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# Time to stop dumping onto others

In this global village, garbage exporters must realize that troubles shifted to a neighbor will come back sooner or later

By ZHANG MING

During a recent meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Council for Trade in Goods, some representatives raised concerns about China's ban on "foreign garbage" imports. Some even asked China to halt its implementation. As Chinese ambassador to the European Union, while quite surprised by such "concerns", I would like to share my views on why China made such a decision and why China will not overturn the ban.

China is a party to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal adopted in 1989. The convention provides for and fully recognizes the right of its parties to prohibit the import of hazardous wastes or other waste material.

China started importing solid wastes in the 1980s, whose annual volume surged from 4.5 million tons to 45 million tons in the past 20 years. A great amount of prohibited wastes, or "foreign garbage" as is often called, was mixed up in the imports, causing great harm to

China's environment and threatening public health. The widely watched documentary *Plastic China*, released in 2015, captures the problem well.

To address the challenge, China decided to ban foreign garbage and reform the management system for solid waste import. According to international law, China has the legitimate right to do so. This is what we must do to improve our environment and protect our people's health, as a crucial part of our new development philosophy. The decision has been widely welcomed and applauded by the Chinese people.

Before announcing the ban, China had full communication with other parties. It was a half year before the ban was actually put in place that we notified the WTO of the change. Issues arising in the course of implementation have been well addressed through timely coordination.

The Basel Convention stipulates parties have an obligation to minimize the quantities that are transported, and to treat and dispose of wastes as close as possible to their place of generation. In other words,

it is the due responsibility of parties to do their best to reduce and take care of their own waste. Only when this principle is appreciated can we join forces more effectively to promote green, low-carbon and circular development globally, and make our planet a cleaner and better place.

Interestingly, those who have expressed "concerns" are all from developed countries. For a long time, well-off and well-equipped developed countries have been dumping their garbage in developing countries. This phenomenon should not be overlooked.

It is more a moral issue that relates to the future of mankind than a trade issue. The great Chinese philosopher Confucius said: "Do not do onto others what you do not want others to do onto you." A famous quote from the Bible goes: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The Quran has it that "none of you have faith until he loves for the people what he loves for himself". No matter the civilization, it is morally unacceptable to dump trash in others' backyards. Moreover, as we already live in a global village, troubles shifted to

your neighbor will get back to you sooner or later.

For those garbage exporters, it is inadvisable to cry out loud and ask for too much from others, like spoiled children giving little heed to others' interests. Rather, they should first examine what is going wrong on their part and fulfill their responsibilities. Developed countries need to rely on their own efforts to address excess waste and endeavor to develop a circular economy. Then they could see what they can do to help developing countries tackle their waste challenge. This is the right way to go.

Many still remember the public health disaster in West Africa in 2006 caused by toxic waste shipped from other countries. The tragedy should have prompted garbage exporters to stop doing the wrong thing. Unfortunately, little has changed since. Erik Solheim, head of the UN Environment Programme, said: "We should see the Chinese decision as a great service to the Chinese people and a wake-up call to the rest of the world." Now, it is high time that developed nations rethink their use of plastics

and not simply seek alternative dumping grounds.

We already see encouraging changes in China and elsewhere in the world. The Chinese people are more aware of the necessity of waste separation and sorting, and are following more stringent rules on waste management and recycling. Some American companies are setting higher and more sophisticated standards for waste sorting, and have introduced artificial intelligence to handle waste. The EU has adopted the first-ever Europe-wide strategy on plastics as part of a transition to a more circular economy and to enhance the union's overall capacity for waste disposal.

If China's ban leads other countries to develop advanced technologies out of a greater sense of urgency and to better serve their own people with a stronger sense of responsibility, China must, indeed, be doing good.

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## Kim visit stresses Beijing role

DPRK leader's meeting with President Xi Jinping ahead of key summits shows importance of relationship

By MA CHENCHAO

Kim Jong-un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), paid an unofficial visit to China at the invitation of President Xi Jinping from March 25 to 28.

At his meeting with Xi, Kim discussed the Korean Peninsula issue, and his scheduled meeting with Republic of Korea (ROK) President Moon Jae-in on April 27 as well as his planned meeting with US President Donald Trump sometime in May, according to Xinhua News Agency.

The DPRK leader's visit to China and his meeting with Xi must have surprised those who were arguing that Beijing had been marginalized after Trump agreed to a historic meeting with Kim. The China skeptics

tried to further their argument after the date for the Kim-Moon meeting was announced.

In fact, there was no reason for China's detractors to be surprised at Kim's visit. After Trump tweeted that he would like to meet with Kim, he called Xi to convey the US' views on the Korean Peninsula issue. Shortly after that, Chung Eui-yong, special envoy of the ROK president, visited China to further explain the developments.

These facts should allay whatever doubts the China skeptics have about the importance and indispensability of China in the peninsula issue. They should also know the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK was built in the "crucible of war" and is based on mutual benefit.

The two countries have common strategic interests in promoting

**"(Kim's) first overseas trip after becoming the DPRK's top leader will likely pave the way for restoring permanent peace and stability on the peninsula."**

peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Although the DPRK's persistent adherence to the nuclear and missile program did somewhat affect its ties with China, Kim understands that maintaining good relations with Beijing is key to keeping peace on the peninsula.

That Kim visited China immediately after the annual sessions of China's top legislature and top political advisory body suggests the DPRK is committed to improving its relations with China, and his first overseas trip after becoming the DPRK's top leader will likely pave the way for restoring permanent peace and stability on the peninsula.

Pyongyang also needs Beijing's support to raise the stakes in its bargaining with Seoul and Washington. Even with positive changes, the fundamental dynamics of rivalry between the DPRK and the US, as

well as the ROK, are not going to change overnight, as demonstrated by the resumption of the Washington-Seoul annual military drills, called Key Resolve and Foal Eagle.

That the drills are ostensibly targeted at the DPRK adds uncertainty to the forthcoming summit-level meetings. No wonder the DPRK has felt the need to enhance strategic communication with China before the two meetings.

It remains to be seen how the Korean Peninsula situation develops, but China will continue to hold a fair and just position, because it is ready to contribute to the efforts of all parties concerned to achieve the goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means.

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