

We Need to Have A Correct Understanding on Some Basic Issues about the Novel Coronavirus Pneumonia Epidemic

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The Chinese Government and Chinese people are now working with the World Health Organization (WHO) and some other countries to fight against the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic with all efforts, and the situation is changing for the better. China has made a solemn promise to the international community that it has full confidence and capability to win the battle against the epidemic.

In the age of globalization, public health security bears on the life health of all humanity and has multiple impacts on various aspects of the society. It is highly spotlighted and should be handled properly. As for the novel coronavirus pneumonia epidemic, for the sake of ourselves, our countries and the international community, we need to have a correct understanding on the following basic issues so as to take an objective and rational attitude towards the epidemic and conduct scientific and reasonable prevention and control against it.

First, the epidemic is the result of both nature and human activities, and can happen in any country. In world history, there were numerous epidemics, including the 1918 flu pandemic, the 1957 flu pandemic, the 7th cholera in 1961, and the recent H1N1, Ebola, Swine flu, Zika, as well as the Measles, which happened in New Zealand and then spread to Pacific Island countries in 2019. Amongst those epidemics that happened in different time and countries, most of their pathogens came from nature. Although the source of the novel coronavirus hasn't been confirmed, the medical authorities tend to hold that it may come from some wild animal, like other epidemics.

From a rational point of view, any epidemic is an objective phenomenon resulted from certain natural conditions combined with normal productive and living activities of human beings. It can happen in any country and is not necessarily related to the social system and people's way of life in that country. The country of epidemic origin and people from that country

should not be demonized, not to mention discriminatorily name the epidemic virus or bacteria as “made in a specific country”. No matter how advanced our society or medical technology is, it is highly possible that new epidemic will happen, and the whole world should cope with the challenge.

Second, compared to other epidemics in history, China’s reaction towards the epidemic is normal at its early stage. The novel coronavirus is a new virus which is very complicated and sneaky. It is a new challenge for all humanity, and it takes quite some experiments and detection to further our understanding on it. There could be some deviations or faults during the process of understanding, which is normal and conforms to the law of scientific understanding by human beings.

In 2009, it was after six months since the outbreak of H1N1 flu that the US government finally announced a state of emergency. And that epidemic ended up in 60 million people infected globally with 280,000 deaths, the fatality rate is as high as 17%. The main reason for this tragic result is not that a certain country or government lacks responsibility, but it is that the cognitive standard and prevention and control capability of the international medical community need to be further improved.

The novel coronavirus epidemic has an incubation period of about 14 days and it outbreaked during the Chinese New Year holiday when mass population migration happened in China, which made it very difficult for the Chinese scientists to recognize and response to it. However, they managed to identify and separate the virus within a record time, measured its genome sequence and shared it with the WHO and other countries. The Chinese Government also immediately adopted a series of strong and effective prevention and control measures to fight the epidemic, and shared information with the WHO and other countries in a timely manner.

This epidemic makes China further realize the significance to promote the modernization of governance system and capability. It also gives a lesson to the international community that, when coping with any potential public health risks, we should adopt a bottom-line thinking for the purpose of safeguarding the life health for all humanity, and conduct early detection, early reporting and early treatment.

Third, the prevention and control measures adopted by the Chinese Government and Chinese people are the most strict ones in the world, and can be described as a textbook case. In order to fight the epidemic timely and effectively, the Chinese Government, with a highly responsible attitude towards the health security of its people as well as the international public health security, has given fully play to its institutional advantages of concentrating resources to accomplish major tasks, pool all available resources and conducted a series of strong measures against the virus, which are far beyond the requirements stipulated in the *International Health Regulations*.

Those measures include locking down the epicenter Wuhan and its nearby cities, adopting ventilation and disinfect measures to all public transportation, checking passengers' body temperature at airports as well as train and bus stations, closing some parts of the high-speed roads, extending the Spring Festival holidays, calling on the public to isolate themselves at home and avoid traveling, building two new hospitals with more than 1,000 beds each to treat the infected patients within 14 days, and mobilizing medical resources from all over the country to pour into Wuhan, etc. The Chinese people actively follow the national prevention and control policies and stay at home for isolation; the medical industries speed up their production of urgently needed medical materials such as face masks and protective clothing.

It can be said that the China Speed, China Efficiency and the Chinese Characteristics demonstrated during the concerted efforts by 1.4 billion Chinese people to fight against the epidemic are exemplary for the world. Such endeavors not only protected the health of Chinese people, but also made great contributions to the prevention of the virus to infect more people in the world. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director-general of the WHO, highly praised the timely, transparent and highly responsible manner of China's response to the epidemic. He said that China's prevention and control measures had set up a new benchmark for other countries to follow.

Forth, calmness and rationality rather than panic are the correct attitude for all countries to fight against the epidemic. Epidemic prevention and control require scientific policy-making, resource mobility and coordinated actions, among which the scientific policy-making based on rational attitude is very crucial, especially the policy-makers should

not be confused by biased and extreme words.

During this epidemic outbreak, fake information and rumors have loomed large online, which caused panic and even racial discrimination and hate in some countries. Rumors confuse minds and panic leads to disorder. This is a challenge that needs global solidarity and cooperation to cope with. Racism, discrimination and demonization, together with the virus itself, are the arch enemies we need to defeat.

Panic has led to irrational decisions made by many governments for the prevention and control of the epidemic without accurate and comprehensive information. For example, some governments chose to adopt irrational travel and trade measures on China and some countries despite the fact that the WHO strongly advised not to do so. However, when H1N1 flu was sweeping the globe in 2009, none of these countries adopted any limitations on a certain country.

Irrational policy decision by a government will not help safeguard public health, instead it will aggravate panic and the spread of rumors, undermine mutual trust, reduce the effectiveness of international cooperation, and increase its own cost for epidemic prevention and control. Some medical and economical experts in the US have pointed out that the coronavirus travel ban could backfire, because under such circumstances, individuals may be more likely to lie, governments may also hold back on the truth, and there can be major economic consequences.

Fifth, all the countries should work together to eliminate the adverse effect by epidemic on the world economy to maintain its steady growth. The world economy is struggling to recover, and the Chinese economy is one of the main engines of the growth of the world economy. If the growth of Chinese economy slows down, many countries will suffer.

In short term, the epidemic will have some impacts on both the Chinese economy and the world economy, especially in industries such as catering, tourism, transportation, movie, education and training, etc, in China. However, IMF, World Bank and many international economists hold that this impact is partial, temporary and limited. The Chinese digital economy is very dynamic and has created new growth point, which will

make up for the loss caused by the epidemic. Meanwhile, the production of medical materials boosted the development of the manufacturing industry. It is believed that people's consumption suppressed during the outbreak will result in sharp bounce after the epidemic. In the long term, with optimized structure, sufficient internal driving forces, large room for financial and monetary policies, stronger resistance against risks, the Chinese economy is very resilient and its positive momentum won't be changed by the epidemic.

We need to note that, in the process of the economic globalization, personnel exchange and trade in goods are becoming very important driving forces for the economic growth of both an individual country and the world. The temporary travel restrictions and trade limitation adopted by some countries due to panic and overreaction have weakened these driving forces, which will bring negative effects on the economic growth, particularly lowering people's living standard. It is hoped that those countries will stay calm and objective, listen to the professional advice from the WHO and International Civil Aviation Organization, remove the limitation measures so as to let the trade and personnel exchange freely. This would be a wise decision.

Sixth, closer cooperation in health will be a priority area in international cooperation. The best way for us to fight against epidemics is to strengthen international health cooperation and improve global medical standard. Not like citizens, viruses have no nationalities, and there are no national boundaries for the prevention and control of them. With regard to combating epidemics and safeguarding global health security, all countries are on the same boat.

Epidemics can happen in and spread to any county. All human beings are a community of shared destiny when facing epidemics. The famous bucket effect can be applied to global health prevention and control.

Countries with advanced medical technology should work together to

tackle medical problems. Developed countries should help those developing countries with weak and vulnerable health systems to enhance their capability in prevention and control of epidemics.

Medical care concerns the health and well-being of people from all countries, and international medical cooperation is an important bond to connecting people's hearts. Cooperation in health constitutes a crucial part of the Belt and Road Initiative(BRI). China stands ready to

strengthen cooperation in medical areas with all countries under the framework of BRI, and jointly improve the capability and standard to fight against global epidemics in order to make contributions to the cause of global health security.

No matter where we come from and what we do, a better understanding on the nature of the epidemic will help us make objective comments, rational decision and correct actions so as to work hand in hand to face the challenges. Through joint efforts to fight against the epidemic, the international community will be more confident, the international cooperation will be in a more friendly way, and the world will change for the better.