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Xi's speech on China's reform and opening-up sets trajectory for new era: expert

Xinhua | Updated: 2018-12-19 17:21

NEW YORK - President Xi Jinping's speech at a grand gathering celebrating the country's 40th anniversary of reform and opening-up "exemplified the accomplishments of the past and set the trajectory for the new era of the future," said Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a leading US expert on China.

Kuhn said Xi's speech was "both a milestone and a benchmark, a milestone in reflecting on all that China has accomplished in the past and a benchmark in addressing all that China still needs to accomplish in the new era," Kuhn told Xinhua via email on Tuesday, after he was honored with the China Reform Friendship Medal at the gathering held in Beijing.

Kuhn, also chairman of the Kuhn Foundation, was among the 10 foreigners honored Tuesday for helping China to open up. The 74-year-old investment banker and the host of an interview-based program titled "Closer to China with R. L. Kuhn" was lauded for his devotion to "telling the world (the story of) contemporary China."

The award itself "evinces how seriously China takes international communication," Kuhn said.

Kuhn noted that Xi's speech showed a clear and confident direction for China.

"In Xi's telling, China's direction is clear and confident, encapsulated in nine major points, stressing confidence in China's socialism with Chinese characteristics, the primacy of the Party (the Communist Party of China) in all areas, putting people and their well-being and happiness first, and the need to implement further and deepen reforms," he said.

"Sitting in the Great Hall of the People listening to Xi's speech, I was struck by the consistency of Xi's thought. When he said 'chanting slogans' was not sufficient, (and) that hard work must be done and reform needs to be furthered, I smiled to myself, because more than 12 years ago, Xi, then secretary of Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China, told me in a private personal meeting precisely the same thing," Kuhn recalled.

"When historians of the future write the chronicles of our times, a highlight is sure to be China's remarkable 40 years of reform and opening-up. What an amazing transformation it has been!" he said.

China has transformed from "a backward economy and a closed society" to the world's second-largest economy, engaged openly with all countries, and involved in all matters of global importance, Kuhn said.

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