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XINHUANET



Interview: Three reasons why world should be confident in China's tackling of COVID-19 -- Kuhn

Source: Xinhua | 2020-02-20 16:41:22 | Editor: huaxia

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (Xinhua) -- "China's commitment, competence and readiness to change and improve" are the three reasons why the world should be confident that China will overcome the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19), a leading U.S. expert on China has said.

UNPRECEDENTED MOBILISATION

"China's commitment to fight the illness is exemplified by the country's astonishing mobilisation to stop its spread," Robert Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, told Xinhua via email on Wednesday.

Kuhn said he "takes it seriously" when the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, China's highest authority, calls the epidemic "a major test of China's system and capacity for governance."

It is "a phrase of such significance that in my 30-plus years of watching China, I do not recall the like," Kuhn said.

"China's mobilisation is unprecedented in global health history. Nowhere could it work like it works in China. And the reason it works relates to how the party system works," he added.

"The whole country is marching to this music. This is China's monumental 'whole of society' commitment. In President Xi Jinping's words: mobilising the people of the whole country, the whole army, and the whole party," the U.S. expert said, adding that "confidence in Beijing's pledge to end the epidemic is rooted in the country's record in mass mobilisation to achieve objectives, including poverty alleviation."

The CPC has been using the same kind of commitment and mobilisation to eliminate poverty in the country, lifting tens of millions out of poverty since 2012, he said.

UNIQUE STRENGTHS

"To me, one of the probative insights of why and how China can and will contain the epidemic is the remarkable parallelism between China's war on the novel coronavirus and China's war on poverty," Kuhn said.

First, he spoke highly of the operational leadership of the CPC, which is not just giving directives and pronouncements but actually implementing programs and projects through the CPC's organizational structure -- the central government and five levels of local government -- provincial, municipal, county, township and village.

Second, he commended the leadership of President Xi, who by voicing his personal commitment and allocating his personal time sets an example that leaders and officials must follow.

Xi visited scores of poor villages across China, said Kuhn. According to public data, the Chinese president has been to all the 14 regions of extreme poverty listed in the national directive on poverty reduction.

Similarly, when Xi visited hospitals, spoke with frontline doctors, the whole country gets the message," Kuhn said.

Third, the mobilization leadership of the CPC, which is able to command the country's human and material resources, for example, assigning "sister" relationships between strong provinces and specific cities in Hubei Province, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, is laudable, he said.

"An important factor is that since the CPC controls the PLA (People's Liberation Army), through the Central Military Commission of the CPC, of which Xi is obviously chairman, the military can be mobilized instantly to help in domestic crises, like earthquakes, floods and now epidemics," Kuhn said.

Several thousand military medical personnel have been flown to Wuhan, Hubei to engage on the frontlines working with infected and suspected patients, the U.S. expert said.

"The party leadership has also shown a willingness to change and correct mistakes, as seen in its admission of shortcomings in containment efforts so far," he said. "China's readiness to change and improve is a critical part of its governance system."

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