News Release

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China Should Focus on Social Development, Education, Rule of Law and Sustainability

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Chinese version

- After paying attention to economic development, China should also push forward social reforms
- Education reform is critical if China's schools are to produce creative people with high moral standards
- For more information about the Annual Meeting of the New Champions, please visit: http://www.weforum.org/newchampions2011

Dalian, People's Republic of China, 15 September 2011 – China should focus not just on developing its economy but also on social, legal and political reforms, senior Chinese business, government and civil society leaders said in a panel discussion on China's 12th Five-Year Plan at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting of the New Champions 2011. "In the past, we paid a lot of attention to economic development," Zhang Xiaoqiang, Vice-Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of the People's Republic of China, noted. "But we have to keep up with the times. China's development should be people-centred and sustainable. Our social development has lagged behind. We need to satisfy people's demands – not just economic, but also in education, health, security and other areas."

Zhang Weiying, Professor of Economics at Peking University, agreed. "The important thing is reform," he declared. He tied the need for reform to China's rise in the world. "The responsibility of China to the world is to change its system to give more freedom to its people and build its society in the rule of law." Zhang warned of "big dangers" for China and the world if reforms are not implemented. Education is a critical priority, he argued. "In the past several decades, we have failed in our education. We looked on it as dissemination of knowledge but not as a way to produce people with creativity and high moral standards."

Embedding the rule of law in China is crucial, added Wang Boming, Editor-in-Chief of Caijing Magazine. "How can we be sure that the rights of the vulnerable population are protected? We should establish supervision and monitoring systems so at last we can have a society under the rule of law and achieve a nation under the rule of law." While the government's Five-Year Plan is now technically referred to as a programme or set of guidelines that is not legally binding, there is too much centralized control over the reform process, Wang reckoned. "If power is not restrained, the inevitable result would be corruption."

The panellists also debated China's position in the global economy. "Many people underestimate the role of China," said Guo Zhuqing, Chairman of China Construction Bank. "But China is right at the centre of the world market." Yet China's economic power and influence at this stage of its development should not be exaggerated, Guo advised. "I don't think China alone can push the world out of the crisis." Concluded the NDRC's Zhang: "China cannot develop without the world and the world cannot develop without China."

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