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Address at the 3th Forum of the World Association for Political Economy

[CN] Weiguang Wang

Dear ladies and gentlemen:

Good Afternoon!

I am very glad to attend the “Marxism and Sustainable Development-- The Third Forum of the World Association for Political Economy” hosted together by WAPE, Academy of Marxism, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), The School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University, and The U.S. journal Nature, Society, and Thought. About 100 Marxist scholars from all over the world, from the perspective of Marxism, make a discussion on the issue of sustainable development confronted currently by the whole world and express their standpoints and viewpoints on this issue, which indicates the deep concern Marxist scholars from all the countries have on the issue of sustainable development. This is of great importance to promote the development of Marxism in the world, to facilitate the progress made by each country in its economic and social development as well as to enhance Marxist scholars’ common understanding on the issue of sustainable development. Here, on behalf of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, I’d like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the sponsors of the Forum.

This year is the 160th anniversary of the publication of Manifesto of the Communist Party. In the 160 years since the birth of Marx, great changes have taken place. Great progress has been made in the field of science and technology, social productive forces have been significantly improved, and the representation of the law of imbalance in economic development shows a tendency of diversification and complication. Political forces are constantly differentiated and integrated in the process of conflict and contest, and the economic and political pattern of the world is changing from a bipolar situation to a multi-polar one. Great changes have taken place in the social living structure, and suburbanization and industrialization are gaining constant progress in the whole world, with a decreasing population engaged in the farming industry. The tendency of diversification, multi-stratum and non-governmentalization and so on emerges in the social organization

structure in developed countries. All these changes provide Marxist scholars both in China and other countries with extensive scope for research and universe of discourse. From the standpoint of evolutionary Marxism, major challenges affecting the sustainable development can be summarized as follows:

First, the faultiness and irrationality of economic & social structure and institutions have brought huge risks and uncertainties to the economic and social development of various countries, which can largely be demonstrated by the fact that the risks and crises of economic and social institutions triggered by the predominant capitalist mode of production are becoming more complicated, which makes it more difficult for human beings to understand and grasp this complexity, constituting a challenge to the enhancement of human rationality and the accumulation of human knowledge. In the process of economic globalization, large-scale transnational flows of international capitals on the one hand have stimulated the economic growth of various countries and meanwhile intensified the imbalance of economic development among different countries, and on the other hand have increased the danger that a global financial crisis and economic crisis might break out. Risk management and control of international capitals have become a difficult problem with top priority for many countries to achieve sustainable development. Within the societies of various countries, the risk of a halt in the economic and social sustainable developments primarily depends on the capability to manage and control capital as well as the tense relations between capital and labor. A significant sign of the tense capital-labor relations is the increasingly serious polarization all over the world, including an increasing gap between rich countries and poor countries on the one hand and a constantly aggravating gap between the poor and the rich as a result of the neo-liberal policies implemented in some countries. In the production system of modern society, any social turbulence and halt of sustainable development is related to the conflict between capital and labor. In October of 2007, over eighty Marxian economists from fifteen countries in five continents attended the 2nd Forum of WAPE held in Japan and made a discussion focusing on the theme of “the Political Economy of the Contemporary Relationship between Labor and Capital in the World”, which adequately revealed the far-sightedness and profundity of the macro and strategic thinking of Marxist scholars from both China and other countries.

Second, negative impacts caused by inappropriate utilization of science and technology are threatening the sustainable development. Progress made in science and technology has promoted the economic and social development, and meanwhile changed the history of human beings and their rhythms of daily life as well as their concepts on time & space, on life and on value. However, when science and technology are benefiting human beings, their negative effects are also noticeable, for example, environmental pollution, network crime and other problems occurring around the globe are becoming more conspicuous, which is also one factor leading to the deterioration of human-nature and

human-human relations. According to the basic viewpoints of Marxism, it can be considered that the root causes of anomie of the management of science and technology and inappropriate exploitation and utilization of science and technology are the control of capital on science and technology. Development of science and technology is significantly influenced by the will of capital, while not based on the practical requirement of human beings. Therefore, utilization of science and technology in conformity with laws has become a problem which must be solved to achieve economic and social sustainable development.

Third, conflict between different values in the ideological and cultural domain brings potential threat to economic and social sustainable development. With the great changes in the fields of science & technology, economy, politics, society and so on around the globe, deep changes in the thinking mode and concepts on value of human beings have also occurred. Conflicts between the values of different cultures and religions have emerged at several levels in the international cultural communications. In the meantime, conflict of values between traditional culture and modern consumption culture has also become more and more intense. Conflict and contest between different ideologies are becoming more covert and indirect. Factors of ideology and culture are of great importance for each country to achieve economic and social sustainable development.

How to understand the reasons and nature of the emergence of such problems is the prerequisite for solving the problem of sustainable development. Scholars working in the field of humanities and social sciences from various countries in the world are engaged in extensive research and making unremitting efforts. Marxists in China are also deeply concerned with the problem of sustainable development, and under the direction of Marxist standpoint and method, they combine the basic principles of Marxism and the reality of China and advance the Scientific Outlook on Development with Chinese characteristics. In the 30 years since the adoption of Reform Policy, taking the Reform as the driving force, China has courageously conducted institutional and system innovation and has gained great achievements in the respects of economic system, political system and cultural system reform, which has deeply changed the visage of China's society. Institutions and policy systems suiting the requirement by socialist market economy have been gradually established, functions of capital are under effective control, mechanism of distribution among the whole society has been constantly improved, and the operation rules of the society are gradually becoming equitable and proper, all of which help provide a sound institutional foundation for China's sustainable development. China's government has adequately realized the importance of sustainable development, and devoted itself to solving problems related to its economic and social sustainable development driven by its responsibility for the people, for the whole mankind and for the next generation. In the economic aspect, following a new mode of economic development, China has taken a low-cost route with Chinese characteristics for its economic development. In the political

aspect, by means of establishing socialist political democracy, China is taking up with the sustainable development of socialist political civilization. In the aspect of the development of humanitarian society, via the construction of socialist thoughts, culture, moral and harmonious society, China is making great efforts to realize the socialist spiritual civilization and the comprehensive sustainable development of society and human beings. After the UN conference on environment and development held in 1992, the Chinese Government took the lead in organizing the constitution of China's Agenda 21, 21 -- China Population, Environment and Development White Paper as the programmatic document to guide China's economic and social development, which greatly promotes the process of China's economic and social sustainable development.

Probing into the way for China's sustainable development is one of the central projects of localization of Marxism in China, which from the beginning has taken the rebuilding of economic and social structure as its major research object and is deeply concerned with the economic and social sustainable development of various countries in the world. Since 1980s, Marxist economists from both China and abroad have gradually changed their research focus from socialist planned economy to socialist market economy, which demonstrates their scientific attitude of seeking truth and being pragmatic. Localization of Marxism in China requires sticking to the belief that Marxism is an open and scientific ideological system, adherence to the Marxist standpoint and method, basing itself upon the current reality of China, absorbing and referring to all the results obtained in the world reflecting the rules of economic and social development. It has been proved by practice that Marxism is still the most powerful ideological weapon to observe and understand the world today.

In the view of localization of Marxism in China, in a comparatively long historical period in the future, capitalist modern civilization dominated by capitalism remains to be the major form of social civilization, and social conflicts affecting sustainable development will still exist and constantly develop. Relations of production in developed countries have developed with the progress made in science & technology and productive forces, and industrial structure has been constantly adjusted, changed and upgraded. New changes also occurred in terms of modes of expansion by developed countries. In the meanwhile, socialist factors are also gaining progress all around the world. People in developed countries are having higher recognition of socialism, developing countries generally are having interest in Marxism, while in China, the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristic is having a quick development. I believe that with the collaborated efforts of people from countries of the whole world and promoted by Marxism, the human society can certainly overcome the difficulties they confront in the sustainable development, and at the time they achieve economic growth, they can effectively control the population growth, enhance people's mental attitudes, constantly improve the social security and welfare

system, make proper use of natural resources, effectively protect the ecological environment, and realize the harmonious development between human and nature as well as between human and human. Scholars from the CASS are willing to cooperate with colleagues from all over the world and devote themselves to this cause.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a good stay in China!

Thank you!