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Green Development under Belt and Road Initiative: Pushing Forward the Global Implementation of the Paris Agreement

November 11, 2017, Bonn, Germany The Belt and Road Green Development and Climate Governance Side-Event Series at the 23rd UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP23) has officially been kicked-off, organized by Belt and Road Green Development Partnership.¹ Chinese and international representatives from government, academia, NGOs, financial organization, enterprises, and developing Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) countries have been invited to join a six-part series of side events, to discuss how to leverage BRI and other multilateral cooperation mechanisms to achieve the 2.0 and 1.5 degree targets, establish an “Ecological Civilization,” and implement the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Under the presidency of the Pacific-island nation of Fiji, COP23 will be focused around advancing the implementation details of the Paris Agreement (the “Rulebook”) and on preparing for the 2018 Facilitative Dialogue at COP24. After the Paris Agreement came into force, countries submitted their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). While there still remains a large gap between the emission reductions covered by NDCs and the emission reductions needed to achieve the Paris Agreement’s 2 degree target, global climate governance has entered a new framework of “bottom-up” emissions reductions. In this context, ambitious sub-national climate action and multilateral and regional climate cooperation are key to closing the emissions gap.

As China’s first regional economic and development initiative, BRI now covers nearly 70 countries, encompassing over 4.8 billion people, or 63% of the global population. Population density in these regions exceeds over 35% of the global average. Combined primary energy use across BRI countries accounts for 50.8% of global energy consumption. BRI countries are responsible for 41.1% of global oil consumption, 47.1% of global natural gas consumption, and 72.7% of global coal consumption. Economic development in this region is fairly extensive, with both intense human activities and high ecological vulnerability. Greenhouse gas emissions from BRI countries account for 60% of global emissions, and CO₂ emissions per unit GDP in the BRI region are more than twice the global average, while access to electricity remains a major challenge with outdated energy infrastructure across the region. Therefore, Whether or not BRI countries can successfully implement their NDCs will be

¹ See the Appendix for an overview of Belt and Road Green Development Partnership

critical to the global efforts to achieve the 2 and 1.5 degree goals. And there is a large opportunity and pressing need for green development and low-carbon energy and technology cooperation between China and BRI countries.

Given the large scale of the Initiative and the environmentally-fragile region which it covers, the attitude of the international community towards BRI remains cautious, with concerns that China is shifting its outdated and excess industrial capacity abroad. There is also apprehension over the potential environmental impacts of investments going into countries with weak environmental laws and governance. To alleviate these concerns, China has been using domestic and international dialogue platforms and cooperation mechanisms to reaffirm its intention to work with the international community to strive towards a “green, healthy, intelligent, and peaceful” Belt and Road. At the 19th National People’s Congress in October, 2017, President Xi Jinping declared that “taking a driving seat in international cooperation to respond to climate change, China has become an important participant, contributor, and torchbearer in the global endeavor for ecological civilization.” Following the United States’ announcement signaling that it would be withdrawing from the Paris Agreement, the world has been looking to China for climate leadership. As a responsible, major nation, China is promoting a more fair, effective, cooperative, and win-win international climate governance system. Through BRI, G20, and other multilateral cooperation mechanisms, China will help BRI countries to address climate change.

In recent years, China has also been encouraging the participation of civil society in the Belt and Road Initiative, to promote policy coordination along with people-to-people bond among BRI countries. On this basis, more than a dozen Chinese and international NGOs, foundations, and think-tank organizations jointly established *Belt and Road Green Development Partnership*, to promote green, low-carbon development among BRI countries. While China continues to improve its environmental governance domestically, this partnership hopes to work collaboratively to strengthen China’s global green leadership.

Dr. Yang Fuqiang, Steering Committee Expert of Belt and Road Green Development Partnership, believes: “As a developing country, China offers valuable lessons to be learned by Belt and Road nations. While China works to implement the Belt and Road Initiative, it can also share with BRI countries the technology and experiences from its own efforts to address climate change. Based on local conditions and in the face of development bottlenecks, China can help to coordinate development efforts towards bilateral mutual-cooperation, jointly striving towards the path of sustainable development.”

As Mr. Nguyen Tuan Anh from the Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment has stated, “climate change adaptation is a challenge that must be jointly faced by developing national, island nations, and least-developed nations. Both Chinese financing and China’s development experience are of great significance to us. I hope investments from the Belt and Road Initiative can flow towards climate-resilient infrastructure for cities, with active cooperation on financing, technology, institution, and capacity building from China and the rest of the international community.”

Appendix

About Belt and Road Green Development Partnership:

In September 2016, Belt and Road Green Development Partnership was launched to provide policy recommendations for sustainable development under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by bringing together Chinese and international think-tanks, environmental NGOs, and foundations. The Partnership aims to fulfill the goals set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, focusing on issues of ecological protection, climate change, energy transition, green finance, and industry cooperation. By working with the international community to promote sustainable development under BRI, this Partnership hopes to help China leverage and improve its leadership in global green governance.

Side-Events Schedule for Belt and Road Green Development and Climate Governance at COP23

Date and Time: November 7, 2017—November 17, 2017

Location: Bonn, Germany

Organizer: Belt and Road Green Development Partnership

Agenda:

Side Event 1. Nationally Determined Contributions in Belt and Road Countries and Green Development

Date and Time: 15:00-16:30, November 7 2017

Location: Meeting Room 11, Bonn Zone

Side Event 2. Exploring Ecological Service Valuation to Promote Green and Low-Carbon Development

Date and Time: 9:30-11:00, November 8 2017

Location: China Pavilion

Side Event 3. Chinese Renewable Energy Development and Climate Change Responses

Date and Time: 16:00-17:30, November 9 2017

Location: China Pavilion

Side Events 4. Green Energy Cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative

Date and Time: 10:00-11:15, November 11 2017

Location: PandaHub, Bonn Zone

Side Events 5. Multilateral Development Banks and Climate-Compatible Investments

Date and Time: 13:15-14:45, November 13 2017

Location: Meeting Room 7, Bonn Zone

Side Events 6. South-South Climate Cooperation to Drive Paris Agreement Implementation at National and Regional Levels

Date and Time: 11:30-13:00, November 17 2017

Location: Meeting Room 1, Bonn Zone