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tors and regions are moving faster than others. However, he also noted that cooperation between the UN and China has accelerated, adding that the country's crucial role in advancing the goals at home and abroad provides a better quality of life for the world.

China released its national plan for implementing the goals in 2016, which Ban said "perfectly incorporated its domestic development plan with an international commitment".

Within the goals, he said climate change is "one of the most concerning issues".

One of his earliest major initiatives at the UN was the 2007 Climate Change Conference, followed by extensive diplomatic efforts that helped put the issue at the forefront of the global agenda.

Ban said he pays a lot of attention to climate change because it is altering the Earth's character and creating dire risks and instability.

"From record-breaking heat waves and wildfires to hurricanes and flooding of historic intensity, climate change is no longer a debate. It is clearly here right now. The extreme weather events of just the last few months alone point to a bleak and dangerous future," he noted.

"This summer, California has been engulfed in flames and smoke from historic wildfires. Intense and prolonged heat waves claimed dozens of lives in Japan and the Korean Peninsula. And near Greenland, the Arctic's thickest sea ice broke up for the first time on record. These events no longer seem like anomalies; rather, they appear to be the new normal."

Ban said that necessary steps should be taken to combat climate change, otherwise these turbulent shifts will continue to bring dangerous scorching heat waves to cities and rural areas, which will drive displacement and seriously threaten entire communities and countries.

With this reality in mind, he is happy to see that many countries, including China, are stepping up collective efforts to implement the Paris climate agreement.

Ban regards the signing of the agreement as one of his most significant achievements during his tenure at the UN, and he believes that it offers scope to counter the serious threats to the planet.

The agreement, signed by nearly 200 countries in 2015, set viable targets to impede rising temperatures, constrict emissions of greenhouse gases and spur climate-resilient development and green growth.

"To achieve these goals, we need to keep working together," Ban said, adding that he is deeply disappointed that the United States has withdrawn from the agreement, and the move isolates the US from every other country in terms of climate policy.

"It is scientifically wrong and economically irresponsible, and it



Ban (left) shakes hands with Zhang Zhaofeng, Kenya project manager of CNPC Greatwall Drilling Co, in Nairobi in 2011.
ZHAO YINGQUAN / XINHUA



Chinese sculptor Wu Weishan donates one of his works to Ban during the unveiling ceremony of Wu's exhibition at UN Headquarters in New York in 2012.
SHEN HONG / XINHUA

will be on the wrong side of history. I greatly hope that this decision is reconsidered and reversed," he said.

However, he believes that there are still many reasons for optimism.

Ban said China's growing climate leadership in these difficult times for the planet has the potential to positively affect the Asian region and the world at large. The country's decision to set a deadline to completely phase out sales of fossil-fuel-powered vehicles is a sterling example in this regard, he added.

Ban said he also greatly values China's contribution to UN peace-keeping pledges, adding that the country's contribution of troops for UN missions in complex and challenging environments is "a role model for other countries".

He listed China's contributions to

the promotion of peace and security in Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sudan and South Sudan, and encouraged the country to remain focused on these issues.

"This not only shows that China is a peace-loving country, but it is also taking more responsibility to bring peace to other places in the world," he said.

Born in the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 1944, Ban witnessed how the Korean War (1950-53) destroyed buildings, separated families and damaged economies.

"I grew up in war, and I saw the UN help my country recover and rebuild. That experience was a big part of what led me to pursue a career in public service," he said.

Established in 1945, the UN was designed to provide an international

forum for the maintenance of global peace and security as the ashes of war dispersed. Although the UN had numerous critics at the time, Ban said the organization offered all nations and peoples an alternative to the bombs, guns and destruction of World War II.

"This alternative was based on the guiding belief that diplomacy and cooperation offered the international community a better way of resolving conflicts," he said. "I cherish peace, and because of this I especially cherish China's efforts to maintain peace."

He added that China's work to bring peace to the Korean Peninsula has been noted by the people of the area.

"Never in the history of the ROK and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) have we seen such an exciting process of reconciliation between the two countries," he said.

"China's efforts cannot be neglected. It has played a very important role by engaging with the DPRK leader Kim Jong-un three times this year. It's very important that Kim understands and learns from China's rapid industrialization and development through reform and opening-up. I think Pyongyang could gain a lot by opening up and engaging in the denuclearization process."

Ban has long been actively involved in issues relating to inter-Korean relations because his ties to the UN date back to 1975, when he worked for the ROK foreign ministry's UN division.

His work expanded over the years, with assignments that included serv-

ing as chairman of the preparatory commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization and chef de cabinet during the ROK's presidency of the UN General Assembly in 2001-02.

China's reform and opening-up had synergies with the country's due role and proper influence in the UN, Ban said, stressing that the thing he most appreciated was China's vision of "mutual prosperity and coexistence".

"My country, the Republic of Korea, is also benefiting from this Chinese philosophy," Ban said, adding that China's support was instrumental in the ROK gaining UN membership in 1991.

In April, Ban began work as chairman of the Boao Forum for Asia. He said his future career goal is to work with China and many other countries at the forum to fight more global challenges: "Our world is going through pronounced changes, and this is resulting in elevated uncertainties and new risks."

He said unilateralism and protectionism have become the main threats to the world, and while China continuously contributes to global financial and economic development, it can make a greater contribution.

"China should feel a sense of responsibility for global economic and financial development as a whole," he said, adding that the country's achievements are the result of multilateral trade liberalization, which has been the major factor in bringing about global prosperity, peace, and stability since the end of WWII.

He said he has seen more moves by China that are aimed at resisting the anti-globalization trend and deepening the country's integration with the global market.

As an example, he pointed out that the first China International Import Expo, held in Shanghai in November, demonstrated the country's determination to expand opening-up and work with the international community on tough global issues.

"The expo was a great occasion to stress the importance of free trade and market liberalization, which should be learned by other countries," he said.

Ban also highlighted the Belt and Road Initiative, which will not only benefit people in participating countries but also build a community with a shared future for mankind.

At the Boao Forum for Asia in South China's Hainan province in April, President Xi Jinping promised the nonstop continuation of reform and opening-up and a commitment to an open economy, which, according to Ban, "was significant for domestic development, as well as that of the international community".

"Because China is not going out on its own, it also sets an example for, and brings benefits to, other countries," he said.