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中国与拉美和加勒比国家 同命运共抗疫

Together, China and Latin America and the Caribbean Countries
Fight Against COVID-19

Together We Fight
against the Virus

中国国际问题研究院 CIIIS
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Abstract

Nothing, not even mountains and oceans, can separate people with shared goals and vision. Ever since the COVID-19 outbreak, Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) countries have expressed solidarity with China. Most heads of state and government, other political leaders, as well as people from all walks of society in the region, have expressed their deep-felt condolences and support for China’s campaign against the epidemic, as well as their praise to China’s success in containing the virus.

During China’s toughest hours against the pandemic, many countries in the LAC region maintained calm and rational, without over-reacting to travel or trade bans. Many countries offered their hands with much-needed aid. They provided masks, protective gears and other relief-related supplies to China even when they had limited medical and health capabilities. These actions showed the deep-seated friendship between the LAC and the Chinese government and people.

Currently, as COVID-19 reaches its full-blown pandemic phase, the situation in the LAC region is becoming more serious every day, with countries struggling to combat the virus. At this critical juncture, China has already delivered disaster-relief to and carried out international cooperation with the 24 countries that it has formed diplomatic ties with in the region, as well as countries that have yet to establish diplomatic ties. China is now actively cooperating with the LAC region, including providing them with valuable political support, material and technical assistance, as well as its experience of disease prevention and control.

Virus knows no borders, love knows no boundaries. During this special period, China and the LAC countries will continue to exemplify the ideas of China- LAC Community of Shared Future through their actions.

I. LAC Countries' Support for China in Combating the Epidemic

There are altogether 33 countries in the LAC region today. 24 of them have established diplomatic ties with the People's Republic of China. After the COVID-19 outbreak, many LAC countries, including some that have yet to establish diplomatic ties with China, have delivered their support for China through various ways.

1.1 Political Support from the LAC Governments

During the early time of the coronavirus outbreak in China, many heads of states in the LAC region made phone calls or wrote to President Xi Jinping or Premier Li Keqiang to deliver well-wish and support to the Chinese government and people, pay respect to the strong Chinese leadership, appreciate China's achievements in combating COVID-19, and express their confidence that China will make an early triumph in the fight against the virus. The leaders include: First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party Raúl Castro and President of Cuba Miguel Diaz Canel; President of Chile Sebastián Piñera; President of Argentina Alberto Fernández; President of Suriname Desiré Bouterse; Governor-General of Jamaica Sir Patrick Allen, and Prime Minister Andrew Holness; Prime Minister of Grenada Keith Mitchell; Prime Minister of the Dominica Roosevelt Skerrit; Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda Gaston Browne; Prime Minister of Barbados Mia Mottley; Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Keith Rowley.

President of Costa Rica Carlos Alvarado, President of Dominica Charles Savarin and President of Columbia Iván Duque Márquez have also respectively lauded China's efforts in fighting against the virus, and voiced support for China on behalf of their governments. Nicolás Maduro, President of Venezuela, has on numerous occasions voiced his support for China and his admiration of the Chinese government's swift response to safeguard the health and safety of the Chinese people. Guyana, as the sitting president of the

G77, also played an important role in coordinating the positions of member countries to pledge their full support for China’s efforts in fighting the epidemic. In its statement, the G77 stressed the need for the international community to fight against the virus in the spirit of responsibility, transparency, solidarity, and cooperation, and prevent discrimination, stigmatization, and the spread of misinformation.

Heads of the Caribbean states also expressed their firm support for China through the convening of the CARICOM summit and the issuance of communique. They also extended their appreciation and gratitude to China for providing assistance to their students and nationals residing in China.

Leaders such as Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno and Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro spoke highly of Beijing’s proactive measures and transparency. President Bolsonaro also said on his personal social media account that the COVID-19 outbreak is a common challenge for Brazil and China, and that the two nations are united as one in the fight against the virus. He also expressed deep admiration for President Xi Jinping for personally leading and directing the fight against the epidemic. The newly elected Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou stated that developing relationship with China is a priority on his foreign policy agenda. On behalf of Uruguay, he expressed condolences and support to the Chinese people in the fight against the virus. Other leaders of the LAC countries have also expressed their support for China’s fight against the coronavirus in various ways. Many of them thanked China for its caring and support for their citizens traveling in China, and expressed their willingness to strengthen cooperation with China in controlling the epidemic.

Other prominent politicians and figureheads from the LAC region have also shown their support for China. In Mexico, President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Rojas Vice President of the Chamber of Deputies Marco Adame, and President of the Senate Commission for Asia-Pacific-Africa

Relationship Cecilia Pinedo sent their well-wishes and messages of support to all Chinese people, and stated that by sharing information with the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as the international community, China has played a key role in keeping the epidemic in check, and that Mexico will continue to work closely with China, and they are confident that China will achieve victory.

Venezuela's Vice President Delci Rodríguez; Colombia's former President Ernesto Samper, Vice President Marta Lucía Ramírez and government ministers; Grenada's Senate President Chester Humphrey; Trinidad and Tobago's Minister of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs Fitzgerald Hinds; Dominican Republic Foreign Minister Miguel Vargas; and Panama's Minister of Health Rosario Turner also, on multiple occasions, appreciated China's disease prevention and control measures and remarkable achievements, lauded the political advantages of China's whole-of-nation system, and thanked China for providing assistance to their nationals in China.

Brazilian Vice President Hamilton Mourão also sent a letter to Chinese Vice President Wang Qishan, expressing his condolences to China on behalf of the Brazilian government and himself. He said that the Chinese government and people have showed firm determination and taken decisive measures in the fight against the virus. Brazil is willing to work within its capacity to cooperate with China and overcome the epidemic. He also thanked China for its assistance in evacuating Brazilian nationals from Wuhan.

Many former presidents of LAC countries have also actively voiced their support. Brazil's three former presidents Rousseff, Lula da Silva and Fernando Cardoso have also agreed to interviews with the CGTN, praising China's efforts and expressing sympathy and support to the Chinese people. Former Argentine President Mauricio Macri spoke highly of the important progress China has made in fighting the epidemic. Former Colombian President

Ernesto Samper expressed sympathy and support to the Chinese government and people and firmly believed that China will overcome the difficulties.

In addition, many ministerial level officials have expressed condolences and support to the Chinese government and people through meetings, letters or online messages which shared their belief that China has dealt with the virus effectively and that China is a responsible country deserving world-wide respect. The officials include: Panamanian Director General of the National Migration Service Samira Gozaine, Minister of Agricultural Development Augusto Valderrama; Venezuelan Minister of Health Carlos Alvarado, Minister of Culture Ernesto Villegas, and Deputy Minister of Culture Raúl Cazal; Bolivian Health Minister Anibal Cruz; Argentine Minister of Foreign Affairs Felipe Solá, Under-Secretary for Foreign Policy José Pérez, and Health Minister González García; Chilean Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Iván Flores, Foreign Affairs Minister Teodoro Ribera; Peruvian Foreign Minister Gustavo Meza-Cuadra; Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo, Minister of Health Luiz Henrique Mandetta, Minister of Agriculture Tereza Cristina, Minister of Infrastructure Tarcísio Gomes de Freitas, Minister of Citizenship Onyx Lorenzoni, President of the Parliamentary Front of Brazil-China National Congress Fausto Pinato, and Deputy Chairman of the House of Representatives Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Front Vieira de Mello.

Many heads of states and high-level political leaders have also visited the Chinese embassies in their countries early on to convey their sympathy and support to the CPC, the Chinese government and people. In their visits, they expressed that they will always stand with China. They appreciated China’s timely alert and information sharing and thanked China for taking care of their nationals residing in China.

Cuban Ambassador to China Carlos Miguel Pereira, Ecuadorian Ambassador to China Carlos Larrea, Uruguayan Ambassador to China Fernando Lugris, and Colombian Ambassador to China Luis Diego Monsalve

sent video messages greeting the Chinese people and praising the Chinese government, which were broadcasted throughout China via China Global Television Network (CGTN). Missions in China from other Latin American and Caribbean countries also expressed condolences and well-wishes to the Chinese government and people by recording videos and hanging banners in embassy buildings, which deeply moved the Chinese people.

Many LAC countries also supported China by refuting the wrongful remarks made by certain politicians. For example, when Brazilian Federal Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro posted remarks on his personal Twitter account on March 18th, smearing China's efforts to contain the outbreak and attacking China's political system, which has caused negative effects. Brazilian Senate President Davi Alcolumbre and House Speaker Rodrigo Maia apologized to the Chinese government and people immediately on behalf of the Congress. They criticized Congressman Bolsonaro's remarks as contrary to the comprehensive strategic partnership between Brazil and China and reiterated their commitment to the Brazil-China fraternity. Brazil's Vice President Hamilton Mourão, former President Lula da Silva, former President Dilma Rousseff, the Parliamentary Front of the Brazil-China National Congress and the Parliamentary Agricultural Front, the Brazil-China Friendship Group of the Brazilian Senate, as well as leaders of Brazil's major political parties, more than 10 governors, representatives of the business sector, well-known scholars, senior commentators, think tanks and a large number of netizens also criticized the congressman's absurd remarks and expressed solidarity with China. They stressed that China has not only taken immediate and effective measures to combat the epidemic, but also actively helped the international community to control the outbreak, which is an example for Brazil and the entire international community.¹

¹ "Statement of Chinese Embassy in Brazil," Embassy of China in Brazil, March 20, 2020, <http://br.china-embassy.org/chn/gdxw/t1758511.htm>; "The Speaker of Brazil's Senate apologized to China on Behalf of the Congress for the Remarks Made by Congressman Eduardo Insulting China," Embassy of China in Brazil, March 22, 2020, <http://br.china-embassy.org/chn/gdxw/t1759254.htm>.

1.2 Encouragement and Aid from Civil Societies

First, leaders of political parties from many countries expressed their support to China and the CPC by writing to Xi Jinping, General Secretary of CPC Central Committee. They include: Alejandro Moreno, Chairman of the Mexican Revolutionary Institutional Party and Chairman of the Permanent Conference of Political Parties of Latin America and the Caribbean; Kamla Persad-Bissessar, Leader of the Opposition of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the United National Congress Party; and José Luis Gioja, Chairman of Argentina’s ruling Justicialist Party. Suriname’s Progressive Reform Party donated a batch of medical supplies to China , apart from writing a letter to President Xi,. The Force of the People Party of Dominica also sent a Letter of Solidarity to the Chinese embassy in Roseau.

Meanwhile, General Secretary of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity Gregorio Chay; President of the Special National Directorate (Dirección Nacional Extraordinaria) of the Mexican Democratic Revolutionary Party Ángel Ávila, President of the Mexican Civic Movement Party Clemente Castañeda, President of the Mexican Labor Party Alberto Anaya; President of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Argentina Juan Carlos Alderete, President of Argentina’s Republican Proposal Party Patricia Bullrich, Chairman of Argentina’s ruling Justicialist Party José Luis Gioja; President of Chile’s National Renewal Party Mario Desbordes, and Chief of Deputies of Chile’s Christian Democratic Party Fuad Chahín; President of the Peruvian Alliance for Progress Party Cesar Acuña; Chairman of the Communist Party of Peru (Red Fatherland) Alberto Moreno; President of the Uruguayan Broad Front Javier Miranda, Chairman of the Uruguayan White Party Luis Lacalle, General Secretary of the Uruguayan Colorado Party Julio Sanguinetti; and the Bolivian Revolutionary Workers’ Party also expressed their condolences and support to the CPC, the Chinese government and people. They believed that

China's measures against COVID-19 are timely and appropriate and they provide an important reference for countries around the world to fight against the pandemic. The top leaders of Brazil's Labor Party, Democratic Labor Party, Democratic Movement Party, Communist Party, among other major political parties, have also expressed sympathy and support for China's fight against the outbreak in the form of oral or written messages.

Leaders of the multilateral organizations and political leaders of various countries in Latin America and the Caribbean who had visited China at the invitation of the International Department of CPC in 2019 also expressed condolences and well-wishes to the CPC and the Chinese people through social media and other channels. For example, Monica Valente, Executive Secretary of Sao Paulo Forum, extended sincere greetings to the Chinese government and people. Beloved Cerrud, a member of Central Committee of the Democratic Revolution Party of Panama and the Central American Parliament, said that he firmly supports China, appreciates the governance capability of the Chinese government, and firmly believes that the Chinese Communist Party and people will properly cope with the difficulties caused by the epidemic. Gloria Guadalupe Oquelí, a member of the Hondurean Liberty and Refoundation Party and the Central American Parliament, said that Central American countries are highly concerned about the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic and are willing to work with the international community to support the "blocking war" launched by the CPC and the Chinese government against the epidemic.¹

Second, officials of the local governments in many countries have expressed their support for China's fight against the virus. For example, government officials from Tlaxcala of Mexico, Quito of Ecuador, Barranquilla and Bogota of Colombian, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Norte of Brazil, Lima of Peru, Misiones and Santa Cruz of

¹ "Fighting against Epidemic, Latin America Together with China", *China News*, February 3, 2020, <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2020/02-03/9076949.shtml>.

Argentina, Montevideo, Florida and Paysandú of Uruguay expressed their cordial condolences and firm support to the Chinese people at this special and difficult time. They highly appreciated China’s swift response, spirit and methods in combating the outbreak. They believed that the effective measures taken by the Chinese government will eventually defeat the virus. They also expressed their willingness to further deepen exchanges and cooperation with China in the areas of economy, trade, education and humanities.

Third, the academic circles speak up for China. Hilarion Klinger, an expert on China at the Dominican Academy of Sciences, published articles entitled “Truth, Half-Truth and Lies about the Novel Coronavirus” and “The Tragedy of Leveraging the Outbreak for Geopolitical Agenda” in local mainstream media, refuting rumors and false information and speaking up for the Chinese people. Arturo Oropeza, vice president of the Mexican Institute of Industrial Development and Economic Growth, said that the Chinese people have made good use of their innovative wisdom in dealing with the outbreak. According to Panama Canal Authority economist Eddie Tapiero, the anti-epidemic campaign shows that emerging industries such as artificial intelligence, robots, 5G, e-commerce and distance education are maturing in China. Professor Xavier Sáez-Llorens, a renowned epidemiologist in Panama, lauded China’s fight against the epidemic, saying that “it is a human miracle to fight against the virus”. Po Chun Lee, a senior researcher at Ecuador’s Institute of Advanced Studies, believes that China’s high Internet penetration rate and advanced application technology are sufficient to guarantee China’s victory over the COVID-19 epidemic, which few countries in the world can do.

Evandro Carvalho, director of the Brazil-China Research Center of the Brazilian Getulio Vargas Foundation, Dr. Luis E. Delpiano, president of the Chilean Infectious Diseases Association, Angel Cabeza, professor of the University of Tarapaca at Iquique, Jorge Malena, director of the China Research Center of the Argentine Council on International Relations,

Fernando Pacheco, President of Peruvian International Political Research Institute, and other scholars have also expressed their confidence in China's victory over the epidemic and path to economic recovery. In mid-February, 16 internationally renowned experts on medical law from Chile and other countries published comments in the well-known British academic journal *Lancet*, saying that "responses that are anchored in fear, misinformation, racism, and xenophobia will not save us from outbreaks like COVID-19" and called on some countries to lift unreasonable travel restrictions on China. Brazilian economist Elias Jabbour also pointed out that some western countries and media are using the epidemic as a smear campaign on China. The opportunistic behavior of certain politicians to hinder China's development will inevitably fail.

Fourth, the business community has made generous donations.

According to big data analysis of the internet conducted by Professor Zhong Hongwu at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Ye Liuhong, executive director of the Research Institute of CSR Cloud, and researcher Liu Mengdi, 254 overseas enterprises had donated over RMB 1.378 billion in cash and supplies to China as of February 6, 2020. Among them, Brazilian enterprises donated RMB 3.3 million, ranking 21st in the list of overseas enterprises. Chilean enterprises donated about RMB 650,000 worth of cherries to Shanghai. The Chilean government and some related private enterprises donated fruits stranded in port storage due to the outbreak as humanitarian aid.

Verdades, semiverdades y mentiras
sobre la neumonía



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La primera gran verdad es el costo en vidas humanas y su alto nivel de propagación al transmitirse fácilmente de persona a persona. Como está resultando habitual en épocas de las redes sociales se divulgan no solo aquellos consejos prácticos y útiles, sino también, especulaciones alarmistas no fundamentadas con simples y llanas mentiras y transposiciones de tiempo y lugar de datos y material fílmico con fines políticos e ideológicos. La extendida campaña global anti China resulta caldo de cultivo ideal para todo tipo de manipulaciones. Hasta con más rapidez de la efectiva expansión de la infección se propaga la desinformación en redes e internet. Muchos creen todo sin analizar. No han faltado las siempre consabidas teorías conspirativas.

BBC, medio internacional serio, perteneciente al gobierno inglés, ha reseñado algunas de las "informaciones erróneas" que han circulado, vemos: aprovechando que la evidencia inicial muestra la posibilidad de que el virus venga de animales, profusamente se han expuesto videos de asiáticos comiendo murciélagos o sopas de murciélagos, el problema es que el video ni es de Wuhan y ni siquiera de China, fue filmado en Palau, en el Pacífico Occidental, en 2016 por el "blogger" Mengyun Wang quien se ha disculpado. Los investigadores si sospechan que el murciélago pudiera ser portador del virus, pero la sopa no "es particularmente común en China". Otro video, con millones de visitas, muestra a una supuesta enfermera de Wuhan, subido por un usuario coreano con, inicialmente, subtítulos en inglés y coreano, ya retirado, pero para muchos la imagen quedó grabada. No todo asiático es chino. Otro video mostraba pacientes caídos en las calles "como moscas" según comentario de un amigo que me lo envió. La artificiosa "enfermera" asegura que una persona puede contagiar a otras 14, cuando la Organización Mundial de la Salud -OMS- informa que un

Eduardo Klinger Pevida, a Dominican expert on Chinese issues, published an article on *Dominican Today* titled "Truth, Semi-Truth and Lies about COVID-19" .

Fifth, children’s well-wishes are especially touching. Children from Cuba, Mexico, Peru, El Salvador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Brazil and other countries painted or wrote, offering sincere blessings to China. For example, Jose David Porrás Mendes, an 11-year-old fifth grader in Costa Rica, wrote, “Everything will be fine! Costa Rica supports China!” Cuban children Manuel, Acosta, Hernandez and the 7-year-old Mexican boy Eric Shanteau



A Brazilian girl displays her painting to support China’s fight against the epidemic.

wrote, “China, you can do it, you are amazing, you will bravely defeat the virus”. El Salvadorian girl Castelhana, 13, and her 11-year-old brother wrote, “El Salvador loves China”. Brazil’s 9-year-old girl Wendy also devised a plan to fight the epidemic in her picture—four children of different skin colors stand side by side and hand in

hand with the words “unite to fight the novel coronavirus” written above. In the painting by 11-year-old Costa Rican boy Porrás, the national flags of the two countries are closely placed together.¹

Sixth, the media actively disseminates positive energy. For example, Rosana, host of Cuba’s national television news channel, said that China’s efforts to secure medical supplies and dispatch aid personnel are admirable. Many mainstream media in Brazil cooperate with China’s Central Radio and TV Station to let Brazilian audiences know the real situation in China through live broadcasts and reprinting of manuscripts. The documentary “Wuhan 24 Hours” (Portuguese version) produced by the China Central Radio and Television Station was first broadcast on the TV news

¹ “‘China, You Can Do It!’ Latin American Children Support China’s Fight against Epidemic with Painting,” *Guangming*, February 17, 2020, http://shuhua.gmw.cn/2020-02/17/content_33562386.htm.

channel and international channel of Brazil Global Group, the largest media group in Latin America. Mainstream media such as Brazil's national television station and Brazil's Rede Bandeirantes television station have interviewed Portuguese-speaking hosts of CGTN headquarters many times.

Fakkale, Chairman-in-Office of the Cooperation Platform of the Belt and Road Initiative Journalists Organization and Chairman of the Argentine Buenos Aires Journalists Association, recently wrote to the All-China Journalists Association in support of China's fight against the novel coronavirus, promising to responsibly disseminate accurate information on the epidemic data and epidemic prevention and control policies implemented by China. *The Peruvian, First Daily, Télam, Peruvian Andina News Agency, El Comercio, La Gestión, RPP News Network* and other media introduced the anti-virus situation and the results achieved in China. Chile's "Century" and "New World" Radio made interviews with the Chinese Ambassador to Chile. The Bolivian newspaper published a transcript of an interview with the Chinese Ambassador to Bolivia on the coronavirus situation. Argentina News Five, National Television, American Television, Radio Mitre, TN News Television, National News Agency, Chronicle and other media also made objective reports on China's fight against the epidemic. Argentine media "INFOBAE" said that the U.S. practice of cutting off air logistics and terminating personnel exchanges with China will only create panic and exploit people's fears.

Seventh, the support from the entertainment and sports industry is encouraging. For example, the Cuban Federation of Literature and Art held a poetry recital on "Supporting China's Fight against the Coronavirus" to express its support to China. Venezuela held cultural activities to support China's fight against the coronavirus outbreak. At the carnival in Sao Paulo, Brazil, the local dance school expressed its solidarity with China with a wonderful Chinese themed performance. During Argentina's first

division football league, a short film of the Chinese people’s fight against the coronavirus was shown. The Argentine Football Association presented a Messi jersey to Wu Yu, a member of the 3rd Medical Team Assisting Hubei and a nurse in the digestive department from Xiangya Hospital, as a gift for her son. In addition to Messi’s jersey, the Argentine Football Association also donated several Argentina’s national team souvenirs such as scarves and plush toys. Argentina’s Club Atlético Independiente and Club Atlético River Plate cheered “Come on, Wuhan! Come on, China! “ during a live competition.

Eighth, teachers and students in various countries and international students in China cheered for China and sent their well-wishes. Teachers and students from Confucius Institutes in Antigua and Barbuda, Brazil, Argentina, and Suriname expressed their support and well-wishes to China and to Wuhan through pictures and videos. In a letter to the headquarter of Confucius Institute, President Luis Alberto Fierro Ramírez of the Autonomous University of Chihuahua in Mexico said that the teachers and students of the university would like to express their most sincere concern and sympathy to China regarding the outbreak. Jose Williams, Rector of Mexico’s Yucatan Autonomous University, on behalf of the university, expressed his deep sympathy and solidarity to the Confucius Institute headquarters, as well as all Chinese people. Marco Cepik, a renowned professor at Brazil’s Nantah Federal University and a visiting scholar of the 2018 “Confucius New Sinology Program”, said he believes that the great efforts of the Chinese government and people will definitely overcome any epidemic.

International students from Cuba, Chile, Ecuador, Brazil, Mexico and other countries expressed their wishes for China to fight the virus. With the help of his wife, Palacio, a Colombian who has lived in China for 24 years, wrote a Chinese song named “Cheering from a Distance” and filmed it as a music video. International students returning from Wuhan to Brazil also firmly believed that China can control the outbreak and hope to return to

China as soon as possible to continue their studies. Cristian Pradenas, a Chilean student, stayed in Wuhan during the outbreak and raised funds with several other international students to buy protective equipment and donated it to a local hospital in Wuhan.

1.3 Other Substantial Support and Aid from LAC Countries

First, with a calm, objective and reasonable attitude, most LAC countries did not over-react with travel bans or trade bans.

During early stage of the outbreak, some countries in Central America and the Caribbean took very severe measures to limit travels going in and out the country due to their fragile health care systems. However, most countries respected the advice from the WHO, and did not instate travel or trade bans targeting China. Noteworthy, Cuba, as a good friend, comrade, and brother nation of China, was firm in its decision not to implement any type of travel or trade bans. Mexico, Barbados, Suriname, the Dominican Republic, and Costa Rica assessed the situation from the scientific and technical perspective, and passed non-radical preventative measures that would help China and themselves weather through “the darkest hour.”¹

In South America, most countries did not enact travel or trade restrictions with China prior to March 15, but they did implement temperature checks on Chinese nationals entering their territories, and suspected cases were quarantined in hospitals or at home after signing a statement promising to follow the quarantine rules. Brazil was quick to state that they would not be implementing any restrictive or discriminatory measures targeted at Chinese citizens entering Brazil. Tereza Cristina, Minister of Agriculture of Brazil, stated when she met with the Chinese Ambassador to Brazil, that the Brazilian government would not restrict trade because of the virus. During China’s toughest hours, Argentina’s Health Minister Ginés González García stressed at a press briefing that there was no

¹ “Barbados Overseas Chinese Donate to Support Motherland’s Fight against the Coronavirus,” Embassy of China in Barbados, February 15, 2020, <http://bb.china-embassy.org/chn/xwdt/t1745181.htm>.

need to implement a travel restriction targeted at China. Argentine Tourism and Sports Minister Matías Lammens, in a meeting with Chinese entrepreneurs, said that Argentina would not restrict Chinese tourists due to the epidemic. Chilean Minister of Agriculture Antonio Walker also stressed that Chile would not limit agricultural exports to China.

Second, many LAC countries provided supplies for China. The material aids given, though limited, are testament of the deep-felt friendship.

Costa Rica and Grenada donated supplies to China via their embassies in China, providing China with masks, medical gloves, personal protective equipment, and other medical aids. Trinidad and Tobago donated two batches of emergency medical supplies, including 15,000 N95 facial masks. The Surinamese government and the opposition, the Progressive Reform Party, donated a total of 22,000 N95 facial masks and over 2,000 medical gloves. The Commonwealth of Dominica donated 10,000 medical facial masks.

Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay have also donated medical and food supplies to China through multiple channels. During the most difficult period of China’s fight against the coronavirus, Brazil transported more than 200,000 disposable masks, protective clothing and other medical supplies to China. The Ecuadorian government donated medical surgical clothing, masks and other materials to China. The Uruguayan government also donated a batch of medical supplies to China.

Local governments and enterprises have also taken the initiative to help. The Argentine city of José C. Paz in Buenos Aires Province organized donations of supplies needed to fight the pandemic, including N95 masks and biohazard suits, which were donated in the name of the municipal government to its sister municipalities of Xiangyang City in Hubei Province and Shangrao City in Jiangxi Province. Chile’s Banco Security donated a batch of medical supplies including masks and sterilized alcohol to the Tsinghua

University Education Foundation. San Jose Province of Uruguay donated 3,000 masks, 1,200 pairs of gloves and other disease-prevention supplies to its sister province Chongqing.¹ Uruguay's Lavalleja and Paysandú Provinces donated anti-outbreak materials to Sichuan and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region respectively.²

In addition, Chinese nationals or descendants of Chinese immigrants in the LAC region have also donated money and supplies and have raised a large number of urgently needed anti-outbreak medical equipment to China as a show of support and the ties they share with their roots.

Third, many countries stood up against radical remarks such as racial discrimination, and helped to protect the health and safety of Chinese nationals. Countries in the LAC region have attached great importance to preventing or refuting domestic racist remarks against Chinese and other Asians. Mexican officials, including Hugo López-Gatell Ramírez, Under-Secretary for Disease Prevention and Health Promotion of Mexico's Ministry of Health and head of the committee to combat the epidemic, and Armando Cabada, Mayor of Juarez, all stressed that Mexico attaches great importance to the maintenance of Sino-Mexican people-to-people, economic and trade exchanges, and called on the Mexican people to follow the recommendations of the World Health Organization, and not blindly trust exaggerated media reports, and to oppose any discriminatory words and actions against Chinese citizens.

The Prime Minister of Jamaica Andrew Holness stressed that personnel tasked with controlling the pandemic should be professional, treat patients and visitors from all countries equally while respecting the dignity of

¹ "San Jose Provincial Government Donates Epidemic Prevention Materials to Chongqing City," Chinese Embassy in Uruguay, February 5, 2020, <http://uy.china-embassy.org/chn/xwdt/t1741500.htm>.

² "Ecuadorian Government Donates Medical Protection Materials to China to Fight the Novel Coronavirus Epidemic," Chinese embassy in Ecuador, February 15, 2020, <http://ec.china-embassy.org/chn/sgxw/t1745461.htm>; "Ambassador to Uruguay Wang Gang Attended the Donation Ceremony of Anti-Epidemic Supplies to China by the Uruguayan Government," Chinese Embassy in Uruguay, February 19, 2020, <http://uy.china-embassy.org/chn/xwdt/t1754193.htm>.

everyone.¹ Jamaica’s Health Minister has expressed clear opposition to the fear and discrimination against Chinese. Saint Lucia’s Ministry of Health also pointed out that people should not participate in racist discriminatory activities involving Asian residents. Costa Rica’s Health Minister Daniel Salas called on the public to remain objective and rational and oppose prejudice and discrimination.

Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and First Lady/Vice President Rosario Murillo called on government officials to join a campaign called “Love in times of COVID-19” in order to raise awareness against racial discrimination and stigmatization caused by the virus.

Brazil’s Secretary of Health Surveillance, Wanderson Kleber de Oliveira, compared the current outbreak in China to the Zika outbreak in Brazil, calling on the public not to have any targeted discrimination.

Apart from LAC countries, regional organizations have also expressed condolences and support to China. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) issued a special statement to express its confidence and support for the victory of China’s anti-COVID-19 campaign. The 31st Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit of Heads of State also adopted a communiqué, expressing their recognition and firm support for China’s fight against the coronavirus, conveying sympathy and condolences for China’s losses, thanking China for providing care to students from the Caribbean countries, and firmly opposing any stigmatization and discriminatory words and actions.

¹ “Prime Minister Says Jamaica Ready to Deal with Impact of COVID-19,” *Pridenews*, Mar 9, 2020, <http://pridenews.ca/2020/03/09/prime-minister-says-jamaica-ready-deal-impact-covid-19>.

II. Regional and Country-Specific COVID-19 Situation and Responses

At present, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the LAC region is rising rapidly, which means the spread of the disease has entered an exponential growth phase. The situation is becoming very serious.

2.1 Regional Outbreak Situation

By 12:00 on April 12 Beijing time, 61,062 confirmed cases had been reported in the LAC region. The cumulative death toll was 2,556. The outbreak has spread to all 33 countries and 14 overseas territories of European countries in the region. Among them, Brazil is the most serious, with 20,962 cumulative confirmed cases and growing at an accelerating pace. What is even more alarming is that confirmed cases have appeared in the slums of Brazil, which means that a larger scale of outbreak is imminent. Next to Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Peru and Mexico currently have the most severe outbreak, ranking second to fifth respectively. Overall, the whole region has entered the full-blown pandemic phase.



Anti-epidemic personnel disinfecting wagons parked at the central train station in Rio de Janeiro.

2.2 Response Measures

Faced with the inbound infections of coronavirus, countries in the LAC region are bracing themselves for outbreak. Most countries have declared a state of emergency, adopted a series of measures such as closing ports and controlling people's movements, and maintained communication and cooperation with international and regional organizations

such as CARICOM, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and other foreign countries such as China in an effort to flatten the curve of the spread of the virus in the region.

Regional organizations have played a leading role in the fight against the coronavirus in the Caribbean. Regional cooperation was especially noteworthy. As early as January 21, authorized by the CARICOM Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), CARPHA launched an emergency response mechanism, which holds weekly meetings jointly attended by the CARICOM secretariat, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Pan American Health Organization, the CARICOM Implementing Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health England and the Public Health Agency of Canada to discuss measures to deal with the outbreak.

Before the virus spread into the region, CARPHA and PAHO, through laboratory construction and training of medical personnel, have enabled most countries in the region to have the capacity of quickly detecting the virus. On February 10, CARPHA’s Medical Microbiology Reference Laboratory in Trinidad and Tobago was ready for testing cases in other countries of the region. On February 12, PAHO sent experts to the region to add equipment and train personnel for laboratories in Suriname, Jamaica, Haiti, Belize, Dominica, Barbados, The Bahamas, and Guyana, among the 29 laboratories in the LAC region, to ensure full detection capacity before February 21, thus laying the foundation for fighting the disease.

In addition, the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) have all taken active action to assist countries in the region in purchasing related supplies in response to the general lack of these supplies. CARPHA and the Regional Security System (RSS) are

coordinating to ensure that countries such as Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Lucia which lack diagnosis capacity can send their samples to the lab in Trinidad and Tobago in a timely fashion.

In mid-February, CARPHA formulated a regional Communications Strategy to help countries enhance public awareness across the region in terms of disease prevention and cracking down on false information and fake news spread by certain media.¹ At the beginning of March, CARPHA formulated a regulation for local outbreak response, specifying the roles and responsibilities of relevant actors in the region including states, the cruise ship industry and others. Under its guidance, countries in the region began to respond to the outbreak in an orderly manner.

The measures adopted by countries mainly cover the following aspects:

First, strengthen border control, implement strict epidemiological isolation and investigation, and mobilize medical forces to fight the outbreak. Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, The Bahamas, and Belize have all established inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms for coronavirus response. Countries such as Cuba and Barbados have formulated special outbreak response plans. Cuba is prioritizing drug research and development, and claims to be able to produce more than 20 types of anti-viral drugs.² Referring to China's experience, Cuba, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada, Suriname, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and other countries have transformed some hospitals and institutions into designated hospitals for coronavirus patients. Haiti have also begun training medical staff in private hospitals across the country.

Second, adopt social distancing measures and travel restrictions. Jamaica has declared the whole country as a disaster area,

¹ "CARPHA Commended for Regional Response to Coronavirus COVID-19 at Heads of Government," CARPHA, February 26, 2020, <http://carpha.org/More/Media/Articles/ArticleID/297/CARPHA-Commended-for-Regional-Response-to-Coronavirus-COVID-19-at-Heads-of-Government>.

² "Cuban President Highlights Combat against COVID-19," *Plenglish*, March 14, 2020, <https://www.plenglish.com/index.php?o=rn&id=53363&SEO=cuban-president-highlights-combat-against-covid-19>.

empowering the government authority to take certain measures to fight the disease.¹ Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Grenada, and Guyana have announced the closure of schools. Jamaica, Guyana, and Grenada have announced the cancellation or postponement of large-scale gatherings such as Carnival. Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Haiti, Saint Lucia, Cayman Islands and other countries or regions have started to prohibit cruise ships and private planes carrying suspected or fever cases from docking. These countries have also employed military and police forces to step up keeping order in key areas such as entry and exit ports, hospitals and prisons. Haiti and the Dominican Republic are coordinating to strengthen their border control and prevent the incoming cases; Grenada announced a prohibition of visits for prisoners to prevent the spread of the virus;² Jamaica cracked down on a patient who escaped the quarantine center; and Suriname has strengthened the monitoring of key domestic roads and highways. These countries are also paying attention to the prevention of misinformation on the media. Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Keith Rowley called on the public not to spread false information and not to panic buy or hoard supplies. The ministries of health of Jamaica, Guyana, Suriname and other countries have been disseminating correct information to the public through regular announcements and press conferences. Saint Lucia stated that it would prosecute anyone who spreads false information about the deadly pandemic.

Third, the Caribbean countries have increased financial support for disease prevention and control. Jamaica, Barbados and other countries said they would increase special fiscal funds to deal with economic and livelihood issues such as the reduction of national income and

¹ “Jamaica Declared Disaster Area, Restriction Now on Travel from United Kingdom,” *The Gleaner*, March 13, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200313/covid-19-jamaica-declared-disaster-area-restriction-now-travel-united>.

² “No Visitors for some Prisoners in Grenada during Coronavirus Outbreak,” *BUZZ*, Mar 13, 2020, <https://buzz-caribbean.com/article/no-visitors-for-some-prisoners-in-grenada-during-coronavirus-outbreak/>.

underemployment caused by the decline in the tourism industry and the disruption of the international supply chain. Barbados was also seeking to negotiate with the International Monetary Fund for relief of fiscal restrictions in order to better cope with the pandemic.

Fourth, LAC countries have strengthened international cooperation against COVID-19. As CARPHA's virus testing laboratory is located in Trinidad and Tobago, the T&T government, in a display of spirit of internationalism, has implemented policies that would facilitate the clearance and transport of specimen needed to be tested from its partners in the region. This decision has won widespread praise from other countries. Jamaica and Cuba strengthened exchanges of medical personnel during the outbreak. According to the bilateral technical cooperation agreements, more than 300 Cuban health professionals are currently helping in Jamaica. Cuba also sent 50 doctors to Suriname to help fight the disease. Guyana and Suriname jointly announced that they would be shutting down border entries along the Courantyne River to minimize unnecessary human traffic. Suriname and French Guiana have launched joint patrols along their river border to crack down on illegal crossings. Barbados, Grenada, Suriname and other countries welcomed the World Bank's debt relief plan.

Latin American countries outside the Caribbean region have adopted varying degrees of measures according to their understanding of the pandemic.

Mexico's Ministry of Health said in mid-March that the country was in the first stage of an outbreak and would not take measures such as international travel restrictions and the closure of borders and ports. However, as early as mid-January, Mexico has already set up diagnostic programs in 32 medical centers across their national network of public health laboratories, and set up checkpoints at international airports. As the pandemic continues to worsen, the Mexican Ministry of Public Education announced that schools

would be closed from March 20 to April 20.

Belize closed all schools for 14 days from March 20, banned gathering of more than 100 people starting on March 16, and prohibited entry of travelers who had visited Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, South Korea and Europe in the past 30 days. Additionally, the Belize government has closed all ports except the Santa Elena border crossing and the Philip Goldson International Airport.

Guatemala declared a state of emergency and closed its borders for 15 days from March 17, allowing only its citizens, permanent residents and diplomats to enter by land.

Honduras has also declared a state of emergency. Red alerts were issued across 18 provinces on March 14, land, and sea and air border crossings were closed from March 16 to March 22. The Honduras National Autonomous University has suspended all classes and recently cancelled all large-scale public activities.

El Salvador announced a 30-day nationwide curfew starting on March 14. It has also announced the closure of border crossings and the banning of foreigners from entering the country. Its citizens and diplomats must be quarantined for 14 days after arriving in the country. The whole country will



On March 16, Venezuela announced the quarantine of all inhabitants and all people should practice “social distancing.”

suspend classes for 21 days and large gatherings of more than 75 people will be suspended.

Venezuela declared a state of emergency and suspended flights from Europe and Colombia for the next month. Starting from 5 am on March 16, the

capital Caracas and six states entered a state of “collective quarantine.” All activities are suspended except for necessary public services such as food, medical care, military and police duty, and transportation.

Colombia declared a state of emergency until May 30, closing the border ports and restricting the movement of people. All gatherings of more than 50 people across the country will be suspended. From March 16 to April 20, public primary and secondary schools and preschool institutions across the country were closed down, students switching to home and distance schooling. The college entrance examination was also postponed.

Panama declared a state of emergency and suspended all flights to and from Europe for 30 days on March 13. From 00: 00 local time on the 17th, Panama only allowed its citizens and long-term residents to enter the country, followed by a 14-day mandatory quarantine. Classes were suspended nationwide until April 7, and all entertainment venues were closed.

Costa Rica also entered a state of national emergency, closing schools on March 17 and the border on the 18th, allowing only its citizens to enter the country. Religious meetings and processions were suspended from April 5 to 12.

The Dominican Republic announced the suspension of flights to and from Europe, China, South Korea and Iran for one month. On March 18, President Danilo Medina submitted a request to the Congress to declare a state of emergency and planned to close the country’s land and sea borders as well as airports, and implement measures such as nationwide quarantine. On March 20, Medina signed a presidential decree, which imposed a nationwide curfew to halt the spread of the coronavirus. Earlier, the Congress approved the state of emergency bill and extended the state of emergency from 15 days to 25 days.

Ecuador has been in a state of health emergency since March 11. From 23:59 on March 15, all foreigners were prohibited from entering through flights, vehicles and ships, thus becoming the first in Latin America to officially shut all borders.

Bolivia declared a state of emergency since March 12. From March 13 to March 31, all schools were closed, flights to and from Europe were suspended, 10,000 police were deployed at borders and airports, and gatherings of more than 1,000 people were banned.¹

Since March 12, schools in Peru were closed and all activities in public places in the capital were suspended until March 30. Since then, tourists from Italy, Spain, France and China had to stay at home for 14 days after arrival.²

Since March 7 in Chile, the Ministry of Health has announced the revision of the "National Coronavirus Program" and will have the right to close or medically quarantine citizens with severe symptoms of infection. Chile's Ministry of National Consumer Service announced that it would monitor prices and inventories of products closely related to disease prevention and control. Foreign visitors to Chile must fill in a declaration of health and report

the countries or regions they visited within one month. Those who make false and concealed reports would be prosecuted for legal liability.³

Argentina announced a one-year state of public health emergency starting from March 12.⁴ At the



On March 19, Argentina declared a mandatory isolation for all Argentine citizens.

¹ "El Gobierno logra \$us 100 millones externos para ítems de salud, equipos e insumos," *La Razón*, March 13, 2020, http://www.la-razon.com/sociedad/COVID19-Gobierno-100_millones-cooperacion_internacional-equipos-insumos-Bolivia_0_3329667026.html.

² "Coronavirus: Gobierno prohíbe toda actividad que congregue a más de 300 personas," *Gestión*, March 12, 2020, <https://gestion.pe/peru/coronavirus-gobierno-prohibe-todo-actividad-que-congregue-a-mas-de-300-personas-noticia/>.

³ "Presidente Piñera y medidas ante el Covid-19: cuarentena para colegios donde haya infecciones, exámenes gratuitos en Fonasa y cancelación de eventos masivos," *La Tercera*, March 13, 2020, <https://www.latercera.com/nacional/noticia/presidente-pinera-y-medidas-ante-el-covid-19-cuarentena-para-colegios-donde-haya-infecciones-examenes-gratuitos-en-fonasa-y-cancelacion-de-eventos-masivos/EFVHN6FCZFEIPCWBOSN5W2ND5A/>.

⁴ "EMERGENCIA SANITARIA Decreto 260/2020," *Boletín Oficial*, March 12, 2020, <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/suplementos/2020031201NS.pdf>.

same time, a special fund of 1.7 billion pesos was set up to prevent and control the epidemic, as well as a US\$30 million loan from the World Bank. Argentina's President Alberto Fernández enlisted the support of more than 20 infectious disease experts to cooperate with the "emergency cabinet" in prevention and control, announcing the establishment of 35 laboratories. A list of countries with high coronavirus risks were also made, which included Chile, Brazil, China, South Korea, Japan, Iran, the United States and many European countries.

After Paraguay confirmed its first case on March 7, the government immediately adopted a number of countermeasures.¹ Earlier, the Paraguayan government had already planned to train about 30,000 medical personnel in pandemic prevention and treatment.

Uruguay declared a state of emergency in the national health system on March 13, partially closing the border, banning cruise ship passengers and crew from entering the country, and imposing mandatory quarantine on inbound personnel from the list of countries at risk or those that show symptoms. At the same time, authorities canceled all public activities nationwide and suspended all school attendance requirements for students.

Brazil's disease prevention measures were also ramping up. On March 2, LATAM Airlines announced the suspension of flights between São Paulo and Milan. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo suspended schools and large-scale gatherings indefinitely. Brazil's Ministry of Health announced that it planned to recruit medical personnel as soon as possible through its "More Doctors" plan to strengthen its diagnostic capacity and to increase the number of beds in intensive care units (ICU). The Brazilian government also introduced temporary measures to allocate R\$5 billion to the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to support relief effort.²

¹ "Coronavirus: Gobierno suspende las clases y toda la aglomeración de personas," *ABC*, March 10, 2020, <https://www.abc.com.py/nacionales/2020/03/10/coronavirus-gobierno-suspende-las-clases-y-toda-aglomeracion-de-personas/>.

² Relevant anti-epidemic and anti-pandemic measures in LAC countries in this report mainly refer to information

In addition, many countries use charter flights to take back their citizens stranded in Europe or other Latin American countries, and continue to adjust the list of high-risk countries with coronavirus, which include countries from other regions, as well as LAC countries such as Brazil, Argentina and Chile. Passengers from the above countries are subject to mandatory quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in their own countries.

2.3 Capacity to Respond to the Outbreak

At present, the general capacity of the LAC region to deal with the coronavirus outbreak is relatively fragile and unevenly distributed.

This vulnerability is manifested in the fact that some countries rely too much on regional organizations to fight the pandemic as their own medical capacity is weak. For example, Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and some other countries do not have virus detection capabilities. Additionally, most countries lack the ability to medically contain and control large-scale community transmission. For example, Jamaica was understaffed of nurses and had to ask Cuba for 100 nurses in aid. In many countries, hospitals suffer from underdeveloped ICUs. For example, the ICU wards in Suriname and Grenada can only handle 6 and 3 patients at the same time respectively. As the pandemic continues to spread and intensify, these problems will become increasingly obvious and grave. There is also a widespread shortage of medical supplies such as medical masks and personal protection equipment (PPE) across the region. In addition, influenced by European and American cultures, the average people in the region have the psychological tendency of refusing to wear masks during the outbreak. There are also some in the region who believe that mandatory quarantine or curfew is impinging on their personal freedom and rights, refusing the authorities' request to stay at home. These are very unfortunate factors for the prevention and control of the coronavirus outbreak.

As for countries facing major domestic and international challenges, such

published on the websites of China's State Administration of Immigration and Chinese embassies of the respective countries.

as Venezuela, the pressure that the virus outbreak exerts on the system is even more severe. María López, President of Venezuela's Infectious Diseases Society, said that, with the sparse medical resource supply and fragile health system, it was difficult for Venezuela to handle new outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

The uneven distribution of capacity in the region is also clearly seen, as countries vary in their ability to deal with virus, ranging from relatively strong to very weak. For example, Cuba claimed that it could produce more than 20 effective antiviral drugs and provide about 3,100 medical beds and more than 100 intensive care beds.² Its pandemic response capacity far exceeds that of other countries in the Caribbean region.

Brazil has long suffered from the Chagas disease, dengue fever and yellow fever. In 2016, Brazil successfully fought against the Zika virus outbreak, enabling the Rio Olympics and Paralympics to be held as scheduled. Brazil is relatively experienced and capable of dealing with large-scale pandemic. In addition to fighting on its domestic front, Brazil is currently providing relevant training to the member countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR).

Even so, there are still many shortcomings in Brazil's fight against the novel coronavirus outbreak. At present, community transmission has erupted in some parts of Brazil, especially in poor areas, which means that curbing the disease's infection has become more urgent. The reason behind these shortcomings include: 1. Awareness about the dangers of COVID-19 among Brazilian people is not widespread or deep enough, as a consequence, blind optimism is common. 2. The Brazilian government's response measures rely on people's self-compliance, and lack compulsion, which actually undermines

¹ "Global Cooperation against COVID-19 Should Not Leave Latin America Out," *Global Times*, March 9, 2020, <https://opinion.huanqiu.com/article/3xNsO7rFVNK>.

² "Cuba: Island's Healthcare System Is Ready for an Eventual Presence of COVID-19," *Radio Havana Cuba*, March 9, 2020, <http://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/216406-cuba-%C2%A0island%E2%80%99s-healthcare-system-is-ready-for-an-eventual-presence-of-covid-19>.

the effect of policy implementation. 3. Due to economic and financial constraints, the government has not invested enough in the health care system in recent years, which has weakened its response capacity.

Chile, equipped with a better economy and health system compared to other countries in this region, has outperformed in responding to this epidemic. Although the mass riots in October 2019 have caused rifts in society, the government has reached consensus with the people and agreed to hold a referendum on drafting the constitution. Chile, as the interim chair of the Forum for the Progress and Development of South America (PROSUR), is also promoting regional public health cooperation, and has jointly responded to the outbreak by holding health ministers’ coordination meetings with countries of the region. However, there still looms a realistic problem, which is whether or not the health care system can withstand the challenge of the coronavirus, if it reaches full-blown infection scale.

Uruguay also possesses much strength in economic development and medical/health care systems. However, although its human development index is relatively high, it still faces major challenges to nurse patients in severe conditions. In terms of intensive care, Uruguay currently has 20 to 21 beds per 100,000 people. If compared to Germany (28) and Italy (18), these figures seem promising. However, such a level will certainly be far from enough if the coronavirus reaches its widespread infection phase.

However, on the whole, LAC countries’ public health systems are still relatively weak on a global scale, with limited coverage of medical services, uneven distribution of health resources, insufficient long-term investment in public health, and underdeveloped healthcare system. With the US and Europe hit hard by the virus, LAC countries are facing severe challenges in terms of preventing COVID-19 from entering from outside and spreading within. Even for country like Brazil that has rich experience of dealing with large-scale pandemics, its medical system still faces unprecedented challenges,

as the coronavirus pandemic is very different from previous infectious diseases (especially due to its long incubation period, the existence of asymptomatic patients, and high infection rate).

What's more, in recent years, the LAC region has faced many economic challenges, including weak economic recovery and increased social welfare problems. In 2019, many Latin American countries experienced political turmoil, intensified social conflicts and economic slowdown. Since the outbreak of pandemic, global commodity prices have fallen sharply affecting both imports and exports, which has dealt a direct blow to LAC countries that rely on energy exports and tourism. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean released a report saying that Latin America's economic and social development is at an extremely complicated stage and the region's economic growth rate was expected to be reduced by 1.8-4 percent this year. In the face of the pandemic, countries may also face daunting public health expenditures and unprecedented challenges in social governance. If the epidemic became intertwined with regional hot-spot issues, domestic problems, and the continuing unilateralism wielded by the neighboring hegemon country, the disaster facing countries in the region would be unimaginable.

III. China-LAC Fighting the Virus Together

3.1 China-LAC Joining Hands to Fight the Pandemic

China and LAC countries have a good tradition of cooperation in the health-care field. For a long time, both sides have carried out medical and health cooperation, focusing on disease control, response to public health emergencies, AIDS, and avian flu prevention and control. China has a long history of sending medical teams, supplying medicines and medical equipment, helping improve medical facilities and training personnel to the Caribbean Countries.

In 1994, China sent a medical team to Guyana, marking the first time for China to send a medical team to the LAC region. As of 2019, China has sent its 15th medical team to Guyana. China also sent a short-term military medical task force to Suriname at the end of the 20th century and will send another medical team in 2020. A short-term medical team was sent to Grenada in 2008. From 2014 to 2016, four medical teams were dispatched to Trinidad and Tobago; China sent its first medical team to Barbados in 2016, and to date, the fourth dispatch has already been sent. In 2018, China mobilized its first medical team to the Dominica in the wake of Hurricane Maria to provide medical relief, currently, a second team has been also sent. In addition, China sent an emergency medical rescue team to take part in disaster relief and disease prevention after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010. China has also helped build hospitals in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Grenada, Dominica, Suriname and other countries by providing preferential loans to meet the needs of Caribbean countries for advanced medical infrastructures.

China has also dispatched two missions of “Bright Journey”, eye care specialists who were sent to Jamaica as well as Antigua and Barbuda for a short time to perform free cataract surgery for local patients. Since 2011, the

Chinese navy's "Peace Ark" hospital ship has also visited Cuba, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Grenada, the Commonwealth of Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago to provide medical services for local patients.

In recent years, China and LAC countries have been exploring new fronts for public health cooperation under the framework of Belt and Road Initiative, especially in the prevention and control of tropical infectious diseases. Under this framework, the cooperation between China and Brazil in the prevention and control of tropical infectious diseases is especially noteworthy. For example, in 2018, relevant departments of the two countries signed an MOU on Cooperation for Infectious Diseases Research and Prevention. The two sides planned to build a core platform for joint pathogen research, prevention and control in Shenzhen, China, and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to carry out cooperation in basic research, teaching, training and technological application in the area of infectious diseases.

Faced with the spread of the coronavirus in the LAC region, China and LAC countries are continuing to carry out a series of cooperation.

China has always attached great importance to international cooperation in the fight against the COVID-19. At present, with the situation getting increasingly grim, China is ready to join hands with LAC countries to fight against the pandemic, which is a moral imperative inherent in the building of China-LAC Community of Shared Future. As a spokesman of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, the pandemic respects no borders, and true love exists across boundaries. The international community has provided valuable political support and medical supplies to China at the hardest time, as the domestic situation getting better China can free up its hands to provide assistance as best as possible to those countries in need. For countries that

have helped us, we will certainly reciprocate in helping them. We will also do our best to provide assistance to friendly countries in serious situation and lack of prevention and control supplies, especially to many developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as the African Union and other regional organizations.¹

First, China and the LAC countries have been politically supporting each other and coordinating stances at bilateral and multilateral occasions. When China was in its toughest time fighting against the COVID-19, the heads of LAC states and governments, high-level political leaders have extended their support to China through various means. As the outbreak becomes a global pandemic, the leaders of China and LAC countries are conducting a new round of high-level engagements.

On March 24, President Xi Jinping telephoned with Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to express condolences and support to the Brazilian government and people in their fight against the coronavirus outbreak. President Xi Jinping said that he was very concerned about the situation and hoped that Brazil would be able to contain the spread of the disease. China is willing to provide assistance to Brazil. He believed that the two countries would work together to overcome the pandemic and push all-round cooperation to a new level. President Jair Bolsonaro thanked China for facilitating Brazil’s purchase of medical supplies in China, hoped to strengthen the exchange of disease prevention and control experiences with China to jointly combat the outbreak, and reiterated that Brazil-China friendship and comprehensive strategic partnership are indestructible.²

On March 26, President Xi Jinping attended the G20 Extraordinary Leaders’ Summit on COVID-19. Attendees from the LAC region include

¹ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Conference on March 23, 2020,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, March 23, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/t1759895.shtml.

² “Telephone Call between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Bolsonaro,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, March 24, 2020, <https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/zyxw/t1760480.shtml>.

Argentina, Brazil and Mexico. The summit was an opportunity for China and the three countries to convey to the international community a united voice and a positive signal for jointly combating the pandemic.

On 10th, April, President Xi Jinping also telephoned with Argentina's President Alberto Fernandez, Mexico's President Andres Manuel López Obrador and Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro respectively, discussing the current situation of the COVID-19 in the region and reiterating China's strong resolve to continue its close cooperation with LAC countries on outbreak response.

Second, China and the LAC countries have maintained communication on coronavirus information. On February 24, Chinese Deputy Foreign Minister Zheng Zeguang telephoned with Brazil's Ambassador to China Paulo Estivallet, Chile's Ambassador to China Luis Schmidt, Mexico's Ambassador to China José Luis Bernal, Colombian Ambassador to China Luis Diego Monsalve, Peru's Ambassador to China Luis Quesada, Trinidad and Tobago's Ambassador to China Stephen Seedansingh and Costa Rica's Ambassador to China Rodrigo Delgado respectively, to brief them on China's disease prevention and control, and to exchange views on bilateral relations.

The Chinese side also swiftly cooperated with foreign offices of the LAC countries in China to strengthen the communication on affairs regarding the LAC nationals residing in China including consular assistance. China has also provided a lot of help in assisting Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and other countries to evacuate their citizens from Wuhan. For these actions, the relevant governments and their citizens all expressed gratitude to China's efforts.

After the outbreak started, China also provided updated information to WHO in an open, transparent and responsible manner as soon as possible. China shared the entire genetic qualities of the virus, including its sequence,

primers and molecular probes to the whole world, including many countries in the LAC region.¹ China has also conducted many remote-technical exchanges designed to discuss and share China’s COVID-19 prevention and control experiences, laboratory testing programs, epidemiological investigations, and clinical diagnosis and treatment with Panama, Argentina and other countries, as well as a number of international and regional organizations including CARICOM.²

Third, as the virus started to spread in the region, China, while continuing its fight against the virus domestically, donated all kinds of urgently needed supplies to the region. For example, China has donated remote thermometers and other technical equipment to Bolivia. China’s ICT giant Huawei donated two infrared sensors to Argentina National Immigration Bureau. As of March 23, China has also donated 2 million masks, 400,000 test kits, 104 ventilators and other emergency supplies to 24 Latin American countries including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Dominica and Peru through Jack Ma Charity Foundation and Alibaba Charity Foundation.

Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado and leaders from other LAC countries have stepped up to express their gratitude to China for its assistance, saying that the materials donated by China are crucial to their country’s fight against the pandemic. When 4,000 sets of test kits, PPEs, goggles, gloves, air purifiers and other aid materials arrived in Venezuela from China, Venezuelan Vice President Delcy Rodriguez personally went to the airport to receive them and said “thank you” for four times to China. He expressed his thanks to

¹ “Ambassador Cui Jianchun in Guyana Publishes Article in Local Media Entitled ‘We Share the Common Destiny in Combating COVID-19,’” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, March 20, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/dszlsjt_673036/ds_673038/t1758860.shtml.

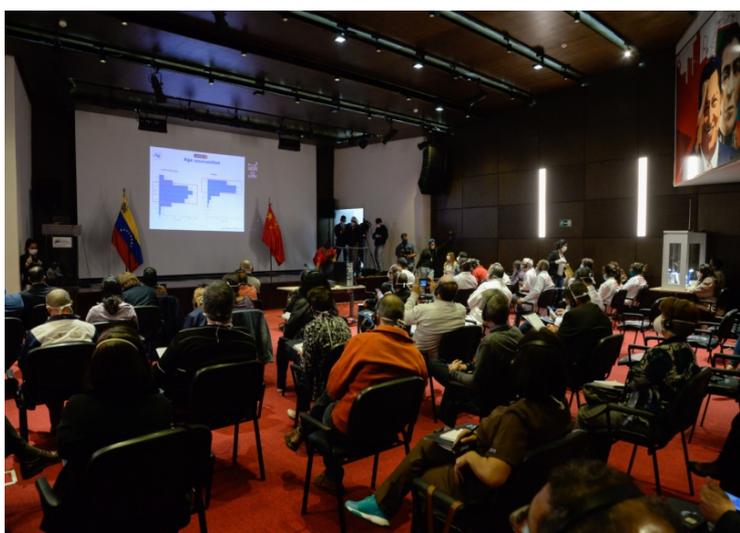
² “Transcript of Press Conference by the Information Office of the State Council on March 5, 2020,” China National Health Commission, March 5, 2020, <http://www.nhc.gov.cn/xcs/fkdt/202003/7cf8d5fbc2a44b11a8d16e0f4137f657.shtml>.

China, Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government and the Chinese people for their generous help, friendship, and solidarity.

Friends of China from Uruguay and other countries have also sent letters to the Chinese Ambassador to the region, thanking the Embassy for actively coordinating China's assistance to their country in the fight against the epidemic, saying that China's assistance has eased the shortage of medical supplies and encouraged the people of the country. China will donate more medical and other materials in the foreseeable future to more countries in need of them.

Fourth, China and LAC are committed to strengthening the exchange of experience in COVID-19 prevention and control, and exploring more efficient ways to combat the disease through technological means such as remote medical assistance, big data application and artificial intelligence (AI).

LAC countries attach great importance to China's experience against the coronavirus. To this end, China has held video conferences with experts and officials in the medical and health fields from Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, El Salvador and other countries to share their experiences. Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado expressed his gratitude for this initiative and believed that international dialogue and coordination are crucial for his country to better respond to the pandemic. Panama's Minister of Health Rosario Turner thanked China for its



China and LAC countries held a video conference on epidemic prevention and control.

unreserved contribution of valuable experience and methods, saying that Panama benefited greatly from exchanges with Chinese experts.

It is worth noting that on March 24, 2020, China and LAC countries held a video conference meeting of experts on the pandemic. Attendees include more than 200 government officials and health experts from Nicaragua which has yet to establish diplomatic ties with China, and all 24 countries that have diplomatic ties with China in the region, including Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Representatives of the Pan American Health Organization and the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund also attended the meeting.

During the meeting, Chinese experts introduced in detail the epidemiological characteristics of COVID-19, and shared a number of China’s experience, including clinical diagnosis, treatment plan, civil aviation security, customs and port health inspections, community self-quarantine. Chinese experts also responded to over 130 questions from a wide array of issues from LAC attendees.

International participants appreciated China’s achievements in the COVID-19 prevention and control as well as its contribution to global public health safety. They believed that the meeting was highly efficient, professional and targeted, which would guide the regional countries to further prevent and control the pandemic. They looked forward to strengthening cooperation with China and winning the fight against the virus.¹

¹ “China Held Expert Video Communication Meeting with Latin American and Caribbean Countries on the Novel Coronavirus”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, March 25, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjbxw_673019/t1760868.shtml.

China and Latin America have also carried out a series of cooperation in fighting the pandemic by employing innovative technology. For example, on March 22, the auxiliary screening system for the coronavirus based on Huawei cloud technology was installed in a hospital in Guayaquil, Ecuador, which has been hit hardest. Ecuadorian Vice President Otto Sonnenholzner thanked Huawei for its help on his personal Twitter account. According to reports, hospitals equipped with Huawei's cloud AI auxiliary screening system can assist the diagnosis of 3,000 suspected cases each month, greatly improving the diagnosis efficiency of suspected cases, and alleviating the urgent pressure faced by Ecuador in its current fight against the outbreak.¹

China and LAC also need to carry out scientific and technological cooperation in medicine, vaccines, testing reagents in order to deal with the pandemic more effectively.

China, the Pan American Health Organization, CARICOM, CELAC and other regional organizations are working hard to establish technical communication to better coordinate and cooperate through the exchanging of information. Such channels will help to provide technical support such as prevention, control, diagnosis and treatment. In the next step, China also needs to communicate and cooperate more effectively with the World Health Organization, international and regional organizations both in the LAC and elsewhere, and other major countries to coordinate the fight the outbreak.

Fifth, China also decided to send medical team to pandemic-stricken countries in LAC region, bringing to them with hope and friendship of the Chinese people. On the 30th of March, a medical team composed of eight experts from Jiangsu Province of China, arrived at Caracas, capital of Venezuela. This is the first medical team dispatched by China to assist LAC countries to cope with the COVID-19. The

¹ "Ecuadorian Vice President Thanks China's High Technology for Helping Ecuador Fight the Coronavirus Epidemic", *Xinhua*, March 22, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2020-03/23/c_1125754615.htm.

medical team worked hard on the front line of the epidemic to provide proper treatment to the patients and share China’s experience with their counterparts, which enabled Venezuela to take effective prevention and control measures and achieved a lot in this regard. President Nicolas Maduro, Vice President Delcy Rodriguez and Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza Montserrat of Venezuela, have expressed on many occasions their gratitude to China for sending this medical team and hoped to learn more from China’s experiences. With the development of the pandemic situation in the future, if more countries apply for China’s help, China will be ready to send more medical teams to assist the LAC countries.

Sixth, the purchase of medical equipment, bulk commodities, agricultural products and marine products can also become areas for China-LAC cooperation in the fight against the coronavirus. In recent years, LAC countries underinvested in public health systems. Faced with the spread of the pandemic, there is an inevitable rise in demand for CT machines, monitors, ventilators, anesthesia machines and other medical equipment that are necessary to improve patient turnover rates. In addition, a large number of face recognition and infrared temperature measurement systems are needed to improve the efficiency of identifying and preventing imported cases. China should provide more assistance to LAC countries in these areas, or take facilitating policy and make preferential arrangement for the region to purchase related Chinese equipment.

China’s resumption of work and production, as well as the gradual restoration to normal social order and the revival of consumer demand, are also major support for LAC countries. As Chilean Foreign Minister Teodoro Ribera pointed out, China’s resumption of work and production is of great importance to the world. More than 30 percent of Chile’s exports are destined for China. It is of vital importance for Chile that China resumes production

and restores economic vitality. Only through this way, can we avoid the impact of the pandemic on the LAC region as well as the global economy as a whole.

3.2 Striving to Build the China-LAC Community of Shared Future

In recent years, guided by the idea of China-LAC Community of Shared Future, China-LAC relationship has achieved leapfrog development. Currently, the pandemic has to some extent negatively affected bilateral trade and people-to-people exchanges, but by no means could shake the fundamental aspect of the overall relations. This relationship has already displayed its risk-proof qualities of resilience and maturity. Through this pandemic, the two sides will only deepen their understanding about the importance and urgency to build the China-LAC Community of Shared Future.

In short term, the pandemic has negatively affected bilateral trade and people-to-people exchanges.

When China was struggling against the outbreak, many Chinese enterprises were forced to suspend production. The import volume of intermediate products and daily consumer goods from China to LAC countries dropped considerably. Due to the lack of intermediate products from China, manufacturing industries in some countries are facing the dilemma of temporary shutting down or operation with unsustainable supply.

Affected by the outbreak, China's domestic demand for commodities and other products has also decreased. Latin American exports of commodities such as oil, copper, bauxite, aluminum and liquefied natural gas to China have been affected to a certain extent. As the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago pointed out, as the world's second largest economy, China's reduced demand for consumption and production had undoubtedly weakened the price of oil and natural gas, thus affecting countries relying on exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and methanol as their main revenue sources. The

outbreak has also caused delays or temporary stagnation in some infrastructure projects that China has invested or contracted to build in the region.

At the beginning of pandemic outbreak, China’s port logistics were affected, and the work efficiency was once reduced. As a result, agricultural products, such as cherries and pineapples, and marine products exported to China by Chile, Costa Rica and other countries could not enter Chinese market in time, and many enterprises had to pay extra storage fees to shipping companies. The export of meat products from Panama, Brazil and other countries to China were also temporarily disrupted.

The pandemic has also decreased people-to-people exchanges between China and the LAC countries at all levels. Prime Minister of the Dominica Roosevelt Skerrit said he would postpone his scheduled visit to China. Many countries have evacuated its citizens from Wuhan, and many exchange programs scheduled by various aspects of society were also canceled. As the virus entered a pandemic phase, more and more countries in the region adopted “closed-door” measures, and imposed tight travel restrictions to China. Chinese businessmen and tourists alike found it increasingly inconvenient to travel to Latin America, and the cultural exchanges between the two regions were inevitably affected.

In long term, China-LAC relationship will become increasingly mature and resilient, and the fundamental aspect of it will stay stable and gain more momentum for further development.

In recent years, Chin-LAC relationship has achieved leapfrog development. **First, high-level exchanges between China and LAC countries have become increasingly frequent, with President Xi Jinping visiting the region for five times, and most leaders of LAC countries visiting China in return.** Since 2008, China has issued two

policy papers on its relationship with the LAC region, which shows the maturity of its LAC policy and the greater importance attached to the region. Since 2017, China has established diplomatic relations with Panama, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, further expanding China's circle of friends in the region.

Second, the strategic value and global significance of the relationship between China and the LAC region are constantly highlighted. The world is currently undergoing unprecedented changes of a

century, with profound and complex changes to the global balance of power, international system and order. The conflict between unilateralism and multilateralism is becoming more acute, and certain powers are bullying others, imposing their political view on the rest of the world. With these changes as a backdrop, China and LAC countries'



Cuba's Chinese-made first new train passenger cars moved after departing from La Coubre train station in Havana, Cuba, July 13, 2019.

relationship is based on mutual respect and reliance. As the relationship enters its 60th anniversary, both sides are even more committed to building a friendly and cooperative relationship featuring equality, mutual benefit, innovation, and openness in this new era, and to building a China-LAC Community of Shared Future. Such a relationship will not only help both sides better cope with the opportunities and challenges brought about by the unprecedented changes, but also jointly contribute wisdom and strength to the mankind.

Third, China and the LAC countries have made new breakthroughs in pragmatic cooperation. At present, a total of 19 countries in the LAC region signed agreements with China to join in the “Belt and Road Initiative.” In 2018, the trade volume between China and LAC countries exceeded US\$300 billion for the first time, reaching US\$307.4 billion. China’s import and export witnessed a year-on-year increase of 24.1 and 13.7 percent respectively in 2018, a 20-fold increase since 2000.¹ In 2019, China-LAC trade continued to progress steadily, with trade volume reaching US\$317.37 billion, up 3.3 percent year-on-year.²

Fouth, measures for personnel exchanges are continuing to be facilitated and become more and more frequent. China has signed air transport agreements with many countries in the region. More and more LAC countries have become destinations for Chinese citizens to travel abroad, and the number of countries agreeing to mutual visa-free access with China is increasing. The coverage of Chinese language teaching in the region is expanding every day. Various sports events, theatrical performances, Chinese film festivals and “root-seeking” activities for Chinese descendants have greatly enhanced the goodwill of the local people towards China.

Just as mentioned above, China-LAC cooperation has made substantial achievements and bilateral relationship is becoming more and more mature and resilient. This relationship is consistent with the trends of our times and deeply rooted in the mutual needs of both sides, thus will never be overturned by the outbreak of the pandemic. Instead, during the joint fight against the pandemic, the two sides have built the concensus for cooperation, deepened the friendship, and enhanced the awareness of community of shared future. The fundamental aspect of the relationship will only stay stable and gain more

¹ Wang Zhen, “Steady Progress and Bright Prospects-Review and Future of Sino-Latin American Relations in 2019”, *People*, December 27, 2019, <http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2019/1227/c1002-31526549.html>.

² “Total Value (USD) of Product Import and Export in China, December 2019,” China’s General Administration of Customs, January 23, 2020, <http://www.customs.gov.cn/customs/302249/302274/302277/302276/2851396/index.html>.

and more momentum for further development.

This fully proves again that in the era of globalization, humans have already become an interconnected community of shared future, with every member becoming more interdependent every day. Our destinies are linked, and no country can stay immune, for this virus respects no borders. Only through joining in the global effort, can we as passengers in one boat weather through this hardship.

Conclusion

A friend in need is a friend indeed. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 epidemic, LAC countries have given sincere help and valuable support to China in its most difficult time, demonstrating their true friendship and kindness to the Chinese government and people. To quote a line from the Confucian *Book of Songs*, “You throw a peach to me, I give you a white jade for friendship.” Chinese always believe in giving back more than what was given, and China will always remember and cherish this friendship. At present, China has achieved astounding results in fighting the epidemic and is freeing up its hands to support and help countries in the LAC region.

The epidemic is a mirror, on which allows China and LAC to see each other’s true attitudes, and realize the urgency of building the China-LAC Community of Shared Future. One may be confident that after this common ordeal, sincere cooperation between the two sides will inject strong impetus into China-LAC relations for the new era featuring equality, mutual benefit, innovation, openness and tangible benefits for the people.

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