral democracy and consultative democracy side by side, and expanding the people's orderly political participation and the scope of democracy;
- consolidating the people's principal position in the country's political and social life;
- leveraging the institutional strengths of Chinese socialism;
- promoting political stability, unity and vitality;
- building a nationwide force towards the country's goals in the new era;
- achieving a strategic success in the fight against the Covid-19 epidemic;
- ending absolute poverty, and completing the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

China has addressed major risks and set out on a new journey towards a modern socialist country and common prosperity, demonstrating the

viability and strength of whole-process people's democracy. The Chinese people have greater confidence in China's democracy, and can now look forward to a bright future.

Whole-process people's democracy is a creation of the CPC in leading the people to pursue, develop and realize democracy, embodying the Party's innovation in advancing China's democratic theories, systems and practices. The Party's history of struggle is a course of rallying the people and leading them to explore, establish and develop whole-process people's democracy. It is a logical outcome of history, theory and practice based on the strenuous efforts of the people under the leadership of the Party. It is a requisite for maintaining the very nature of the Party and fulfilling its fundamental purpose.

Whole-process people's democracy, giving full expression to the socialist nature of the state and the people's principal position, serves to better represent the people's will, protect their rights and fully unleash their potential to create. Whole-process people's democracy has formed and developed in a nationwide effort, led by the CPC, to strive for national independence, the country's prosperity, and the people's liberation and wellbeing. It is rooted in this vast land, nourished by the culture and traditions of the Chinese civilization, and draws on the achievements of human civilization. Suited to the conditions in China and embraced by the people, it has solid foundations and a bright future.

Whole-process people's democracy is a complete system with supporting mechanisms and procedures, and has been fully tested through wide participation. It integrates two major democratic models – electoral democracy and consultative democracy. It operates a democratic system covering a population of more than 1.4 billion from 56 ethnic groups of a vast country, making possible the wide and sustained participation of all its people. Whole-process people's democracy has distinctive Chinese characteristics; it also exemplifies common values and contributes China's ideas and solutions to the political progress of humanity.

CPC leadership is the fundamental guarantee for whole-process people's democracy. It is no easy job for a country as big as China to fully represent and address the concerns of its 1.4 billion people. It must have a robust and centralized leadership.

Committed to people-centered development and ensuring their principal status to run the country, the CPC governs for the people and by relying on the people. The CPC plays to the full its role as overall leader and coordinator in all areas of endeavor in every part of the country, to ensure that the people run the country effectively and that the people's democracy is an overarching philosophy, principle and policy in the country's political and social life.

The CPC follows the mass line – it is committed to doing everything for the people and relying on them, and follows the principle of “from the people, to the people”. It maintains close ties with the people and pools their wisdom and strength.

The CPC upholds democracy within the Party and practices democratic elections, decision-making, management and oversight, to better serve the development of people's democracy. The CPC has improved its mechanism for selecting and appointing officials, enabling outstanding individuals in all sectors to enter the Party leadership teams and the government, and ensuring that the leadership of the Party and the state rests in the hands of those loyal to Marxism, the Party, and the people.

The CPC upholds law-based governance of the country. It exercises leadership over legislation, guarantees law enforcement, supports judicial justice, and plays an exemplary role in abiding by the law. Through advancing the rule of law, the Party ensures that its policies are effectively implemented and that the people run the country as its masters.

II. A Sound Institutional Framework

In China, the people's status as masters of the country is the bedrock of all the systems of the country, and underlies the operation of all the systems for state governance. Whole-process people's democracy involves complete institutional procedures. These well-coordinated and comprehensive institutional procedures serve to put into place diverse, open, and well-organized democratic channels to ensure that the Party's policies and the state will be integrated with the people's aspirations, and that the people are masters of the country.

1. The Governing System of the People's Democratic Dictatorship

The Constitution describes China as a socialist country governed by a people's democratic dictatorship that is led by the working class and based on an alliance of workers and peasants. The fundamental nature of the state is defined by the people's democratic dictatorship.

China upholds the unity of democracy and dictatorship to ensure the people's status as masters of the country. On the one hand, all power of the state belongs to the people to ensure that they administer state affairs and manage economic and cultural undertakings and social affairs through various channels and in various ways in accordance with the Constitution and laws; on the other hand, China takes resolute action against any attempt to subvert the country's political power or endanger public or state security, to uphold the dignity and order of law and safeguard the interests of the people and the state. Democracy and dictatorship appear to be a contradiction in terms, but together they ensure the people's status as masters of the country. A tiny minority is sanctioned in the interests of the great majority, and "dictatorship" serves democracy.

2. The Governing Structure of the System of People's Congresses

The system of people's congresses, an organizational form of political power compatible with the governing system of the people's democratic

dictatorship, is China's fundamental political system, and the ultimate approach and optimal solution to guaranteeing the people's status as masters of the country. It is also an important institutional support to whole-process people's democracy. Under this system, all power of the state belongs to the people to guarantee their status as masters of the country. At the same time, it integrates the Party's leadership, the people's principal position, and the rule of law, to help the country avoid the historical cycle of rise and fall of ruling orders apparent through the centuries of imperial dynasty. Under this system, all the major political relationships with a bearing on the nation's future are properly managed, and all social undertakings operate under the effective centralized organization of the state. This maintains national unity and ethnic solidarity, and ensures that vigor, stability and order prevail in the country's political life.

The people exercise state power effectively through people's congresses; people's congresses exercise state power collectively on behalf of the people. The National People's Congress (NPC) is the highest organ of state power. Local people's congresses at all levels are local agencies of state power. All administrative, supervisory, judicial, and procuratorial organs of the state are created by the people's congresses, to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised.

The people's congresses have four main functions and powers:

- Legislation. The NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power of the state. The NPC exercises the powers and functions to amend the Constitution and enact and amend basic laws governing criminal offenses, civil affairs, state agencies and other matters;
- Appointment and removal of officials. The NPC exercises the powers and functions to appoint or remove the president and vice president(s) of the PRC, the premier, vice premier(s) and other members of the State Council, the chairperson and other members of the Central Military Commission, the chairperson of the National

Supervisory Commission, the president of the Supreme People's Court, and the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate;

- Decision-making. The NPC exercises the powers and functions to examine and approve major issues significant to national development and the interests of the people, such as the plan for national economic and social development and the report on its implementation, and state budget and the report on its implementation;
- Supervision. The NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the right of overseeing the enforcement of the Constitution and the work of the State Council, the National Supervisory Commission, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Local people's congresses and their standing committees exercise corresponding powers and functions as prescribed by law. The system of people's congresses makes extensive democracy possible by empowering people's congresses at all levels, to ensure that the people hold and exercise state power, and that they keep the nation's future firmly in their hands.

The deputies to people's congresses are fully representative of the people. They come from all regions, ethnic groups, sectors and social groups, and function at national, provincial, city, county and township levels. At the end of 2020, 2.62 million people were serving as deputies to people's congresses at all levels nationwide. Among them, those at county and township levels accounted for 94.5 percent of the total. Making full use of their close connections with the people, these deputies diligently fulfill their duties by soliciting and submitting the people's suggestions and advice through various forms and channels.

The annual people's congresses are first held from the grassroots upwards at township, county, city, and provincial levels and then at the highest national level, to take full cognizance of the people's aspirations and report them to upper levels. Since the launch of reform and opening up in 1978, about 3,000 NPC deputies have gathered in the presence of the

Party and state leaders at the NPC session each year to discuss plans for national development and problems affecting people's lives, and to put the people's expectations at the top of the agenda on state matters. Many of the motions and proposals put forward by deputies have been carefully reviewed and then included into policy decisions of state organs.

The system of people's congresses has provided institutional guarantee for the CPC to lead the people in effectively running the country. It enables the Party to turn its proposals into state policies, and to place the candidates recommended by Party organizations into positions as state leaders through statutory procedures. It also empowers the organs of state governance to exercise the Party's leadership over the country and society, to uphold the authority of the Party and the state, and to safeguard the unity and solidarity of the Party and the country. The system of people's congresses is the optimal choice, in accord with China's national conditions and realities. It embodies the socialist nature of the state and guarantees the people's principal position and national rejuvenation. It must be fully implemented, further enriched, and maintained as a long-term institution.

3. The System of Multiparty Cooperation and Political Consultation Under CPC Leadership

The system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC is a basic element of China's political framework. The Constitution stipulates, "The system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China will continue and develop long into the future." A new model grown out of the soil of China, it also learns from other countries and absorbs the fruits of their political achievements.

In China, there are no opposition parties. But China's political party system is not a system of one-party rule. Nor is it one in which multiple parties vie for power and govern in turn. It is a multiparty cooperation system in which the CPC exercises state power. In addition to the CPC,

there are eight other political parties.¹ The other parties participate fully in the administration of state affairs under the leadership of the CPC.

Under the shared banner of people's democracy, and respecting the principles of long-term coexistence, mutual oversight, sincerity, and sharing the rough times and the smooth, the CPC and the other parties have created a new political party system with distinctive Chinese features and strengths.

The CPC is the governing party, and the other parties accept its leadership. They cooperate closely with the CPC and function as its advisors and assistants. Through forums, talks, and written and other forms of consultation, the CPC consults with the other parties and prominent individuals without affiliation to any political party (non-affiliates) on major national and local policies and matters. It willingly accepts the democratic scrutiny of the other parties and the non-affiliates. In the exercise of state power, the CPC works together with the other parties and the nonaffiliates. Members of the other parties and the non-affiliates account for a certain percentage of the total numbers of deputies to people's congresses, the standing committees of people's congresses, and the special committees of people's congresses at all levels. Some of them occupy leading posts in state organs. The other parties and the non-affiliates actively deliberate on and participate in the administration of state affairs. They are valued advisors on key national programs and contributors to the development of the country.

¹ The eight other political parties are the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League, the China National Democratic Construction Association, the China Association for Promoting Democracy, the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party, the China Zhi Gong Party, the Jiusan Society, and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League.

Panel 1 Political Consultation

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee has organized or entrusted relevant departments to organize more than 170 consultative forums. On these occasions, it has engaged in consultation with the other parties and the non-affiliates and solicited their opinions on matters of great importance such as the CPC Central Committee reports to CPC national congresses and the Political Bureau reports to plenary sessions of the CPC Central Committee. It has called for their advice on amendments to the Constitution, on the drafting of medium and long-term plans for economic and social development, and on candidates for positions as leaders of the state. Its goal is to ensure more informed and democratic decision-making on major issues. Central committees of the other parties, together with the non-affiliates, have conducted in-depth field work and made more than 730 written proposals, many of which have become major state policies. Proceeding from reality, CPC local committees at all levels conduct consultations with corresponding local organizations of the other parties on important local issues, creating a driving force for the development of the local economy and society.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) serves as a key element of the multiparty mechanism. A specialized body for socialist consultative democracy, the CPPCC promotes unity, strengthens multiparty cooperation, and practices people's democracy in the process of political consultation. It maintains the traditions of the past, and keeps pace with the times. It reflects the distinctive features and strengths of China's socialist democracy – problems are solved through consultation. It is a key component of the state governance system, and a distinctively Chinese political institution.

Through the institutions of the CPPCC, representatives from all political parties, people's organizations, ethnic groups, and social sectors engage in political consultation. They carry out their routine duties through mechanisms such as plenary sessions, meetings of the standing committee, meetings of chairpersons, meetings of special committees, forums on specific subjects, and consultative seminars, and make proposals, conduct

inspections and field surveys, and report on social conditions and public opinions on a regular basis. In this way, they conduct extensive, constructive consultations on an equal footing and in an orderly manner, and put forward opinions and suggestions on important national strategies and policies and major economic and social matters. The CPC collects these opinions and suggestions and adopts those which are sound, while the other participants accept the Party's propositions and promote its guidelines and policies. In doing so, they increase trust and dispel doubts, convey the will of the people and draw on their wisdom, and build the broadest consensus, so as to form a shared ideological foundation for collective endeavors.

When the annual sessions of the NPC and the CPPCC National Committee (Two Sessions) are held concurrently each year, members of the CPPCC National Committee submit proposals for deliberation. They also sit in on NPC sessions to participate in the discussions on the amendments to laws and on the work reports of the central government, the Supreme People's Court, and the Supreme People's Procuratorate. This mechanism ensures that all the people can play a part in overseeing the work of the government, and forms China's own model of democracy based on the Two Sessions.

Panel 2 Biweekly Consultative Forums Convened by the CPPCC National Committee

Biweekly consultative forums convened by the CPPCC National Committee constitute an important innovation in China's consultative democracy. Forums on specific topics are the standard model, attended by specific participating groups and relevant Party and government departments. They integrate consultations on specific subjects, consultations on the handling of proposals, and consultations with relevant Party and government departments and with specific social groups. The biweekly consultative forums are designed to solicit advice and proposals on major economic and social development issues, leveraging the role of the CPPCC as an important channel and a specialized body for socialist consultative democracy. In total, 132 such forums were held between October 22, 2013 and November 6, 2021.

The system of multiparty cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC is an extensive and reliable means of representing and fulfilling the interests of the maximum number of people of all ethnic groups and social sectors. It avoids the drawbacks of the old political party system that stood for only a small number of people and interest groups. It unites all political parties and the non-affiliates towards a common goal, effectively mitigating the risks of inadequate oversight in one-party rule, and the problems of continual transfers of governing parties and destructive competition in multiparty political systems. Through standardized institutional procedures and arrangements, it pools ideas and suggestions to ensure informed and democratic decision-making. It avoids the weakness of Western-style political party systems: When making decisions and exercising governance, political parties act in their own interests or the interests of the classes, regions and groups they represent, provoking division in society.

4. Broad Patriotic United Front

The united front is an important structure through which the CPC earns popular support and pools strengths. In practicing people's

democracy, the Party has always placed the united front in an important position, striving to achieve great unity and solidarity and balance commonality and diversity. The Party has made coordinated efforts to unite the other political parties, the non-affiliates, intellectuals who are not CPC members, members of ethnic minorities and religious groups, people working in non-public sectors, people belonging to new social groups, compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and overseas Chinese and returned Chinese nationals. It has combined all the forces that can be united and mobilized all positive factors to build a broad consensus, expand common ground, and achieve convergence of interests. In order to pool the wisdom and strength of the Chinese nation to the full, it has systematically promoted harmonious relations between political parties, between ethnic groups, between religions, between social groups and between Chinese people at home and overseas.

The CPPCC is an organization of the Chinese people's patriotic united front. It is composed of representatives from 34 sectors, including the CPC, the other political parties, the non-affiliates, people's organizations, ethnic minority groups and other sectors, compatriots from the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions and Taiwan, returned Chinese nationals, and specially invited public figures. The First Session of the 13th National Committee of the CPPCC was attended by over 2,100 members, 60.2 percent of whom are non-CPC members. This demonstrates its important function as a center of unity and solidarity. It allows us to mobilize all positive factors and forces that cherish patriotism and support the CPC's leadership, and build a strong alliance for the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation by seeking common ground while setting aside differences.

5. The System of Regional Ethnic Autonomy

China is a unified multiethnic state. The CPC's ethnic policies are built upon the goals of forging a keen sense of national identity, maintaining territorial integrity and national unification, and achieving common development and prosperity through the joint efforts of all ethnic

groups. The system of regional ethnic autonomy means that areas with large ethnic minority populations can practice regional autonomy, establish autonomous organs, and exercise the power of self-government under the unified leadership of the state. This basic political system is specified in the country's Constitution and its *Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy*.

China's regional ethnic autonomy is autonomy under the unified leadership of the state. Territorial integrity and national unification are preconditions and foundations for regional ethnic autonomy, which combines unification with autonomy and ethnic factors with regional factors, and are thoroughly suited to China's realities. All ethnic autonomous areas are inseparable parts of the country, and all autonomous organs of these areas are local governments subject to the unified leadership of the central government.

Regional ethnic autonomy provides institutional and policy guarantees to ensure that ethnic minority citizens enjoy rights to equality and freedom, and to economic, social and cultural services. On all standing committees of people's congresses of the 155 ethnic autonomous areas, there are citizens from the local ethnic groups assuming the office of chair or vice chair; all governors, prefectural commissioners, and heads of counties of ethnic autonomous areas are citizens from the ethnic groups. The central government assists all ethnic minority areas in accelerating their economic and cultural development based on the characteristics and needs of the ethnic minorities there.

The system of regional ethnic autonomy has greatly increased the sense of pride and responsibility of people of all ethnic groups and stimulated their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity in jointly steering the course to a bright future. Under this institutional framework, communication and exchanges between ethnic groups, and socialist ethnic relations characterized by equality, unity, mutual assistance and harmony, have expanded. Ethnic unity has been reinforced, and a strong sense of national identity has been forged.

6. The System of Community-Level Self-Governance

Due to China's huge population and vast territory, there is great diversity in community-level governance. China applies a system of community-level self-governance represented by villagers autonomy, urban residents autonomy, and employees congresses. Under the leadership and support of community-level Party organizations, local residents directly exercise the democratic right to manage their own affairs by serving the community, undertaking self-education, and exercising public scrutiny. This effectively ensures that the people's rights are genuinely respected.

Villagers and urban residents exercise self-governance. Under the leadership of community-level Party organizations, residents in China's rural villages and urban communities establish villagers committees and residents committees, and directly exercise their democratic right to handle public affairs and public services in residential areas to which they belong:

- They hold democratic elections in which they elect villagers and residents committees.
- They conduct democratic consultation on local affairs in various forms.
- They practice democratic decision-making in handling community public affairs and public services through committee meetings and congresses.
- They carry out democratic management – they discuss and decide on their own rules on self-governance and codes of conduct and self-regulation, and run their affairs accordingly.
- They exercise democratic oversight – they elect village and urban community affairs oversight committees to supervise the handling of their community affairs and guarantee information disclosure.

As of the end of 2020, all the 503,000 administrative villages in China had established villagers committees, and all the 112,000 urban communities in the country had established residents committees.

Employees in enterprises and public institutions exercise democratic rights. Enterprises and public institutions practice a system of democratic management whose basic form is employees congresses, so that workers and staff can play an active role in decision-making on important matters concerning their immediate interests. They are implementing a system of employees serving as board directors and board supervisors. They have all employed a system featuring open access to enterprise affairs and are experimenting with practices that include open days to communicate with leaders, employee-employer consultations, and letters and messages to senior executives. These efforts are designed to mediate labor relations, listen to workers' voices, protect their lawful rights and interests, and collect complaints and suggestions on the operations, management and development of these entities. Corporate trade union committees are the operating mechanism of employees congresses. At present, there are 2.81 million primary-level trade unions in China, covering 6.55 million enterprises and public institutions.

Democratic innovations demonstrate great vitality. The Chinese people have explored and initiated numerous popular and pragmatic grassroots practices – residents councils, residents workshops, democratic discussions and hearings, courtyard discussions, neighborhood meetings, offline roundtables and online group chats. They have arranged for representatives of Party committees, deputies to the people's congresses, and CPPCC members to visit rural and urban communities. All these down-to-earth and pragmatic forms of democracy encourage people to voice their opinions and suggestions and conduct extensive consultation on matters related to their vital interests. This helps to coordinate the interests of multiple stakeholders, mitigate conflict, and maintain social stability and harmony at the grassroots level. Many successful grassroots experiences and practices have eventually turned into national policies, injecting new vitality into the development of China's democracy.

Panel 3 The Fengqiao Model

In the early 1960s, the officials and citizenry of Fengqiao Town in Zhejiang Province began a drive to solve problems *in situ* rather than passing them up to higher authorities. As a result, social order was well maintained and people lived in peace. The practice has developed over the intervening decades, and is now a model for promoting community-level governance and social harmony. What is commendable is that the local people, under the leadership of the Party, are able to solve small problems within their village, and serious ones within the town, so as to maintain social stability and promote development.

The system of community-level self-governance has strengthened the public's ability to understand and practice democracy, demonstrating that China's democracy is extensive and genuine. Community-level self-governance energizes all the "cells" of society. It makes grassroots governance more vibrant and efficient, and provides a solid institutional guarantee for a grassroots governance system in which responsibilities are shared and duly fulfilled, and achievements are enjoyed by all.

III. Concrete and Pragmatic Practices

Whole-process people's democracy in China is a complete system with supporting mechanisms and procedures, and has been fully tested through wide participation. China's whole-process people's democracy is a combination of electoral democracy and consultative democracy, and is applied through a combination of elections, consultations, decision-making, management and oversight. It covers the economic, political, cultural, social, eco-environmental and other fields, with a focus on national development, social governance and people's lives.

Whole-process people's democracy is a comprehensive and coordinated system involving extensive and regular participation, ensuring that the people's voices are heard and their wishes are represented in every aspect of China's political and social life. Whole-process people's democracy prevents individuals from manipulating the political process to win elections, and leaves no room for politicians to shower promises while campaigning and break them all once elected.

1. Democratic Election

By exercising their right to vote in elections, the people elect those who represent their will to hold and exercise power. This is an important form of democracy in China, and a clear demonstration of the people's status as masters of the country.

Elections in China are extensive and cover all aspects of the country's political and social life. They include elections to government institutions, villagers and urban residents committees, and employees congresses in enterprises and public institutions.

Elections in China are based on equality, and the people's right to vote and stand for election is fully guaranteed. Each person can cast one vote, and all votes are of equal value.

Elections in China are genuine and not manipulated by financial interests. Voters are free to vote for the candidates they trust.

Elections in China are progressing in a positive direction with the progress of the economy and society.

Elections to state organs. These include elections to the NPC and the local people's congresses at all levels, and those in which deputies to people's congresses elect leading officials of state organs at the corresponding levels. All citizens of the PRC who have reached the age of 18 – with the exception of those persons deprived of political rights in accordance with the law – have the right to vote and stand for election.

In accordance with the principles of universal suffrage, equal rights, multiple candidates, and secret ballot, deputies to people's congresses at the township and county levels are elected directly by the public. Deputies to people's congresses at the city, provincial and national levels are elected by people's congresses at the next level below. All deputies are elected for a term of five years. Leading officials of state organs at various levels are appointed or elected by people's congresses at the corresponding levels.

Panel 4 The World's Largest Community-Level Elections

In 2016 and 2017, more than 900 million voters participated in the elections to people's congresses at the township and county levels – the world's largest direct elections.

The elections involved more than 32,000 townships and 2,850 counties. Nearly 2.48 million deputies were directly elected to people's congresses at the two levels, and on this basis, new leaderships of state organs at these two levels were elected.

Community-level elections. Elections at the grassroots level are the most extensive and dynamic form of democracy in China. They include elections of villagers committees, urban residents committees, and employees congresses in enterprises and public institutions.

Villagers and urban residents committees are composed of chairpersons, vice chairpersons and members, and the elections are held simultaneously with those at the township and county levels.

Employees congresses – elected by all employees – are the bodies through which employees exercise their democratic management rights and make their own decisions in enterprises and public institutions.

China's democratic elections are adapted to the country's national conditions and stage of socio-economic development. Over recent decades, the *Electoral Law of the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses* has been amended progressively. The ratio of deputy representation in people's congresses has been optimized – in 1953 there was an imbalance between urban areas and rural areas that gave urban residents eight times more representation than rural residents. By 1995 this ratio had fallen to 4:1, and by 2010 there was parity – urban and rural residents had equal levels of representation.

As the understanding of democracy has grown, so has the number of people participating in elections. Since the initiation of reform and opening up, China has held 12 direct elections to people's congresses at the township level and 11 direct elections to those at the county level, with a current participation rate of about 90 percent.

2. Democratic Consultation

Whenever a problem occurs, those concerned should always hold deliberations in good faith. Matters involving many people are discussed by all those involved; to reach the greatest common ground based on the wishes and needs of the whole of society is the essence of people's democracy. The Chinese people widely exercise their right to vote in elections and undertake extensive deliberations before major decisions are made. Democratic consultation is a special feature of democracy in China.

Democratic consultation has been established on the basis of solid cultural, theoretical, practical and institutional foundations. It derives from the best of traditional Chinese culture, including such ideas as aspiring for

the common good, mutual understanding and inclusiveness, and seeking common ground while setting aside differences.

It comes from years of tenacious struggle by the Chinese people led by the CPC.

It originates from the political system created by all parties, organizations, ethnic groups, social groups and people from all walks of life since the founding of the PRC.

It also stems from China's continuous innovation in its state institutions since reform and opening up.

Democratic consultation takes many forms. In making and implementing decisions on major issues concerning reform, development and stability, and on matters bearing on the vital interests of the people, China conducts extensive consultations in all fields and at levels through various channels, including proposals, conferences, discussions, seminars, hearings, assessments, consultations, the internet, and opinion polls.

On matters that have a bearing on the interests of everyone, extensive consultations will be held throughout the whole of society; on matters that concern the interests of people in one specific region, consultations will be held locally; on matters that affect the interests of certain groups of people, consultations will be held among those groups; and on matters that concern the interests of a community, consultations will be held within the community.

The system of democratic consultation has improved. To promote the broad-based, multilevel and institutionalized development of consultative democracy, China has explored and expanded consultation channels to include consultations carried out by political parties, people's congresses, government departments, CPPCC committees, people's organizations, social organizations, and communities.

- The CPC and other political parties carry out consultations on major documents of the CPC National Congress and the Central Committee, the revision of the Constitution, the formulation and revision of major laws, the selection of candidates for state leaders,

medium and long-term programs of socio-economic development, annual plan of socio-economic development, and major issues related to reform, development and stability, the united front, and multiparty cooperation.

- In exercising their functions and powers, people's congresses at all levels engage in deliberations with government departments, social organizations, experts and academics, and the general public.
- Governments at all levels, when performing their duties, strengthen communication with deputies to people's congresses, members of CPPCC committees, and representatives from the other political parties, the non-affiliates, people's organizations, social organizations, and all sectors of society.
- Under the leadership of the CPC, the CPPCC carries out extensive consultations and build consensus on matters concerning reform, development, and stability.
- People's organizations conduct consultations with relevant government departments on matters concerning the people's vital interests, especially those concerning the rights and interests of particular groups, and participate in consultations organized by the CPPCC.
- CPC organizations, government departments, and people's organizations for self-governance at the grassroots level, economic and social organizations, and local people deliberate over issues concerning the development of local communities and the vital interests of the people.
- Social organizations participate in or carry out consultations to better serve society.

With these seven consultation channels in place, China practices a rich and extensive form of democracy.

China draws on collective wisdom and promotes full expression and in-depth exchange of different ideas and viewpoints through democratic consultation. Parties to these consultations respect each other, consult on

an equal footing, follow the rules, hold orderly discussions, stay inclusive and tolerant, and negotiate in good faith. In this way, a positive environment for consultation has been cultivated in which everyone can express their own views freely, rationally and in accordance with the law and rules. Through democratic consultation, China has built consensus and promoted social harmony and stability.

3. Democratic Decision-Making

Democratic decision-making is an important link in China's whole-process people's democracy. Reflecting the will of the people, sound decision-making ensures their rights and interests and improves their wellbeing. In China, the standard practice is to hear people's voices, act on their needs, and pool their ideas and strength. More and more ideas and suggestions of the general public are flowing directly to decision-makers at all levels, and they are increasingly reflected in the major decisions of the Party and the government.

Panel 5 Collecting Opinions When Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan

The recommendations of the CPC Central Committee on formulating the 14th Five-year Plan were drafted following a number of seminars, open discussions, and collection of public opinion.

General Secretary Xi Jinping chaired a symposium on the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region, and seminars with entrepreneurs, scientists, grassroots representatives, and experts on economic and social development, education, culture, health, and sports, to hear their opinions and suggestions.

The draft was circulated among a certain number of Party members and retired senior Party officials for suggestions, and opinions were also solicited from the central committees of the other political parties, heads of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, and the non-affiliates.

More than 1,000 suggestions were collated from a pool of some one million online messages. The drafting group analyzed them item by item, took them all into

consideration, and accepted all pertinent suggestions. Through thorough deliberation, 366 changes were made to the draft, reflecting 546 opinions and suggestions.

Open-door legislation by the NPC. People's congresses at all levels and their standing committees are committed to democratic lawmaking in the public interest. To reflect their will in lawmaking, the people's participation in legislative activities is guaranteed through various channels, an approach that has won wide public support.

When a piece of legislation is proposed, seminars, hearings and discussions are held to widely solicit public opinion, so that the people's will is reflected from the very first stage of legislation. When a law is being drafted, professionals and the public are both consulted, and now third parties are entrusted to draft laws and regulations on a trial basis. When a draft law is released, it is subject to public review from online channels and news media. Through local legislative information offices, people can participate in the drafting, research, revision, evaluation, and post-assessment of draft laws.

Panel 6 Legislative Information Offices

Legislative information offices collect public views and send them directly to legislative organs, contributing to progress in targeted, sound legislation. They are also developing new functions such as overseeing law enforcement, promoting observance of the law, and educating the public on legal matters.

The first legislative information offices opened for service in 2015. By October 2021 the Legislative Affairs Commission of the NPC Standing Committee had set up 22 such offices in 21 provinces and equivalent administrative units, covering two thirds of the country. Nearly 7,800 suggestions have been made on 127 legislative drafts and plans through these offices.

Transparent decision-making by the government. Governments at all levels hear the opinions and suggestions of all sectors on major decisions. Public participation in decision-making is ensured in various forms and through multiple channels.

At the beginning of the decision-making process, deputies to people's congresses and CPPCC members make suggestions and proposals, and citizens, legal persons, and other organizations can file written suggestions. During the decision-making process, opinions and suggestions are collected from all social sectors, and especially from those directly concerned, through formats including seminars, hearings, questionnaires, and field trips.

For public information, the draft decisions and relevant explanatory notes are available on government websites and media portals. In the last step, the final decision is made after group discussion based on the principle of democratic centralism. In post-assessment, public opinion is solicited once more, and deputies to people's congresses, CPPCC members, people's organizations, grassroots organizations, social organizations, and experts in various fields are invited to participate.

Grassroots decision-making. This happens in various forms of meeting among rural villagers and urban residents or their representatives, on a wide range of subjects such as the economy and society, infrastructure, social management, cultural services, eco-environmental conservation, the formulation of self-governance regulations, and other key matters in local governance. Rural villagers and urban residents also take part in carrying out the decisions they have reached.

4. Democratic Management

In China, the people manage their own affairs. They are the masters of the country and exercise their democratic rights accordingly, managing affairs of the state, the economy, culture, and society through various channels and in many forms.

Participation in the management of political and social life. The people exercise their rights and fulfill their obligations as prescribed by the Constitution. They participate in elections, consultations, decision-making, and oversight, and manage other areas of political and social life, fully enjoying their rights of information, participation, expression, and scrutiny.

Democratic management of urban and rural communities. As per the Constitution, relevant laws and regulations, urban and rural residents can set rules and conventions to govern their communities. Through discussion, they can decide residents' rights and obligations, the coordination rules and procedures between local organizations, and general principles for the collective economy, neighborhood security, fire safety, community sanitation, marriage, neighborhood relations, family planning, and activities concerning cultural progress. All urban and rural communities are run by their residents, who manage the public affairs and public services in their communities, exercise self-supervision, and seek to improve their lives.

Democratic management of enterprises and public institutions. With autonomy in their business operations and management, more than 150 million market entities are thriving across the country, providing job opportunities to over 700 million people, increasing China's national strength and promoting steady growth in economic and social wealth.

In accordance with the Constitution, relevant laws and regulations, enterprises and public institutions are run under democratic management through their employees congresses. The framework features disclosure of information on the affairs of enterprises, and systems for employees to serve on the board of directors and the board of supervisors. Under this framework, employees participate in business management, and protect their own legitimate rights and interests. In this way enterprises and their employees develop and maintain management mechanisms through consultation, and share the benefits they create.

A total of 3.14 million enterprises have established employees congresses, including 2.94 million private enterprises.

Panel 7 Grassroots Self-Governance Organizations in Covid-19 Response

Since Covid-19 hit China, China's grassroots self-governance organizations have worked closely with the government to fight the virus, creating a strong line of defense at the community level.

Some 650,000 urban and rural communities with more than 4 million community workers mobilized all forces available, including volunteers, officials and Party members sent to work in communities, and members from local enterprises and public institutions, to conduct screening for infection, stand guard, carry out disinfection, and provide care and assistance to local residents. They made an important contribution to safeguarding public health and the fight against Covid-19.

Democratic management of social organizations. Associations, foundations, social services and other social organizations formulate their own charters and exercise autonomy in managing their staff and activities. They address the concerns of their staff and clients, and hear their opinions. They participate in the governance of public affairs as appropriate to their role, and contribute to improving professional discipline, public services and charitable undertakings.

As of November 2021, more than 900,000 social organizations were registered with departments of civil affairs at all levels, including 2,284 with national networks. Diverse in form, social organizations have become an important area of people's democratic management in China.

5. Democratic Oversight

Comprehensive and effective democratic oversight enables the people to continue to exercise their democratic rights after elections, and ensures that there is an effective check on the exercise of power. In China, the abuse of power for personal gain is not eradicated by the rotation of ruling parties or separation of powers, but by sound, effective democratic oversight. Taking into consideration its own conditions, China has explored a coordinated system of oversight and established a well-defined, efficient

supervisory network with clear functions and responsibilities. Supervision of power extends across every area and into every corner.

Supervision by people's congresses. People's congresses play their full role in overseeing the enforcement of the Constitution and laws, and the implementation of major decisions and plans. The people's congresses at all levels and their standing committees have strengthened their efforts to oversee judicial, supervisory and law enforcement work by the government, supervisory commissions, people's courts, and people's procuratorates, to ensure that laws and regulations are observed and that administrative, supervisory, judicial and procuratorial powers are exercised properly. The people actively participate in supervisory work of the people's congresses by various means such as forums of NPC deputies, meetings of people from the grassroots, questionnaires, online research, etc.

Supervision by non-CPC political parties. The CPC encourages the other political parties and the non-affiliates to exercise democratic oversight by expressing views, making criticism and giving advice as they participate in political consultation, conduct field work, take part in inspection and oversight of the implementation of major policies, decisions and plans of the Party and the state, and carry out targeted scrutiny over major issues as entrusted by CPC committees, while adhering to the Four Cardinal Principles – to keep to the path of socialism, to uphold the people's democratic dictatorship, to uphold the leadership of the CPC, and to uphold Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought. The political parties, organizations, and prominent figures participating in the CPPCC can, in accordance with the CPPCC's charter, oversee in various activities organized by the CPPCC the implementation of major policies, decisions and plans of the CPC and the state by offering criticisms and suggestions. Their assistance to the CPC and the government in solving problems and improving their work increases solidarity.

Administrative supervision. The state administrative organs, in accordance with their statutory authority, procedures and methods, supervise their own operational and administrative acts. Different organs

supervise each other, and conduct internal supervision from top to bottom and from bottom to top.

Oversight by supervisory commissions. Supervisory commissions perform their duties of supervision as provided for by the law. They examine the political conduct of public servants and supervise their exercise of public power and their fulfillment of professional ethics; they can also urge relevant organs and units to strengthen education, management and supervision of their staff.

Judicial supervision. The judicial and procuratorial organs, in accordance with their statutory purview and procedures, supervise the exercise of public power mandated by the people. Judicial supervision is the most forceful form of oversight of the CPC and the state; it is the ultimate “line of defense” to ensure lawful exercise of public power.

Auditing supervision. Auditing organs at each level inspect budget performance, audit the final accounts and the revenues and expenditures of the departments at their level and of lower-level governments.

Fiscal and accounting supervision. Financial departments are legally empowered to supervise the enforcement of laws, administrative regulations, and departmental regulations that govern fiscal and accounting affairs.

Statistical supervision. Statistical departments and relevant offices with statistical functions and duties supervise all organizations and personnel producing official statistics, to prevent and punish falsification, and ensure that statistical data are authentic, accurate, complete, and up to date, providing reliable reference for planning economic and social development.

Public supervision. Citizens, legal persons and other organizations supervise the performance of state organs and their staff. They can request administrative review, initiate administrative litigation, or file complaints or charges with supervisory organs against any misconduct or crime involving dereliction of duty, abuse of power, or violation of professional ethics.

Panel 8 People's Supervisors

Selected from the public through set procedures, people's supervisors raise suggestions on public trials, public hearings, the service of legal instruments, evaluation of case handling, prison and detention house inspections, and inspections of standard judicial practices. They take part in judicial procedures in an orderly manner and oversee case handling by people's procuratorates.

Since 2003, procuratorial and judicial administrative bodies have selected and appointed 70,000 people's supervisors, 23,000 of whom are currently in active service. More than 60,000 cases have come under their supervision.

Supervision by public opinion. The media fulfill their supervisory role by representing public opinion, exposing in a timely manner abuses of public power, derelictions of duty, and acts of malfeasance. People are now relying more on the fast-growing internet and other platforms to offer criticisms and suggestions on the work of state organs and public servants at all levels. The internet is playing a bigger part in facilitating supervision by public opinion.

IV. Democracy That Works

With complete institutions and extensive participation, whole-process people's democracy has evolved from an idea into a system and mechanism of governance that has taken root in the soil of Chinese society and become part of people's lives. In practice, the principle of the people being masters of the country is manifested in the Party's governance policies and measures, in all aspects of the work of Party and state organs at all levels, and in the efforts to meet the people's expectation for a better life. The light of democracy has illuminated China's entire territory, allowing its people to enjoy extensive and tangible democratic rights.

1. Extensive Rights of the People

The Constitution stipulates that all power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people, and that the people shall, in accordance with the provisions of the law, manage state affairs, economic and cultural undertakings, and social affairs through various channels and in various ways. China's political power is not linked in any way with personal status, wealth, or social relations, but is equally enjoyed by all the people. The state power serves the people, rather than capital.

China practices a socialist market economy in which public ownership plays the leading role alongside other forms of ownership. Distribution according to work is the mainstay, while other forms of distribution coexist alongside it. This ensures that the lifelines of the Chinese economy remain firmly in the hands of the people, providing solid economic and material foundations for the people to run their own country.

In China, the people have the right to vote and stand for election. They enjoy the rights to be informed about, to be involved in, to express views on, and to supervise the state and social affairs. They have the right to criticize and make suggestions regarding any state organ or public servant. They enjoy freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession,

demonstration, and religious belief. The Chinese people take part in the management of state affairs and social, economic, and cultural affairs in an extensive manner; they also fully exercise their democratic rights in everyday life. Everyone plays multiple roles in advancing democracy, and enjoys corresponding democratic rights in the process.

In China, human rights are fully respected and protected. Living a life of contentment is the ultimate human right. China's economy has maintained long-term, stable, and rapid growth, and people's lives have significantly improved. China has established the world's largest social security system. The number of people covered by basic medical insurance has surpassed 1.3 billion, and the number of those covered by basic old-age insurance has now exceeded 1 billion. China has completed the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The entire country has shaken off absolute poverty and embarked on the road to common prosperity. The people have gained a stronger sense of fulfillment, happiness and security. Their rights to subsistence, development and health are fully protected, and their economic, political, cultural, social, environmental, and other rights keep expanding.

The Chinese people can see their rights being steadily enriched and improved. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, they began to seek subsistence and development on the basis of political and economic equality; after the launch of reform and opening up in 1978, they began to pursue both material and cultural prosperity; in this new era, China has eliminated absolute poverty, completed the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, made great strides towards common prosperity, and achieved remarkable successes in the fight against Covid-19. Throughout this course, the rights enjoyed by the Chinese people have expanded in scope and depth, and steady progress has been made in achieving the free and well-rounded development of the individual.

Panel 9 The Civil Code of the People's Republic of China

On May 28, 2020, the Third Session of the 13th NPC adopted the *Civil Code of the People's Republic of China*, which took effect on January 1, 2021. The first

law defined as a “code” in the PRC, the Civil Code consists of seven Books – “General Part”, “Real Rights”, “Contracts”, “Personality Rights”, “Marriage and Family”, “Succession” and “Tort Liability”, in a total of 1,260 articles. The Civil Code embodies the principle of people-centered development, in full consideration of the people’s expectation for a better life, and provides clear stipulations on citizens’ rights, including personal rights, property rights and personality rights. It reflects China’s efforts to fully protect the rights of the people.

2. Expanding Democratic Participation

If the people are awakened only to cast a vote but become dormant afterwards, that is no true democracy. If the people are offered great hopes during electoral campaigning but have no say afterwards, that is no true democracy. If the people are offered fulsome promises during electoral canvassing but are left empty-handed afterwards, that is no true democracy. In China, the concept of democracy has taken root in the people’s minds, and the practice of democracy has become an integral part of daily life and work, resulting in wide and sustained democratic participation. Democracy has become the norm, injecting great vitality into Chinese society.

The Chinese people are showing greater interest in democratic participation, which is expanding in scope and depth. The people participate in the management of state affairs, social affairs, and economic and cultural affairs; they provide opinions and suggestions for the design of national development plans at the highest level, and also contribute to the governance of local public affairs; they take part in democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management, and oversight; they express their aspirations and demands through channels such as the people’s congresses and the CPPCC, and through platforms like social organizations and the internet. Continuous innovations in the forms and channels of democracy have broadened participation: Electronic voting has

replaced “bean voting”¹; people no longer need to deliver their demands to government departments in person, but can turn to online channels. Public participation is seen throughout the process of determining what the Party and the government should do and how, and how to assess its results.

The people’s demands can be freely expressed and effectively fulfilled. Democracy starts with the full expression of the people’s wishes, but if people can only voice their wishes but have no way to fulfill them, that is no real democracy. China has ensured that its people have channels to express their aspirations, wishes and demands on issues ranging from important national strategies and policies to social governance and basic necessities of life, enabling their voices to be heard and their requests to be answered.

Through the democratic decision-making process, the people’s aspirations and voices can become the guiding principles and policies of the Party and the state. These principles and policies embody the people’s expectations and are implemented through cooperative and effective efforts by governments at central, provincial, city, county, and township levels, through the division of work and teamwork of departments responsible for leadership, management, coordination and support, and through the collaboration and synergy of such activities as decision-making, implementation, inspection, scrutiny, and accountability. Concerning problems directly impacting their personal interests, people can make suggestions and demands via channels like the online petition,

¹ Before the founding of the PRC, the CPC carried out extensive democratic elections across the countryside in the base areas of resistance against Japanese aggression and liberated rural areas under its leadership. Back then, the overwhelming majority of peasants were illiterate. The Party therefore introduced a series of innovative methods to enable those who could not read and write to exercise their right to vote in the elections. The most celebrated was called “bean voting”, a method using beans as ballots. A voter only needed to cast a bean into the bowl for the candidate of whom he or she was in favor. The candidate who got more beans would win the election. At that time, a folk rhyme was prevalent in those places: “Beans roll, beans vote, beans go into the right bowls.”

“leaders’ mailboxes”, government service hotlines, and online message boards, which can enable timely feedback and responses.

Panel 10 Ensuring the People Can Voice Their Demands Freely and Conveniently

During the drafting of the proposals for the 14th Five-year Plan, the CPC Central Committee solicited views and suggestions from people from all walks of life and set up an online platform for this purpose. A deputy secretary of a village’s Party branch submitted a proposal on mutual aid for the aged, which was incorporated into a document of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th CPC Central Committee.

In early 2021, the NPC Standing Committee solicited public feedback on the draft law on food waste. The 15 community-level legislation liaison stations in Yiwu City, Zhejiang Province held face-to-face meetings in catering business at the grassroots to collect comments and advice from owners of local restaurants, convenience stores, and small hotels. Their proposals were adopted and turned into stipulations in the final version of the law.

After the outbreak of Covid-19, an NPC deputy made a proposal on using AI-based lung CT scans to facilitate the early detection of Covid-19 cases. The NPC transferred the proposal to relevant departments, and it was quickly adopted.

Panel 11 Ensuring the People’s Demands Are Answered

Government service commitments such as “enforcement departments responding immediately to the call of grassroots communities”, “zero-delay response” and “immediate response upon receipt of complaint” have been set up to address public concerns in many places of China. They form a rapid, efficient work process that involves listening to and categorizing suggestions and complaints, assigning them to the appropriate departments, giving feedback, and conducting supervision. In this way, governments at all levels truly respond to public demands and address the issues and problems that directly concern the public.

The 12345 government service hotlines are public service platforms run by municipal governments in China. The platforms integrate channels such as the 12345 call center, “mayor’s mailbox”, SMS, mobile app, Weibo, and WeChat to allow the public to voice their demands, and provide a 24/7 service. In recent years, the call completion rate of the 12345 hotlines around the country has steadily increased, making them a useful avenue to address public concerns. In 2020, the average call completion rate of the hotlines reached 72.3 percent, and the average wait time was 16.2 seconds. Through encouraging everyone to take on responsibilities and participate in scrutiny, the 12345 hotlines help improve government services and safeguard people’s legitimate rights and interests.

The “Message Board for Leaders” (liuyan.people.com.cn) is a national online public service platform enabling principal officials of ministries and commissions of China’s State Council as well as local governments and Party committees at various levels to hear public concerns. Since its inception in 2006, the platform has enabled nearly 2.8 million public requests, suggestions and complaints to be heard and addressed.

3. Efficient National Governance

Democracy and national governance operate in parallel. Progress in democracy and modernization of national governance are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. It is hard to see how a country can serve as a good example for the rest of the world if its own model of democracy is unsuccessful or inefficient in national governance. One essential feature of a good model of democracy is that it will promote sound governance and boost national development.

High-quality democracy in China has improved the system, capacity and efficiency of national governance. Democracy has given prominence to the people’s principal status and reinforced their sense of being masters of the country. The people are the builders and beneficiaries of democracy. They fully tap into their own wisdom and strength to create a better life and make the country stronger.

Democracy in China effectively regulates political relations and fosters vibrant relationships among political parties, ethnic groups, religions, social groups, and compatriots at home and abroad. It bolsters national cohesion by minimizing internal friction, maintains political unity and stability, and creates great synergy in developing the country.

Democracy in China gives full expression to the guidelines of the CPC, the will of the state, and the expectations of the people, uniting the Party, the government and the people behind shared goals, interests and aspirations. This generates a huge cohesive force that translates into one of China's great institutional strengths – the ability to pool resources to accomplish major initiatives. It has helped unleash and develop the productive forces, incentivize all sectors in the drive for modernization, and raise the quality of life.

Democracy in China has always put the people first and improved their wellbeing. It has safeguarded national independence and protected national sovereignty, security and development interests.

Over the seven decades since the founding of the PRC, the CPC has led the people in overcoming formidable difficulties, opening a distinctive Chinese path to modernization, and achieving remarkable successes. There has been a marked increase in China's economic and composite national strength, and a notable improvement in the people's living standards.

China is the largest developing country. It hosts one fifth of the world population, but its per capita resource endowment is low. Its success today would have been impossible without the people's determination to run their own country and create a better life for themselves. Democracy in China means people-centered development that fully mobilizes the initiative of the people, relies on their strength, and ensures that all share in the benefits. This is the key to sound governance and the fount of democracy in China.

4. Social Stability and Harmony

Democracy is both a result and a marker of social progress. Democracy can only thrive in a society based on freedom, equality, justice, civility, unity and harmony. A good model of democracy should build

consensus rather than creating social rifts and conflicts, safeguard social equity and justice rather than widening social disparities in favor of vested interests, maintain social order and stability rather than causing chaos and turmoil, and inspire positivity and appreciation of the good and the beautiful rather than instigating negativity and promoting the false and the evil.

China's complex national conditions pose a set of unique challenges in governing the country. Through people's democracy, China has balanced the demands and interests of all social groups and strengthened national unity based on their shared ideas, interests and goals. The people can live and work in contentment, in a stable, vibrant and harmonious social environment.

In just a few decades, China has gone through a process of industrialization that took the developed countries centuries to complete. Despite undergoing this dramatic transformation, it has avoided the social unrest which has afflicted many late-industrializing economies in the process of modernization. Instead, it has maintained rapid economic growth and lasting social stability.

In China, personal liberty has developed to an extent never before seen in several thousand years of history. Creativity and potential for innovation have been fully unleashed, and people enjoy freedom of speech and mobility.

Every day in China, people travel freely across the country; 16,000 new companies are created; 1 billion people surf the internet, accessing news, communicating with other people, and expressing their views.

While China has become an open and free society, it has maintained order and stability and promoted unity and harmony. People's democracy is the propellant as well as the lubricant for China's social progress.

5. Effective Constraint and Supervision of the Exercise of Power

Power is a double-edged sword. It can only contribute to democracy and benefit the people when it is exercised under effective constraints and supervision. Unchecked, it is always likely to run out of control, sabotage

democracy, and harm the people. In China, the exercise of power has been brought under growing control and supervision. Public power, entrusted by the people, is and will always be exercised for the public good.

Restraining power in an institutional cage. Checks on and supervision over power are being strengthened under solid institutions, ensuring measures against corruption are thorough, all-encompassing, consistent and long-lasting. Ongoing efforts have been made to govern the CPC by regulations, and to promote law-based governance, law-based exercise of state power, and law-based government administration. Power is prescribed by law, and regulated, constrained, and supervised by legal means, to ensure it is exercised transparently. The CPC has taken measures to strengthen its regulations, and requires all its members and organizations to act within the scope of Party discipline and rules. Officials' term of office has been introduced for leadership positions, ensuring the orderly transition of leadership personnel in state organs. Management of officials, especially high-ranking officials, has been strengthened, with strict and clearly-defined rules over their incomes and entitlements to prevent the evolution of a privileged elite. The supervisory systems of the Party and the state have been improved; the Party, the government, the judiciary, and all sectors have become more transparent in handling affairs; leading Party and state organs and their personnel work within their statutory limits, with clear powers and responsibilities and following statutory procedures. All this prevents rent-seeking and ensures that the exercise of power does not stray beyond the proper boundaries.

Fighting and punishing corruption. Corruption is the arch-enemy of people's democracy. The Chinese government is determined to honor its commitment to 1.4 billion Chinese people by fighting corruption. With systemic efforts to address both the symptoms and root causes, the awareness, ability and resolve to resist corruption form an integral, coordinated whole. While punishments are meted out to deter crime, institutional checks and personal commitment to staying clean also play a role. No refuge has been excluded from the scope, no ground left unturned,

and no tolerance shown in the fight against corruption. China will continue to impose tight constraints, maintain a tough stance and long-term deterrence, and punish both those who take bribes and those who offer them. No case of corruption will escape investigation and no corrupt official will go unpunished. Just as a heavy dose of medicine will be taken to treat a serious disease, China will fight with all the means necessary to “hunt down tigers”, “swat flies”, “chase foxes” and mete out severe punishments to corrupt officials – big or small, in China or seeking refuge overseas. Strong, decisive measures have struck down corruption like thunder, forming a powerful deterrence that has helped to consolidate China’s sweeping victory in the fight against corruption. To solve this persistent malaise, a thorn in the flesh of all governments regardless of time or place, China has taken a clear stance and responded with resolute action.

Whether a model of democracy works should be tested in actual practice and judged by the people. Whether China’s model of democracy is successful should be judged by its people. It all boils down to whether the people can enjoy a good life. Surveys have shown that the level of public satisfaction with the government has remained above 90 percent for many years. This provides unequivocal evidence of the efficacy and vitality of democracy in China. The Chinese people will continue firmly on the path they have chosen to achieve greater democracy.

V. A New Model of Democracy

Democracy is a political form that has taken shape over the course of thousands of years. It has played a significant role in human development. Since the onset of the 20th century, democracy has made little progress in some countries, and others have found themselves in a state of turmoil and even have split apart. Today's world is facing challenges of excessive democracy, democracy implemented in great haste, democratic deficit and fading democracy. What has happened to democracy? Does it still work? The answers to these questions will influence world peace and development and the future of all civilizations. There is nothing wrong with democracy per se. Some countries have encountered setbacks and crises in their quest for democracy only because their approach was wrong.

In promoting democracy, China has undergone a difficult process of selection, experimentation, practice and development. China has created and developed whole-process people's democracy in line with its national conditions. This is a form of democracy with distinctive Chinese features which at the same time reflects humanity's universal desire for democracy. It has fueled the development of the country and driven the revitalization of the nation. It has contributed a new model to the international political spectrum.

1. Exploring New Paths to Democracy

It is extremely important, yet also very difficult, for a country on the road to modernization to promote democracy while ensuring political stability and social progress.

China did not follow the established path of Western countries in its modernization drive. Similarly, China did not duplicate Western models of democracy, but created its own. Now, the entire Chinese population, almost one fifth of the world's total, enjoys extensive rights and freedoms. This is most encouraging to developing countries and greatly enhances their

confidence in developing their own democracy. China's new approach to democracy represents a significant contribution to international politics and human progress.

The original aspiration of China's democracy was to ensure the people's status as masters of the country. China's path to democracy has been rocky and tortuous. Nevertheless, the nation has remained unshaken in its determination to pursue democracy based on its original aspiration. In today's China, the goal of ensuring the people's status as masters of the country has grown richer in content, wider in channels, and greater in impact, driving democracy in China onward.

An accurate understanding and a determination to forge ahead are preconditions and the key for realizing, developing, and enriching democracy. A sound and genuine democracy must allow the people to become masters of the country. It must allow them to enjoy the right to stand for election, the right to vote, and the right to extensive participation. It must allow them the right to express their expectations and the right to have those expectations fulfilled. It must allow them the right to contribute to national development and the right to share the fruits of development.

2. Following the Most Suitable Path to Democracy

Democracy is rich in form, and there are many ways to achieve it. Countries with different histories, cultures and national conditions may choose different forms of democracy. Blindly copying other models of democracy is a problematic endeavor – it risks creating cultural conflict, political volatility or even social turmoil and causing great pain to its people.

It is of vital importance for China to choose a path to democracy suited to a vast country with a large population. China draws on each and every political achievement of other countries, but does not imitate any of their models of democracy. China welcomes all constructive suggestions and well-intentioned criticism, but rejects any form of overbearing lecture. China must devise the most suitable form of democracy in accordance with

its characteristics and realities – a basic principle China adheres to for developing democracy.

As a populous country long plagued by weak economic foundations, China strives to strike a balance between democracy and development. The priority always rests with development, which is facilitated by democracy and in turn boosts the development of democracy. China has never indulged in empty talk on democracy regardless of a country's development stage.

Always drawing wisdom and strength from its 5,000-year-old culture and fine traditions, and based on a correct understanding of its current development stage and its economic and social conditions, China has made active and prudent efforts to advance democracy. To avoid fatal errors, it never seeks unrealistic goals or over-extends itself in pursuit of quick success. Instead, it focuses on identifying and resolving each and every problem, and presses ahead with democracy step by step to make the system more mature and well-defined.

There are no identical political systems in the world, neither is there a political model that fits all. Countries can borrow from the successful experience of others and develop forms of democracy suited to their own modernization process, but they should not simply duplicate other systems or models. The model that suits best is always the most appropriate. Only democracy rooted in a country's unique social environment has proven to be reliable and effective, and can thrive and progress. External interference and “democratic transformation” bring nothing but endless trouble. China never seeks to export the Chinese model of democracy, nor does it allow any external force to change the Chinese model under any circumstances. It firmly supports the independent choice by every country of its own path to democracy, and opposes any interference in others' internal affairs on the pretext of “bringing democracy”.

3. Promoting Democracy in International Relations

Democracy manifests itself in two dimensions: On a national level, it refers to the people's status as masters of their own country; on an international level, it refers to the democratic relations between nations.

A country's dignity should be respected, and its sovereignty, security and development interests are inviolable. To judge other countries by one's own yardstick, or force them to duplicate one's own political system or democratic model through color revolution or the threat of force are undemocratic in themselves.

China is a faithful and exemplary actor in pursuing, exploring and practicing democracy. It endeavors to increase democracy both within its own territory and between nations. At a time of momentous change of a scale unseen in a century, China champions peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit. China proposes to build a global community of shared future, and presses for a new model of international relations based on mutual respect, fairness and justice, and win-win cooperation. At a time of intense global competition in the economic, scientific, technological and other fields, China regards other countries as partners rather than rivals – it does not engage in cold war, confrontation, control or manipulation, but rather promotes mutually beneficial exchanges and cooperation.

China has actively developed global partnerships. It works to establish a framework of major-country relations that is generally stable and balanced. In developing relations with neighboring countries, it applies the principles of amity, sincerity, inclusiveness, mutual benefit, and the policy of promoting friendly and neighborly ties. In strengthening cooperation with other developing countries, China pursues the greater good and shared interests, and applies the principles of sincerity, affinity, good faith and real results. China has strengthened exchanges and cooperation with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative and shared the gains with them, expanding the initiative into more regions and turning it into a well-received global public good.

The present world is far from fair and just, equal and democratic. A small number of countries ignore international law, flout international justice, disdain international public opinion, flagrantly infringe upon the sovereignty of other countries, and interfere with others' internal affairs. They frequently abuse and dictate to smaller and weaker countries, turning the "global village" into a primeval jungle where the strong prey on the weak. In a world confronted by challenges, all countries, large or small, strong or weak, rich or poor, are equals, and should uphold the principle of democracy in international relations. Powerful countries should behave as befits their status, make the future of humanity their priority, and shoulder greater responsibility for world peace and development, rather than wielding their power in pursuit of supremacy or hegemony. The future of the world should rest in the hands of all peoples of the world. International rules should be made by all countries, global affairs should be governed by all parties, and the fruits of development should be shared by all.

4. Increasing Exchanges and Mutual Learning Between Civilizations

There is no single road to democracy. The true barrier to democracy lies not in different models of democracy, but in arrogance, prejudice and hostility towards other countries' attempts to explore their own paths to democracy, and in assumed superiority and the determination to impose one's own model of democracy on others.

Political systems vary from civilization to civilization, and each has its own strengths. All countries should uphold the principle of nondiscrimination, respect others' models of democracy, share experience with others, explore their own paths, and contribute their due share to human progress.

One Person, One Vote is a democratic principle, but it is by no means the only principle, nor does it of itself create democracy. However, it has long been misinterpreted and its meaning distorted by a small number of countries. The principles of One Person, One Vote and party competition

underlying the Western electoral system are propagated by them as the sole criterion for democracy. A handful of countries exploit democracy as a political tool. Adopting the hegemonic mindset that “whoever disagrees with me is wrong”, they interfere in the internal affairs of others in the name of democracy, and infringe on their sovereignty to serve their own political interests. They also incite antagonism and secession on the pretext of “bringing democracy”, causing endless instability in many parts of the world and aggravating international tensions. To advance human progress and achieve peaceful coexistence and common development, all countries must understand and promote genuine democracy.

Political parties in all countries are the major entities of modern governance and an important force for social progress. They should therefore assume their responsibility to spearhead democracy in pursuit of a shared future for humanity, and to achieve greater democracy in their own countries in pursuit of the greater wellbeing of their peoples. They should be open and inclusive, put people first, seek common ground while setting aside differences, and demonstrate mutual respect. The CPC is willing to work together with other political parties and political organizations around the world to increase exchanges, learn from each other, and promote human progress.

Conclusion

There is always scope for improving the system of democracy. Humanity's quest for and experiments with greater democracy will never end.

China has achieved considerable progress in developing democracy; to meet the new requirements of modernization and the people's new expectations for democracy, China still needs to make further improvements. On the path towards comprehensive socialist modernization, the CPC will continue to uphold people's democracy, embrace the people-centered development philosophy, promote whole-process people's democracy, ensure the sound development of democracy, and pursue well-rounded human development and common prosperity for everyone.

Today's world is experiencing change on a scale unseen in a century. It can anticipate hopes and opportunities as well as risks and challenges. All paths to democracy chosen by the peoples themselves deserve proper respect. We should pursue peaceful development, safeguard fairness and justice, increase democracy and freedom, and improve the people's wellbeing. This is the only way to build synergy among all civilizations in the quest for a better future.

Civilizations are enriched by exchanges and mutual learning. The Chinese people are willing to work together with all other peoples around the world to carry forward the common values of humanity – peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy and freedom. In a spirit of mutual respect and following the principle of seeking common ground while setting aside differences, we will add new elements to the world's political structure and advance towards a global community of shared future together.