

The Three-Year Work Plan for the Silk Road Think Tank Network (2019-2021)

In order to promote the Silk Road Spirit, facilitate the Belt and Road featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, give full play to the role of think tanks in intellectual support, jointly seek a harmonious and sustainable development path for progress and prosperity, we jointly launched the Silk Road Think Tank Network (SiLKS) in 2015.

Over the past three years since its establishment, the SiLKS has promoted the Silk Road Spirit of “peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefits”, focusing on the common vision of the Belt and Road Initiative, conducting in-depth discussions, candid exchanges and joint research while offering advice and recommendations; in doing so, the SiLKS has played a positive role in promoting the Belt and Road Initiative. Held in Warsaw, Poland, on June 20, 2016, the first Annual Meeting of the SiLKS adopted the *Guidelines for the Silk Road Think Tank Network*, a basic document on the future development of the SiLKS. The 2017 Annual Meeting was held in Beijing on May 16, 2017, during the first Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. During the 2017 meeting, the first steering committee was established and the online platform of eSiLKS officially launched; we also jointly issued the *Beijing Joint Action Declaration for the Silk Road Think Tank Network* to further forge consensus between members and partners and chart the course for the development of the SiLKS.

In December 2018, all members and partners of the SiLKS have met again in Paris to discuss the plan for development. In order to promote the sustainable development of the SiLKS, we have drawn up a three-year work plan for its development.

I. Vision

By 2021, the SiLKS will develop into an international think tank alliance with wide influence, featuring **sound governance mechanism, strong funding support, active academic exchanges and applied research outcomes.**

II. Approach

From 2019 to 2021, the SiLKS will make great progress in seven areas of governance mechanism, online platform, offline exchanges, academic research, funding channels, work teams and international communication.

Governance mechanism. Specify the rights and responsibilities of members and partners and establish the mechanism of accession, withdrawal, rewards and penalties to constantly improve the SiLKS governance mechanism.

Online platform (eSiLKS). The aim is to promote information exchange, policy communication and explanations for development policies, trade and investment, infrastructure, finance and people-to-people exchanges, with the focus on **building Belt and Road expert database and project database and distinctive, competitive and specialized Belt and Road databases,** to offer data support to Belt

and Road academic exchanges and research.

Offline exchanges. Facilitate personnel exchanges and visits between SiLKS members and partners to increase cohesion. **The SiLKS will take joint research as a key lever to promote exchange of visits, information sharing, communication, exchanges and specialized seminars. It will also explore exchanges of visiting scholars between members.**

Academic research. On the one hand, the SiLKS will support joint studies on key issues and mid- to long-term development of jointly building the Belt and Road. On the other hand, we encourage independent or joint studies on Belt and Road issues of common interests. The outcomes of such studies will be shared among SiLKS members and partners.

Funding channels. Enhancing the financing abilities of the SiLKS by building databases and brand reputation; attracting public funding, including from partners, to constantly expand financing channels and pave the way for the sustainable development of the SiLKS.

Work teams. Further strengthen the existing full-time team under the SiLKS Secretariat and establish and improve the mechanism of permanent contact persons for members and partners. We will explore the possibility of regional leading members around the world. Such regional members will be responsible for organizing and coordinating SiLKS activities in their regions and contacts with the SiLKS Secretariat to ensure the efficient operation of the SiLKS.

International communication. Specify the audiences of SiLKS and

make the communication of SiLKS more targeted. The current audience is mainly SiLKS members and partners with audience gradually expanded to governments, international organizations, multinational corporations and general public in the future. The mode of communication varies according to time, location and institutions, so as to improve the influence of SiLKS on different audiences.

III. Major tasks

(1)Governance mechanism

1. Improving governance structure

We support the SiLKS Annual Meeting in serving as a decision-making mechanism. We will review major SiLKS decisions at the Annual Meeting, such as accession and withdrawal of members, reelection of the steering committee, revision of the charter and use of funding. The steering committee will be reelected every three years.

Further enhance the role of management and coordination of the SiLKS Secretariat, including but not limited to the following: First, coordinate sharing of information and research outcomes within the SiLKS; second, visit members and partners for research; third, organize and deeply involve in joint research supported by the SiLKS; fourth, organize the development of databases; fifth, offer support for SiLKS activities hosted by members in relevant countries and regions. Relevant members and partners will support and cooperate with the Secretariat in such work.

2. Improving the accession system

The accession of new members and partners will follow the procedure of application, review by the Secretariat, nomination by the steering committee and deliberation by the SiLKS Annual Meeting. To be more specific, the prospective institutions will apply to the Secretariat, who will then review their applications and submit the results to the steering committee for discussions on nomination. The steering committee will submit the names of the institutions to the Annual Meeting for deliberation by a two-thirds majority and the accession to the SiLKS will be approved by a majority (more than 50%) of members and partners.

The key principles for the Secretariat review: First, the applicant is a representative and important think tank of its country; second, it agrees with the Belt and Road principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits and takes a relatively objective and fair position; third, it has research teams dedicated to the Belt and Road and relevant academic outcomes; fourth, it has reliable sources of funding.

3. Specify responsibilities of members and partners

a. Ensure their principal persons in charge will actively participate in Annual Meetings and other SiLKS events; b. Timely update their information and research outcomes in their subpages on the online platform; c. Update the contents of online databases relevant to the countries they are from; d. Actively participate in relevant joint research; e. Contribute articles to the journals under the SiLKS Secretariat; f. Each appoints a permanent contact person for the SiLKS and timely update their contact information.

4. Specify rights of members and partners

a. Use online databases for free; b. Receive SiLKS journals for free; c. Share the research outcomes of the SiLKS; d. Enjoy priority in attending the Silk Road Forum; e. Join visiting scholar programs; f. Provide suggestions for the development of the SiLKS.

5. Providing incentives

Institutions that excel at Belt and Road research, online platform update, receiving visiting members and partners could enjoy priority in visiting scholar programs, undertaking entrusted research projects and participation in and giving remarks at the Silk Road Forum, etc.

6. Specify withdrawal mechanism

The Secretariat will evaluate the qualification of members and partners each year, including participation in SiLKS events, update of website information and support for the Secretariat in relevant work (developing databases, research arrangements, contributing articles to eSiLKS and journals), etc. If evaluated as off-grade, upon consent by no less than two-thirds of steering committee members after deliberations, the Secretariat will send a written notice to remind such institutions to earnestly perform their obligations. If an institution is evaluated as off-grade for two times in a row, it will be disqualified after no less than half of members and partners give consent by voting.

If members and partners no longer exist due to bankruptcy, dissolution or other reasons, they will automatically withdraw from the SiLKS.

7. Make the SiLKS members and partners more representative

Based on the current consensus by members and partners and the review by the Secretariat and the views of the steering committee, the SiLKS will **focus** on attracting more qualified think tanks and international organizations **in Africa and Latin America** to make the SiLKS members and partners more representative.

(2) Online platform

1. Forming an active online academic community. The role of eSiLKS will be further strengthened in publishing research outcomes and sharing information about the Belt and Road: **members and partners will publish no less than three articles of original research outcomes about the Belt and Road on eSiLKS every year**; the eSiLKS will attract more viewers through video and online live academic activities to extend its influence.

2. Building databases. Stepping up the development of Belt and Road databases and facilitating the sharing of Belt and Road research and development knowledge. Keep improving the expert tank and project tank and jointly developing databases on country-based cases and international cooperation mechanisms and other Belt and Road databases serving policy research with members and partners.

(3)Offline exchanges

1. Creating an offline program for visiting scholars. Fully leverage the international resources, academic influence and other advantages of members and partners and encourage qualified members and partners to exchange visiting scholars.

2. Enhancing visits and academic exchanges between members and partners. The members and partners with joint research projects will establish regular mechanism for visits and academic exchanges to boost joint studies; the Secretariat will explore video conference and other methods and conduct regular academic video conferences on world economic landscape, Belt and Road, international development and other issues to boost academic exchanges.

(4)Academic research

1. Cooperate to conduct mid- to long-term research. Study and draw up annual research plans of the SiLKS through the Annual Meeting. Members and partners are encouraged to conduct multilateral and bilateral mid- to long-term joint research and theory and policy research in priority areas such as **economic cooperation and trade, system of international rules for trade and investment, international cooperation mechanism, global economic governance system, the alignment with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other areas related to the Belt and Road**. Recommended by the Secretariat, the outstanding research results will be published at the SiLKS Annual Meeting and the Silk Road Forum.

2. Enhancing capacity building. Constantly improve the policy research and consultancy abilities of members and partners through relevant training and academic exchanges and offer high-quality policy suggestions for the countries they are from in joining the Belt and Road featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits and achieving common development.

3. Publishing international academic journals in Chinese and English.

Explore establishing international academic journals on SiLKS based on existing publications. Encourage original studies on Belt and Road and publish their abstracts on eSiLKS to extend the international academic influence of the SiLKS.

(5) Funding channels

1. SiLKS' own revenue. SiLKS databases will offer paid service to external users; SiLKS publications will charge certain fees for external readers; revenue from advertisements.

2. Social financing. Drawing on the common practice of international think tanks, cooperate with international companies or government agencies outside of the SiLKS. Joint studies will be conducted by SiLKS members and partners with funding from such cooperation partners.

The funding of SiLKS will be mainly used for personnel training, relevant research projects of members and partners, building eSiLKS, compiling international academic journals under SiLKS and the daily operation of SiLKS.

(6) Work teams

1. The full-time team under the SiLKS Secretariat will be fully-staffed.

2. Establish and improve the mechanism of permanent contact person under the SiLKS. Members and partners will each appoint a full-time employee as their permanent contact persons for the SiLKS to keep in touch with the Secretariat and handle their daily affairs related to

the SiLKS.

(7) International communication

1. Improve eSiLKS. The Secretariat will enhance the quality of SiLKS newsletter and eSiLKS platform in order to enhance their influence in the countries and regions where members and partners locate, build a SiLKS communication platform which highlights knowledge sharing, dialogue of opinion and thought exchange.

2. Broaden the channels of international communication which includes the publications of joint research on internationally renowned media and journals, the use of Silk Road Forum and SiLKS Annual Meeting to organize or participate in different levels of international conferences, and the establishment of SiLKS exclusive social media accounts, etc., which can effectively respond to the core concern about *Belt and Road Initiative* raised by current international community.

3. Innovate the communication modes which includes international communication by the Secretariat, by members and partners both independently or jointly, and international communication with the use of international organizations and platforms, thus forming a compound and network-based international communication system.

The SiLKS Secretariat