



# Minutes<sup>1</sup> for Think Tank Roundtable

## SILK ROAD FORUM 2015

**Time: Thursday, 29 October 2015**

**Venue: Westin Palace Hotel, Madrid, Spain**

### **FIRST HALF:**

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- **Chair: CHENG Guoqiang**  
**Secretary-General of Academic Committee and Director-General of Department of International Cooperation, Development Research Center of the State Council, PRC**

Good Afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am Cheng Guoqiang from the Development Research Center. Most of the representatives around the table are from founding members of the Silk Road Think Tank Network (SiLKS). I'm very glad that we have the opportunity to discuss Silk Road and SiLKS.

For this session, we have two chairs: Patrick Ho from China Energy Fund Committee and me. As we have a large group, I suggest that each representative speaks for 3-5 minutes so that everyone has a chance to speak.

Now we begin our session.

- **Carlos Westendorp**  
**Vice-President of the Toledo International Center for Peace and Secretary General of Club de Madrid; former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain**

We have two suggestions in terms of the development of SiLKS:

First is to set up a center of SiLKS at the west end of the Silk Road. It could be located in our center, as Toledo can provide related facilities at low cost.

Second is to turn the Silk Road initiative into a global one, to include think tanks in Americas. In history, the maritime Silk Road stretched from China to Mexico, covering the whole planet. Therefore, we think it is necessary to involve think tanks from Mexico and other countries.

- **WANG Xiaojun**  
**Lead Advisor, South-South and Triangular Cooperation, UNDP**

The ancient wisdom that we gained from the ancient Silk Road is about the importance of peace, prosperity and partnership. These stand to be the critical

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<sup>1</sup> This minutes is based on the live record on Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and may not fully reflect your opinions. Your feedback will be highly appreciated.



elements for us as we try to achieve sustainable development for the world in 2030.

However, the old wisdom needs to be adapted to address a set of new questions today. That brings home questions such as: how can the Belt and Road Initiative address the sustainable development agenda? How can we make economic corridors human development corridors? How can Silk Road-supported projects not only have high standards and safeguards against negative impact on environment, but also take proactive measures to maximize its positive impact on development? These are the questions I want to first put forward today.

The second set of questions is about strategy. How can countries conjoin their national development strategies so that supports provided by the Belt and Road Initiative can tackle priority demands from countries, so that you move beyond just a series of projects? Policy coordination relates to trade policy, customs, and IPR issues. How can we tackle those to facilitate cooperation instead of hindering it, so that we can achieve the impact at scale? Also at the global level how do we leverage the existing multilateral mechanisms to support the achievement of those goals? At the individual and local level, how do we engage private sector and technology-enhanced innovations? It is the concept of Internet Plus that can add value to this Belt and Road Initiative. I think the SiLKS Network can bring collective wisdom and address a few.

The third set of questions is about impact. The first impact is about impact on sustainable development. How can the Belt and Road Initiative address, in an inter-related manner, economic, social and environmental dimensions of development? The solution is needed not only because it will advise and inform the overall direction of the Belt and Road Initiative, but also because it will help us communicate with our citizens, so that we can mobilize the optimal constituency support of member countries. Think tank has an important role to play there. The second kind of impact that we will talk about is the new evidence and knowledge of south-south cooperation. The Belt and Road can offer new, and maybe transformational, knowledge that may help the world achieve a really inclusive, horizontal, global partnership for sustainable development.

I think it is important to build on evidence, on cases, so that we are no longer talking about just principles, but actual experiences. UNDP, as a founding partner, is ready and committed to taking this mutual learning journey with all members of SiLKS.

■ **Anup Singh**  
**Vice Admiral, Visiting Fellow of Vivekananda International Foundation,**  
**India**

It is innovative to get think tanks to do some collective free-willing discussion, which governments normally cannot.

There are many challenges that we are going to face, particularly in the Silk Road Economic Belt, which is the land road. Think tanks can play a role in addressing these challenges, and contribute to a much better solution for the Silk Road whether on land



or at sea.

For example, countries along the Silk Road have vast disparity in economic development. This is where governments will be a little hesitant in discussing and in clarifying things. Think tanks, being completely free-willing societies, will be able to discuss and recommend very concrete solutions.

Moreover, the efficiency and profitability of infrastructure vary among different hubs and ports. In economic activity and in global economic engagement, one looks for economies of scale and for profitability. So think tanks can help improve the efficiency and profitability of infrastructure within their own regions to reap more benefits from global economic engagement.

■ **Emilio Lamo de Espinosa**  
**Chairman of Elcano Royal Institute, Spain**

I think that we probably should concentrate on issues that, first, are concrete topics of research; second, that unite us. There are a lot of ideological differences on this table; but there are also a lot of common interests. I think that we should be able to concentrate on questions that unite us. And finally, topics that are original, that are not usually addressed by our think tanks because of their regions.

I want to advance a couple of issues that can be of interest to the SiLKS network. The first is trade. Trade was the beginning of the Silk Road. Trade is something that interests us all. There are no ideological differences in trade.

The second major issue is energy. It's another very crucial and important question that links Asia and Europe.

From the point of view of financing, I do not think we need a lot of money. At the beginning we probably need fund for the web page. It is important to create a web page as a reference. The research is probably going to be enough if each one of the think tanks around the table simply identifies one researcher to spend half a week or even less on the Silk Road. That would create a huge amount of labor time oriented towards the Silk Road.

Finally, I simply want to support fully the ideas advanced by colleagues from the Toledo Institute of the Peace to have a terminal of the Silk Road in Madrid. Royal Institute is willing to wholeheartedly help Toledo for that goal.

Finally, the idea of extending the land Silk Road to the maritime Silk Road, so that it would cover the whole world, will be a belt covering East and West and do the round-world trip the same way that Elcano did five centuries ago.

■ **Tuvdiin Dorj**  
**Vice President, Mongolian Academy of Sciences**

I would like to mention that the idea of building an economic corridor between Mongolia, Russia and China originated at an official meeting of the three heads of states in Dushanbe. In pursuit of that, we are building cooperation on Silk Road, Steppe Road, Euro-Asian United Railway and electrical power networking. In my



mind, scholars of the three countries will make significant contributions to the development of this corridor, by identifying needs of multilateral cooperation, estimating conditions of tri-lateral relations on trade, economy, infrastructure, tourism and culture. Moreover, our tri-lateral meetings of think tanks will develop the new Silk Road and Steppe Road concepts. We are networks of trade routes across land and sea that expanded to much of the globe from pre-historical time until the present day, among which people of many different cultures, religions and languages exchanged ideas and influenced each other.

Thus, I hope that our meeting will be a platform for exchanging experiences, results and ideas for the future green and sustainable development.

■ **Medelina Hendytio**  
**Deputy Executive Director, Center for Strategic and International Studies,**  
**Indonesia**

One question that I would like to pose here is how we organize the network in such a way that it would achieve its intended targets, while still providing benefits to its members and minimizing any problem. To answer that, I would like to highlight several important aspects that could strengthen think tank collaboration.

First, we have to decide the mode of collaboration to fit with the collaborative interests of the group as well as to accommodate the need of each individual organization. For example, on the type of membership, we have agreed that membership should be institution- or organization-based. But should it also be open to individuals? That is one question.

Second, connecting the newly built think tank network to current issues and international agenda is very important. The network has to focus on solving global strategic issues such as global security, food security, climate change, and poverty eradication.

Third, we are all aware that the market of ideas has become increasingly saturated due to a high number of players in the field. In this situation, we, as a think tank network, have to maximize our public communication in order to have a louder voice in advancing certain global issues to attract public attention.

Fourth, it is very important to identify the areas of collaboration. These areas of cooperation could include research collaboration, academic exchange, and policy engagement on the roles of rising powers in shaping international development.

Finally, we need to guarantee the basic principles of international cooperation, such as independence, transparency and accountability. Although we are connected to some extent, it is imperative that every think tank still has its own freedom to voice its thoughts and aspiration to reflect its independence.

■ **Sergei Luzianin**  
**Acting Director of Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of**  
**Science**



I would like to present eight points for your attention. General title: Russia, China, and avenues for connectivity and mutual empowerment.

First, as shown by Russia and China's document on comprehensive cooperation signed by Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping in 2015, the two parties started to develop the Sino-Russian/Eurasian strategy, aimed at connecting the Silk Road Economic Belt and Eurasian Economic Union.

Second, the roads to connectivity between the construction of the Eurasian Economic Union and Silk Road Economic Belt will by all evidence include the entire spectrum of economic investment and transportation. However, we hardly discuss a real integration of Eurasia between Eurasian Economic Union and institutionalized projects.

Third, the parties formed new Sino-Russian and other bilateral and multilateral models of frameworks. Silk Road plus Eurasian Economic Union are in the interests of all states on the continent as well as in the interests of peace and development. Russian experts interpret connectivity not only in economic but also in geo-political terms. Chinese experts, in contrast, consider the Silk Road as a purely economic concept without political issues.

Fourth, for connectivity purposes, it would be advisable to use the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the bases for realizing the whole complex of infrastructure, financial, economic, and other projects in Central Asia.

Fifth, we may assume that Moscow and Beijing would not position the two projects as alternatives to the TPP. The two projects are transparent and open to participants not formally included in the Eurasian Economic Union and the Silk Road.

Sixth, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization can serve as both the technological base of the Eurasian projects and the geo-political Eurasian core of such project as the One Belt One Road plus Eurasian Economic Union.

Seventh, building an economic space is a long and complex process hiding a mass of the differences, problems and contradictions. However, the strategy of building the common economic space also meets the mutual interests of participating countries and makes it possible to maintain consolidation process in Eurasian stability and co-development.

Eighth, the expert would start operating and producing practical recommendations for multiple problems within a year.

■ **Tan Sri Rastam Mohd Isa**  
**Chairman and Chief Executive, Institute of Strategic and International Studies Malaysia**

The One Belt One Road Initiative is certainly something interesting to all of us in Southeast Asia. Its objectives are similar to the OBOR Initiative and the ASEAN community: peace, sustainable development, and security, which would lead to facilitation and promotion of trade, investment, tourism, cultural interactions, education, and people-to-people exchanges.



What can we do for the SiLKS network? I think it is important that all of us involved here would need to have a sense of ownership and also a sense of active participation in this venture. Perhaps one way to do this is to have a regional approach whereby caucuses could be formed. There are existing networks that we can plug into. For example, the ASEAN can perhaps work on issues pertaining to Southeast Asia or the ASEAN region in so far as the OBOR Initiative is concerned. Perhaps we can work in the context of ASEAN-ISIS.

Secondly, I would like to address the question of communication, including the exchange and dissemination of information. Perhaps as a start, we can have website links of all the think tanks involved here, which could eventually lead to initiatives such as publishing the OBOR-related works done by the various institutions, even on electronic publication and so on.

Thirdly, I think it is important that there should be some kind of workshop to make this OBOR Initiative more visible to the general population. For example, in addition to the annual Silk Road Forum, we could have mini-forums in various regions, such as one in central Asia, one in Southeast Asia, one in Eastern Europe, one in Western Europe. Then we can communicate in the Silk Road Forum at the end of the year.

Fourthly, we have government officials present from Spain as well as from China. But perhaps in the future we could also have more officials from various countries.

Fifthly, I want to address the question of how to bring think tanks, governments, business and civil society in this whole process. I believe think tanks cannot deal with all these issues and problems in that context. So obviously, inputs from the other sectors would be very important.

Lastly, looking ahead, there could be a possibility at some point in the future for programs involving exchange of scholars and researchers.

#### ■ **Felix Preston**

**Senior Research Fellow, Energy, Environment and Resources, Chatham House, UK**

The first thing is, this forum can play an important role in building bridges between the existing global governance arrangements and the new ones which are coming into being. The Silk Road Initiative is much broader than the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund, and all the other instruments. Of course there are linkages, and forums like this can help to elucidate exactly what those look like. Linkages can be built on detailed empirical and other kinds of analysis, which think tanks are very good at providing. The number and range of think tanks we have in the room suggest that could lead to a very fruitful area of inquiry.

Beyond those classical linkages, we talked about the SDGs, but not so much about the new financial arrangements and development for climate, and how they might be related to the Silk Road Initiative.



Think tanks are very good at building broad-based discussions in very difficult areas that are difficult to have formal political processes. So I think this should also be an aspect to the forum. I feel like the forum has been quite positive in the way that the Silk Road Initiative has been presented. I agree with that. But I think it's also important that think tanks engage in some of the tensions that could arise and try to neutralize those as much as possible.

I want to talk about what areas this kind of setup could look out. It is clear that this initiative will require a very large volume of finance and investment in important projects. How to manage the environmental and social risks around some of those investments is very important. This Silk Road Initiative won't just take Chinese money, for it will be a combination of investors. It is very promising that one signal from the head of AIIB recently is the "lean green clean" vision of Jin Liqun, which I think hopefully could be applied more broadly to the way that we think about the Silk Road. That can help contain the negative risks.

It is also a very important role of this forum to build a more positive image of the Silk Roads.

There are two practical things that can be done. First, there can be closer cooperation on data-bases. Second, we could think more about long-term scenarios. Related to that, think tanks have a very important function in providing early warnings. Sometimes there will be issues raised that could become serious political problems in the future. Maybe conversations between new sets of actors such as those in the room could help to manage those and help them move on.

#### ■ **Daw Chaw Chaw Sein**

##### **Member of Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Head of the International Relations Department, University of Yangon**

The first thing that I would like to point out is about the forums on One Belt One Road. Among these forums, ASEAN is missing and only part of ASEAN members are invited. So if ASEAN region is on the focus of the One Belt One Road Initiative, I would like to kindly request that China should consider the ASEAN member countries that are not yet invited to participate in this think tank network.

My second point is the impact on the OBOR strategy. When talking about the new Silk Road, we should not only look for the economic order, we should also emphasize on the peace order for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. China should also consider the growing sense of the complex attitude toward China's stand in the region. For example, Singapore has a trade and commercial interest; but Vietnam and Philippines have serious attention on the political implications; and Myanmar has community-level resentment toward Chinese investments. So to overcome these, the recommendation is exchange of the scholars, policy dialogue, trend research, and people-to-people contact.

My third point is Myanmar's stand on the OBOR. Regarding the proposed 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road, Myanmar considered that the Road can play an



important role in the development of the country by bringing economic opportunities to both peoples. But we need to consider the challenges and differences to achieve the objective of the OBOR, too. One challenge is the border area of development: we need to clarify the vision of how we can promote the border area of development. Other challenges include security and environment, which are two of the major negative factors inhibiting successful realization of the OBOR.

■ **Françoise Nicolas**

**Senior Researcher and Director of the Center for Asian Studies, French Institute of International Relations**

I'm a little bit confused about the role that think tanks may play in the design and the implementation of the Silk Road project. And this persistent confusion, I guess, comes from one very simple fact. That is the very strong heterogeneity among the think tanks. If you look around this table, what you immediately observe is that the think tanks sitting around the table are very different. And I would suggest 3 major dividing lines within this think tank community.

First of all, you have the genuine think tanks and you also have what are often called the do-tanks. Think tanks are much more closely associated with policies, and with policy implementation. The second dividing line is between government-led or government-controlled think tanks and independent think tanks. And the third dividing line is between public diplomacy think tanks and research think tanks, which I would claim are the genuine think tanks.

So the result of this high heterogeneity is that these very think tanks cannot play exactly the same kind of role within the project. I certainly think that all these think tanks can play a role and contribute in a very positive way to the Silk Road project or to the One Belt One Road project. But they can do so in their own way. And they cannot be expected to provide the same kind of contribution.

As a conclusion, there should be a little bit of classification about the specific role that each single type of think tanks can be expected to play in this Silk Road project.

■ **Chair: CHENG Guoqiang**

**Secretary-General of Academic Committee and Director-General of Department of International Cooperation, Development Research Center of the State Council, PRC**

In the first half of this session, we had 11 speakers who proposed great suggestions on SiLKS. Also some speakers expressed their views on the OBOR Initiative. After the forum, we will summarize your views and suggestions on SiLKS, including the ones in the second half. I would like to express our sincere appreciation to you for supporting SiLKS. I hope that from today on, we will further the cooperation among us.





## **SECOND HALF:**

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### ■ **Chair: Patrick C.P. Ho**

#### **Vice Chairman and Secretary-General, China Energy Fund Committee**

For this half of the session, I think we really have to start on time. We have already wasted 4 minutes. If we have to finish on time before 6 o' clock, we have exactly 1 hour and 10 minutes, meaning that we have 70 minutes and we have 17 people trying to speak. So dividing 70 minutes by 17, we get 4 minutes for each person. There will be no time for discussion. Ok, let's begin.

### ■ **H.E. Dr. Kobsak Chutikul**

#### **Secretary-General of the Asian Peace and Reconciliation Council**

People who are building the Silk Road should be aware of the danger of overreach. If we load up too many issues onto the plate, at the end of the day, not able to deliver anything, that is, better lives of those 4 billion people along the road, I think that it would be something regrettable for all of us.

It would be better to build SiLKS, a virtual institute, step by step, rather than setting up a huge bureaucracy again. Headquarters, sub-regional headquarters — that is good on rhetoric but not good on the ground actions.

China has to continue to bear the financial burden for some time, because many of us do not have the financial resources.

One Belt One Road is not only about the hardware, but also about software. The diversity that we bring to the table is more important in the long term, reinforcing understanding that would create elements of an environment for peace and development.

### ■ **Talant Sultanov**

#### **Director, National Institute for Strategic Studies, Kyrgyz Republic**

Kyrgyzstan is the only parliamentary democracy in Central Asia, and the only land lock country where trade exceeded GDP.

Some ideas for cooperation: we can do joint research, joint projects and comparative studies. We can learn from other networks. For example, ADB (Asian Development Bank) has a network of think tanks. I think it would be very useful in the future to bring youths and maybe students to participate in such event to share ideas and learn from us.

### ■ **Chhem Rethy**

#### **Executive Director, Cambodia Development Resource Institute**

Regarding the One Belt One Road Initiative, from the think tank perspective, we are looking forward to collaborating with partners in China and in the region. We have years of experience of cooperation with Chinese think tanks. In this new initiative, we see an escalation in exchange and cooperation.



Our goal is to facilitate the coordination between Chinese government and Cambodian government and provide policy advice for policy formulation and implementation. For example, the investment in China has certainly allowed Cambodia to develop tremendously in the last two decades. As the positive part has been stated, there are also some negative implications on the environment and on the population. And we look forward to working closely with think tanks in China on how we can balance this benefit and negative impact from this new initiative.

■ **Li Mingjiang**

**Coordinator of China Program at S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore**

A few suggestions:

1. For SiLKS, I think it would be good to have a secretariat in order to ensure that our cooperation is smooth and efficient. Supposedly a good location for a small secretariat would be DRC at this moment.

2. It is just impossible for all the members to meet every time. It is always good to have a steering committee, comprised of a much smaller number of think tanks. And the membership could be changed on a rotational basis.

3. For the research, it is impossible to get all think tanks involved. So I suggest that it would be good to divide us into working groups.

We can have two approaches to establish working groups. One, we can form working groups in terms of geography in different regions. Think tanks in particular region can get together and work on certain themes and research topics. Or we can simply look at the 5 areas of connectivity of the One Belt One Road Initiative and establish 5 mega working groups and then establish some more specific and smaller scale groups under each mega working group.

4. In terms of funding, I think it is probably unrealistic to expect all the think tanks to provide their own funding. So for our future activities, I would propose the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Perhaps our Chinese organizer could be more generous, especially in the near term, when it comes to funding. And in principle, I also suggest that think tanks from the developed countries try to find funding for themselves and developing countries may need extra assistance in this respect.

5. We need a "boss". At this stage for our network it would be appropriate to suggest to China especially to consider starting to establish some sort of official mechanism involving all the willing participants of One Belt One Road, either a senior officers' meeting or a minister-level meeting.

■ **Victor Shadurski**

**Dean of the Faculty of International Relations, Belarusian State University**

Implementations of the Chinese initiative have a good chance to strengthen Belarus's position in Eurasia as well as on the wide economic space.



Why Belarusians support the Silk Road Project:

1. The trust over China is based on the bilateral relations practiced generally since 1992. The history between our two countries convinces the Belarusian society and Belarusian authorities that China respects the country's sovereignty: internal and external political choices of our country.

2. Despite the good dynamics of mutual trade, Belarusian society is concerned with the negative trade balance with China. We expect that the Eurasian integration project would contribute to the conversion of good political relations into the expansion of beneficial economic cooperation and decrease the trade imbalance.

3. Belarusian stake in the foreign strategy of Beijing has been significantly enhanced with the beginning of the implementation of economic belt. It is an opinion based on not only the mutually friendly Belarusian-China relations but also on the acknowledgement of our country as the very important actor in developing the links between Eurasia and the European Union.

4. Belarus maintains a particular significance to Beijing as the country plays the role of stabilizer in the Eastern Europe.

5. Belarus's position is also strengthened by the country's membership in Eurasian Economic Union.

#### ■ **Sven Grimm**

##### **Senior Researcher at the German Development Institute**

I would like to offer my reading of 3 elements in the historical Silk Road that relates to how I see the think tank network now.

1. Comprehensiveness. Besides goods, ideas also travelled along the historical Silk Road. Today there is a quite comprehensive agenda coming from development institutes. And our understanding of development is also very comprehensive. I think a broad perspective links to the positive sound of the historical Silk Road.

2. The historical Silk Road was about overcoming very difficult terrain. That's related to geography and infrastructure. But it also related to difficult political terrain. For instance, security is an aspect that was not included historically and should not be omitted. We should not exclude the sensitive issues, but rather engage them and contribute to overcoming them.

3. Flexibility. There wasn't one road, there were several. If one of the avenues was blocked, you could use an alternative route. Looking at the diversity of institutions around the table, I think it might be very wise to keep the flexibility when convening around certain issues, so that whoever can and wants to contribute should be there. Otherwise, contribution cannot be forced.

#### ■ **Mustafa Hyder Sayed**

##### **Executive Director of Pakistan-China Institute**

I think communication and dialogue between all of us present in this room today is very important. It can be a website which would give us the platform to post things



and exchange notes. The Pakistan-China Institute would also like to offer to create the website if needed.

It is very important to identify the priority areas collectively so that we can all achieve common ground and what can be called “shared priority areas”. From the view of Pakistan-China Institute, we think cultural exchanges, information sharing and economic cooperation are extremely relevant to working collectively to realize this historic initiative.

It is also very important for us to meet frequently in China or other Silk Road countries to make SiLKS a sustainable initiative. The DRC should be in the lead for this since it is the umbrella organization for this.

For countries looking to be part of the Silk Road, it is very important to learn from Pakistan’s experience as we have materialized about six to seven billion dollars’ worth of projects already, including energy and infrastructure projects.

■ **John Wong**  
**Professorial Fellow and Academic Advisor, East Asian Institute of National University of Singapore**

The problem with many regional think tanks is that they ran out of steam over time. There is one successful example: the Network of East Asian Think-Tanks (NEAT). The reasons why it is successful are:

1. It is low cost. NEAT does not have a secretariat, though it has a website. Each member country would volunteer to sponsor for a particular year as the host country. Then other member countries will send a delegate at their own expenses. Usually, every year some individual member countries would volunteer to set up a study group on certain subject. The member country that wants to sponsor the study group needs to raise money and invite scholars from other member countries.

2. It has a "mother-in-law", as Li Mingjiang has said. NEAT is under the ASEAN +3 Ministerial Meeting. Every year NEAT will make a report to the Meeting about what has been done in terms of promoting regional cooperation.

■ **GU Jing**  
**Director of the Centre for Rising Powers and Global Development, Institute of Development Studies, UK**

I would like to make three points.

Firstly, the success of the post-2015 global development agenda will rely on better cooperation between traditional powers and emerging powers. Certainly, the SiLKS network potentially can play a very important role in this relationship. We have discussed what we, as think tanks, can do in great length. However, it's important to understand our limitation and what we cannot do. Also as pointed out by Francis Nicolas, we are think tanks with very different nature. So how can we better cooperate with each other? That is a question that needs to be explored.

Secondly, we need to link to other main development actors, including the



business sector and the civil society sector.

Thirdly, I would like to raise three questions. First, what are the distinguishing features of SiLKS that differentiate it from other think tank networks? Second, how to best ensure the cooperation in view of South-South cooperation and North-South cooperation? Lastly, how to best leverage China's experience to promote the SiLKS network?

#### ■ **Paola Maniga**

##### **Development Manager of Bruegel**

At the moment, Bruegel is not yet a founding member, but we are seriously considering joining. So for us, this is the opportunity. To stay here is very important because it allows us to understand better what type of collaboration to expect.

1. Make the list of confirmed founding members, and circulate it among the think tank network. Because it would be very useful to understand who we are going to work with.

2. It is very important that the development and the deepening of trade, economic relations achieved between partner countries would be beneficial to wider region, at least to Asia.

3. Think tanks and policymakers should pay particular attention to how the revolution of regional collectivity will affect local population. I believe that a bottom-up development approach is key. And think tank has a clear role in it.

4. A well-designed plan outlining how the Silk Road Initiative will work is critical to ensure that additional value is created along the value chain. In particular, our efforts should be made to promote green and low-cost infrastructure construction across all the regions.

5. It is very important that think tanks work together. But clear objectives and concrete proposals are not set. In particular, our efforts should be made to promote green and low-cost infrastructure construction across all the regions. There should be more European participation in international forums in China in which the concept will be discussed and more concrete cooperation projects will be proposed.

#### ■ **Jasna Plevnik**

##### **Vice President of Croatian Geo-economic Forum**

The One Belt One Road has made a good start. But the implementation of this project will be a very long journey. Many economic, financial, political, and business issues need to be discussed. So for the understanding of the initiative, it is important to clarify its aims, instruments and benefits.

That is the cardinal task of SiLKS, which seems to me already very much intellectually equipped to give inside answers and reflections on economic, political, and cultural meanings of the OBOR Initiative.

Unfolding the strength of Silk Road depends on the right methodological approaches and choices. I hope SiLKS will be OPO, which means objective,



pioneering and open.

■ **LI Qiang**

**Director-General of Development Research Center, Fujian Provincial People's Government, China**

To realize the vision of OBOR, we need to integrate the wisdom and strengths of all parties. SiLKS provides a new platform for the communication and cooperation of think tanks. Think tanks can play the following roles in OBOR:

1. To facilitate in reaching consensus on Silk Road. The views of think tanks on Silk Road can make a positive impact on social consensus.
2. To promote the spirit of Silk Road. We can share developmental experience and clear up misunderstandings through discussions at forums, joint research, people exchanges, academic exchanges, and etc.
3. To promote cooperation along the Silk Road. Since the SiLKS has been launched, we need to draft a constitution, clarify mode of cooperation and participants, set up mechanisms of coordination and communication, and identify priority sectors. These will lay a foundation for joint policy research and information sharing among think tanks along the Silk Road, and for the institutionalization of communication and cooperation between think tanks, governments, and enterprises.

■ **ZHAO Deru**

**Director of Development Research Center, People's Government of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, China**

Xinjiang is the core region along the Silk Road Economic Belt. We are now working in five major areas.

First is ensuring the connectivity of roads. We are building highways and railways, even high-speed railways in Xinjiang to connect other parts of China with Central Asia and Europe.

Second is guaranteeing the free flow of traded goods. Currently, all of the special trains in China heading to Europe have to travel through Xinjiang. We use diplomatic measures to simplify the customs procedures, and make sure the flow of goods is not blocked.

Third is improving our industrial system, including energy, agriculture, tourism, etc.

Fourth is pushing forward the progress of IT application. As goods come and go, IT application is very important.

Fifth is deepening reform in a comprehensive way.

Through these efforts, Xinjiang has seen double-digit growth in the past two years. People's daily life has been greatly improved, and so does education and poverty alleviation. All in all, building Silk Road will be beneficial not only to Xinjiang, but also to neighboring provinces, countries and the entire Eurasia.



■ **YANG Chenhua**

**Director-General of Development Research Center, Government of Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China**

The gathering of think tanks today and cooperation in the future will facilitate regional policy adjustment. There are two benefits from the cooperation and communication among think tanks.

One is short-term benefit. The achievements of the forum are short-term benefits, such as profound discussion on future research, and policy advice and suggestions. The prerequisite for achieving these is the inclusiveness of think tanks.

The other is long-term benefit. After the forum, we need to carry out joint research on priority areas. The aims of Silk Road are to promote development and cooperation, and to overcome difficulties. Joint research is the key to achieve these aims.

■ **SUN Yuesong**

**Director of English Desk, Information Department, Xinhua News Agency**

Leveraging the complementarities among countries along the Silk Road, OBOR creates a new opportunity for mutual development. As we all know, OBOR covers a wide range of regions, where countries have distinctive political systems, development levels, laws and regulations, social customs, and cultures. Therefore, the free flow of information is an important basis for realizing the vision of OBOR.