

Let China's share accelerate UN reform

Rise in nation's contributions is the price it must pay for marching into global arena

By QIAO XINSHENG

China's contribution to the United Nations' regular budget will rise from 7.92 percent in 2016-18 to 12.01 percent in the next three years, says a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on Dec 22. So China will surpass Japan to become the second-largest contributor — behind only the United States — to the UN budget.

Japan's contribution will drop from 9.68 percent to 8.56 percent, but the US' will stay unchanged at 22 percent, prompting some commentaries in Japanese media outlets to say that the continued decline in Japan's contribution shows the country's influence in the UN has been declining, and if this trend continues it could lose more say in the world body.

They also said Japan should attach greater importance to its status in the international community, and warned that if it fails to make larger contributions to the UN and other international organizations, it may fail to achieve its coveted goal of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

In contrast to Japanese concerns, some Chinese scholars worry that if China, as a developing country, shoulders more and more responsibilities in international institutions and contributes increasing amounts of funds, the interests of the Chinese people could be seriously compromised.

Member states make contributions to the UN budget every three years based on their gross national income (GNI) among other factors. And given China's continued economic growth and the fact that it is the world's second-largest economy, it is not surprising for China to become the second-largest contributor to the UN budget.

But since China's per capita GNI is far lower than that of developed countries, and if China does not urge the UN to reform its budget distribution system soon, it will continue to assume international obligations not commensurate with its national strength. As a result, ordinary Chinese people will have to bear a heavy burden.

That the UN budget distribution is based on member states' GNI other than their per capita gross national product means countries

with a large population have to pay a large share of the budget.

As the world's most populous country, China's GNI has grown rapidly in recent years, but its per capita GNI is still relatively low, so the ever-growing share of China's contribution to the UN and other international agencies is not in line with its actual economic state.

But as China has entered or is about to enter the ranks of middle-income economies, it is capable of paying its share of the UN budget and participating in UN peacekeeping operations. And indeed, China should give international aid within its capacity and under the UN leadership, as this is a concrete manifestation of it fulfilling its global obligations and necessary responsibility as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.

However, despite all UN member states, big or small, being equal, their rights must match their obligations when it comes to UN budget distribution reform. Any reform that does not adhere to the "fair but differentiated" principle or take into account the actual economic condition of developing countries will go in the wrong direction.

Thanks to the steady development of the Chinese economy, the rise in its contributions to the UN and its affiliated agencies is the price China has to pay for marching into the global arena. But being the largest developing country, China must also push for UN reform, because only through deeper reform and improvement in the UN's efficiency can we make better use of members' contributions.

If the UN struggles to deal with some major issues, such as settling the power games of big countries, then the contributions made by China and other developing countries will be used for settling meaningless quarrels, which would not be conducive to maintaining world peace or the development of the UN itself.

China should actively push the UN to expedite the pace of reform, improve its work efficiency by streamlining bureaucracy, as well as consider the situation of developing countries and establish a differentiated budget distribution mechanism. Only in this way can we make the UN reform help the developing countries lift their people out of poverty, and prompt the developed countries to make greater contribu-

tions to world peace.

More important, China should support the UN to play a bigger role in safeguarding world peace and promoting the development of all countries. As a signatory to the UN Charter, China hopes the UN, following the basic principles set out by the Charter, will earnestly protect the interests of developing countries through reforms.

In recent years, China has played an increasingly active role in the UN and its Security Council, and taken the initiative to set important topics on a series of major issues while expressing its views on hotspot issues, in order to maintain world peace and development.

So far, China's contribution to the UN has been within its capacity. And we should not consider China's contribution to the UN budget unreasonable just because of the large increase in its proportion. China should fulfill its obligations, and along with other developing countries accelerate the reform of the UN and its affiliated bodies.

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Real gains on path to ending poverty

Alleviation work has made critical achievements for families in China's poorer rural areas

By LI GUOXIANG

Last year was the first year of the implementation of the rural rejuvenation strategy (2018-20) as well as the three-year targeted poverty alleviation drive. While the rural rejuvenation strategy focuses on improving the overall rural living environment, the targeted poverty alleviation drive is aimed at lifting deeply impoverished families and areas out of poverty. And both have been alleviating poverty in an all-round way.

Local authorities have made specific rural rejuvenation plans applicable to their areas but in accordance with the national rural rejuvenation strategy, and taken measures to facilitate rural industrial rejuvenation, talent rejuvenation, cultural rejuvenation, ecological rejuvenation and organizational rejuvenation. Major projects for overall rural rejuvenation have been implemented as well.

Nationwide, agricultural production has developed steadily. Last

year the overall grain yield reached 660 million tons. The planting and replanting structure has been further optimized, with the farming areas for crops that are in short supply in China, such as soybean, increasing further. For example, the total planting area for soybean in 2018 reached 8.4 million hectares, an increase of 1.9 percent year-on-year, with the soybean yield reaching 16 million tons, up 4.8 percent year-on-year. In a sense, the high-quality development of the agricultural industry has reduced the impact of the Sino-US trade conflict.

The integrative development of rural primary, secondary and tertiary industries is being promoted, and the scope of building agricultural industrial parks has expanded. The agricultural processing industry, too, has entered the stage of high-quality development. And the development of rural tourism has been comprehensive both in terms of quality and benefits.

Moreover, local governments have learned from Zhejiang prov-

ince's experience how to dispose of rural waste and domestic sewage, start a toilet revolution, adopt rural water environment management systems and build a beautiful countryside. As such, many rural living environment problems are being gradually solved.

With the rural contracted land reform deepening, the new round of land use rights registration work has been basically completed. And the sixth meeting of the 13th Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, has completed the second review of the draft Rural Land Contract Law, providing the legal basis for promoting rural rejuvenation.

Many pilot rural land reforms, including collective land construction for commercial use and the homestead system reform, have made the fruitful use of rural land resources possible and thus increased farmers' and rural collectives' incomes.

As for the targeted poverty alleviation drive, it has focused on poverty relief work in markedly

impoverished areas. More poverty alleviation funds will be directed to lift families in such areas out of poverty so that the pace of the overall poverty alleviation program gains speed.

With the intensification of poverty alleviation work, the goal of eliminating absolute poverty has become clearer: to raise per capita disposable income to 4,000 yuan (\$580) or more, and guarantee compulsory education, medical treatment and housing security to impoverished households, in order to reduce the rural impoverished population to less than 15 million and the poverty incidence to below 2 percent by end-2018. In fact, about 40,000 extremely impoverished villages and more than 50 percent of the impoverished counties will have been lifted out of poverty last year.

The relocation of extremely impoverished people is the most difficult task of the poverty alleviation work. An estimated 2.8 million extremely impoverished people will have been relocated in the past year,

in order to lift them out of poverty.

The rural rejuvenation strategy will be further promoted this year, through optimization of the grain-planting structure. Production of corn and soybean will be further raised, which will increase the supply of quality green agricultural products.

The drive to deal with the rural environment will intensify in the next stage. Garbage and sewage disposal and the toilet revolution will improve the rural environment and living conditions in the countryside.

In other words, the poverty alleviation work has made critical achievements, making possible the elimination of absolute poverty from rural areas. All impoverished villages and counties will basically be poverty free in the next stage. And the connection between poverty alleviation work and rural rejuvenation strategy will be further strengthened.

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