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Interview: China-proposed GDI offers what developing countries need the most, says scholar

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Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, speaks during an interview with Xinhua in New York, the United States, Sept. 17, 2023. (Xinhua/Wu Xiaoling)

Many countries benefit substantially from the Belt and Road Initiative and the Global Development

Initiative, said Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a leading U.S. expert on China. China also benefits from the two initiatives, such as via diversification of markets and access to natural resources, which makes the two initiatives self-sustaining.

by Xinhua writers Yang Shilong, Mao Lei, Xiong Maoling

NEW YORK, Sept. 20 (Xinhua) -- The China-proposed Global Development Initiative (GDI) deals with all kinds of projects and necessities that developing countries need the most, Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, said.

"The Global Development Initiative, in specific, has great practical importance," Kuhn told Xinhua in an interview on Saturday. Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed the GDI during his remarks at the general debate of the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021.

"Certainly, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) had obviously all the infrastructure projects. And as I've said in the past, that the infrastructure is the first step, you need to do that first," he said.

"But then the Global Development Initiative is the most natural application on top of that because it deals with all kinds of projects and necessities that poor or developing countries or the least developed countries need the most. These range from health care to educational facilities to the beginning of industrialization," said Kuhn.

Leveraging China's experiences, the GDI addresses global inequalities directly by focusing on poverty alleviation, food security, developmental finance, climate change and green development, industrialization, connectivity and the digital economy -- all areas of China's expertise, said Kuhn.

Kuhn said that many countries benefit substantially from the BRI and the GDI. China also benefits from the two initiatives, such as via diversification of markets and access to natural resources, which makes the GDI and the BRI self-sustaining. China can provide long-term, critical support to the developing world with its expertise and experience.

"It's all very natural for these countries to work with China in this mutually beneficial way," he said.

Sustainability, climate change and global inequities are "front and center" in China's initiatives on global governance, said Kuhn. These are now being recognized as "perhaps the planetary's primary concern because of the commitment we have not just to our own generation, but to future generations," he said.

"China is now a world leader in several aspects of sustainability, certainly in new energy vehicles, electric cars ... China is, arguably, now the world leader in not just the manufacturing of cars, but in the technology, battery technologies, etc.," he said.

"This is enabled due to the innovativeness of the Chinese scientists and technologists, but also the size of the market that can allow them to have economies of scale. So China has those advantages, and it is in the process of seeing how it can benefit the world and benefit itself in terms of internationalizing some of its activities," he said.

Kuhn was impressed by Xi's announcement during his 2021 UNGA statement that China will not build new coal-fired power projects abroad. He said this commitment puts climate change theory into real-world practice by reducing greenhouse gases, a move unmatched by the fine rhetoric of others.

"What is clear is that in the focus on sustainability and green technologies, China is a world leader. And it is committed to not only being a world leader but to sharing it with other countries and applying China's expertise in terms of the applicability in each individual country," said Kuhn.

Around the 2nd anniversary of the GDI, the Xinhua Institute, the think tank of Xinhua News Agency, released a report entitled "The Practical Achievements and Global Contribution of the Global Development Initiative."

Kuhn said that through the report, he found the GDI is particularly relevant for Africa.

"And you see that China's concern and interest in Africa appears in several of the initiatives, particularly in the Global Development Initiative, where China is pledging to help Africa develop its industrialization," Kuhn said.

"Although the other things, healthcare, education, communications, those are all obviously extremely necessary for the people. But the industrialization is something that will have long-term benefits to Africa," he said. ■



Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, speaks during an interview with Xinhua in New York, the United States, Sept. 17, 2023. (Xinhua/Wu Xiaoling)



Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, gestures during an interview with Xinhua in New York, the United States, Sept. 17, 2023. (Xinhua/Wu Xiaoling)

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This photo taken on Sept. 9, 2023 shows the construction site of the Magufuli Bridge project over Lake Victoria in Mwanza, Tanzania. (Photo by Herman Emmanuel/Xinhua)

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People attend a tomato cultivation training class at a demonstration village for China-Africa Agricultural Development and Poverty Reduction in Nakuru County, Kenya, on Sept. 18, 2023. (Xinhua/Han Xu)

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This photo taken on May 23, 2023 shows a Yutong electric bus at a launch ceremony in Lagos, Nigeria. (Photo by Li Peng/Xinhua)

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