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Cleaners tidy up a temporary treatment center converted from a sports venue in Wuhan, Hubei Province in central China, on March 8. The facility closed that day after its last batch of cured COVID-19 patients were discharged

A Shot of Confidence

President Xi leads the battle against COVID-19 outbreak toward victory

By Zhao Wei

Wearing a mask like everyone else and regular dark clothes, President Xi Jinping visited Wuhan, Hubei Province, on March 10, where he inspected a hospital treating patients with the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and a residential community.

During the visit, Xi said the situation in Hubei and Wuhan has shown positive changes, with the spread of the virus there basically curbed. "Initial success has been achieved in stabilizing the situation and turning the tide," he said.

He also pointed out that epidemic control remains arduous and pledged to continue taking it as a task of paramount importance.

His visit is a confidence booster not just for China but beyond, and provides a strong antidote for the fears and concerns that may follow the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring COVID-19 as a pandemic on March 11.

"All countries can still change the course of this pandemic if countries detect, test, treat, isolate, trace and mobilize their people in the response," WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on the same day in Geneva.

The number of newly confirmed cases in Wuhan dropped to 4 on March 15, which was the lowest since Wuhan was sealed off in January to prevent the transmission of the virus, according to the National Health Commission (NHC). No other cities nationwide reported new cases except for 12 imported cases that day.

As Xi walked through a marketplace where vendors were selling vegetables enclosed in plastic bags, he talked with them about ensuring a steady supply. Later, he spoke to community members about their work in epidemic prevention and control.

His visit was also one to express his appreciation in person to

the city that made incalculable sacrifices so that the epidemic could be contained.

Xi's visit showed a leader's responsibility and demonstrated that he cares about his people, Andrey Ostrovsky, Deputy Director of the Institute of Far Eastern Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, told Xinhua News Agency.

The number of confirmed cases surpassed 153,000 in 146 countries and the death toll was over 5,700 as of March 15. Tedros cautioned on March 11 that the number of infections and deaths is expected to climb higher in weeks ahead.

In the grim situation, China is willing to share its prevention and control measures, which were found effective by WHO experts during an earlier visit to China.

In February, a joint mission of Chinese and WHO experts visited Wuhan and other cities in the country. In their report, the team said in the face of a previously unknown disease, China has rolled out "probably the most ambitious, agile and aggressive disease containment effort in history." Its science and risk-based strategy is tailored to allow it to use

different containment approaches and measures, they added.

"We shared many technical documents, including our epidemic control measures, as well as diagnosis and treatment plans, with more than 100 countries around the world and over 10 international and regional organizations," Zeng Yixin, Vice Minister of the NHC, said during a briefing in February.

The Chinese Government has sent test kits, masks and protective clothing to countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea, and medical experts to Iran, Iraq and Italy, all affected by the epidemic. Also, it has announced a donation of \$20 million to the WHO to support it in carrying out international cooperation in response to COVID-19 and helping developing countries improve their response capacities.

"In a globalized and highly interdependent world, the chance to solve major issues increases with the effectiveness of multilateral cooperation," said David Gosset, a sinologist and founder of the Europe-China Forum, told China Focus, an online magazine published by the China International Publishing Group. "When the international community declares victory against the new coronavirus, it will certainly be a win of the nations that compose it, but also the triumph of multilateralism and of the spirit of transnational solidarity that it embodies."

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