The Concept of the “Harmonious World”: An Important Contribution to International Relations

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Two years ago, When President Hu Jintao of China attended the World Summit Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the United Nations, he suggested for the first time that issues concerning peace and development of the world should be correctly handled with the concept of a “harmonious world”. This important thought not only answers the question of common interest to many countries, namely what kind of development road will China take in the future, but also expresses the fact that China has high expectations for members of the international community to conduct exchanges with each other on the basis of mutual respect and to solve various problems in a peaceful way. This concept will also lead China to actively participate in and influence the trend of international relations with a cooperative attitude.

I. The Nationality and Universality of the “Harmonious World” Concept

In its history of several thousand years, the Chinese nation has always venerated a philosophic thought that “harmony is most precious”, holding that the world could be “harmonious but also diversified” and countries should “seek common ground while reserving differences”. When New China was founded in 1949, it suffered from containment, blockade and encirclement by some

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Western countries. And China had a very bad international living environment. In order to break through the containment and blockade by Western countries, to protect the newly-born government, to safeguard state sovereignty and territorial integrity and to promote peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems, China, Myanmar, and India jointly initiated and formulated the basic principles for countries to dealing with their mutual relations in 1954, namely, “the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”, which has been universally known. Later, these five principles were accepted by most of the countries attending the Asian-African Conference and were written into the Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference. The “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence” reflected the trend of that time, and common aspirations of Asian and African countries as well as other developing countries that have the same historical experiences. Thus, they have gradually become the basic norms of international relations and basic principles of international law.

Since the end of the Cold War, peace and development has become the theme of the times once again. People all over the world long for lasting peace and strive for common development. However, the fact we are facing is that this world is not a perfect one, with inharmonious international relations, unjust distribution of resources and wealth and different levels of development among countries. Disputes and conflicts resulting from ethnic, religious, territorial and resources problems rise one after another. So do the non-traditional security issues such as terrorism, poverty, environmental deterioration, drug trafficking and so on. “Peace and development” is facing many challenges. All these require people from all countries to think calmly, cope with these problems together, and seek orders and behavioral rules, which have moral appeal and cohesion and are also just to most countries, in order to guide international relations to a virtuous development. The concept of the “harmonious world” summarizes the historical experience of China, and absorbs and carries forward the positive factors in all countries’ values. With the aim of maintaining world peace, this concept has sorted out the basic thought for today’s international community to establish lasting peace and promote common development, which is feasible and universally applicable.