

# Intercultural Dialogue Better the World

## Dialogue

By LONG Yun & BI Weizi

On November 28, 2023, Andrei Chevelev, former head of the Asia-Pacific Unit Sector for Priority Africa and External Relations at UNESCO, began a new chapter in his career with his appointment as a visiting professor at Jinan University in Guangzhou, China.

Chevelev's vision is clear: to uphold an open attitude and foster "solid, win-win, and efficient cooperation" with Jinan University. His words reflect the values that have been at the heart of his lengthy career, where "mutual benefits" and "cooperation" have been the guiding principles that have shaped his work across various countries and continents.

**Career milestones**  
Chevelev's career began 40 years ago when he graduated from the Moscow State Institute for International Relations. From there, he embarked on a path that would take him around the world and into the heart of international diplomacy.

"My career journey led me to the United Nations, where I spent 27 years within UNESCO, contributing to education, science, and culture," he said.

His involvement with UNESCO provided him the perfect platform to work closely with countries worldwide, but it was his connection with China that stood out.

"I'm very proud that I prepared the visit of President Xi Jinping to UNESCO Headquarters. It was a pivotal moment in starting cooperation between China and UNESCO," Chevelev said, recalling the event in 2014. This landmark visit resulted in several significant outcomes. Furthermore, Chevelev was involved in establishing the UNESCO Institute for



Andrei Chevelev. (COURTESY PHOTO)

International STEM Education (IISTEM) in Shanghai. "This is the first Category 1 Institute of UNESCO in China, and I'm very excited to see China promoting its influence on the international stage, especially in [the] sci-tech sector," he said.

### Promoting intercultural cooperation

In recognition of his contributions to strengthening ties between China and the international community, Chevelev was awarded the prestigious Chinese Government Friendship Award in 2024. "I am so proud and I feel that my efforts were appreciated," he said.

Chevelev's career has been defined by his efforts to promote intercultural understanding, something he views as increasingly vital in today's complex geopolitical landscape. He pointed out that recent global events have created an environment where casual diplomacy is more difficult, but still, there are opportunities for meaningful dialogue. Referring to the "Pact for the Future,"

adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in September, Chevelev stressed the importance of fostering international peace and security, as well as intercultural dialogue.

He sees China standing at the forefront of upholding world peace and global prosperity and was impressed by the speech made by President Xi Jinping at the reception to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. There, Xi stressed that humankind is living on the same Earth and people of all countries share a common destiny. "This is China's engagement in global relations, while promoting intercultural understanding and cooperation," Chevelev explained.

### Patriotism and professionalism for young talent

As a visiting professor at Jinan University, Chevelev takes his role in mentoring the next generation seriously. When asked about his advice to young students aspiring to a career in promoting international cooperation, he empha-

sized two key qualities: patriotism and professionalism.

"China is becoming a world leader, and young professionals must serve their country and ensure China's interests abroad. They should be patriots, but at the same time, they need to be real professionals," he advised.

He also applauded China's rapid economic, political, and cultural development. He noted that China has become a major player in global institutions like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and he is glad to see that China's influence is growing.

"China is advancing the common values of humanity, advocating for an equal and multipolar world. With initiatives like the Belt and Road, China is leading the way in promoting international cooperation," he said.

### China's role in global cultural exchange

Chevelev's admiration for Chinese culture runs deep, and he thinks China has been playing an important role in global cultural exchange. As he reflects on his work in China and his Chinese students, he praised the country's ability to preserve its rich cultural heritage while embracing modernization. "China has a 5,000-year-old civilization, and it is remarkable how it has safeguarded its cultural heritage while becoming a modern and strong country," he said.

As part of his role at Jinan University, Chevelev will continue to promote the importance of preserving both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. "Imagine your grandmother sings you a traditional song, but no one preserves it. That song could be lost forever," Chevelev said. He believes that cultural traditions, especially those passed down through generations, are vital to maintaining a country's identity.

This article was also contributed by Jinan University.

## Traditional Eastern Wisdom

# Joined Without a Single Nail, Surviving Time and Turmoil

By BI Weizi

Mortise and tenon is a type of joint in traditional Chinese woodworking. Widely used in wooden buildings and furniture, this unique construction method developed by China has had a profound impact on traditional wooden construction in East Asia.

The tenon is the protruding part, also known as the groove. The mortise is the concave part, or the tenon eye or tenon groove. The basic principle is to join two components, a mortise is cut in one and a tenon in the other, and then the tenon is inserted into the mortise, interlocking the two parts.

Archaeological discoveries have shown that mortise-and-tenon structures were used as early as 7,000 years ago, both in the wooden buildings preserved at the Hemudu site, a Neolithic cultural site in Zhejiang province in east China, and in wooden items such as utensil handles and small rods.

Hundreds of wooden components from the Hemudu site have different types of tenons. In the thousands of years that followed, mortise and tenon construction continued to improve, reaching its peak in ancient China. The Foguang Temple, a Buddhist shrine that is regarded as China's second oldest surviving wooden structure, built around 857 AD in the Tang Dynasty and now a UNESCO World Heritage, and the Yingxian Wooden Pagoda in Yingxian county, in Shanxi province, built in 1056 AD during the Liao Dynasty, are typical examples of mortise and tenon architecture.

The Yingxian Wooden Pagoda is the tallest surviving ancient wooden



The Yingxian Pagoda in Shanxi province. (PHOTO: VCG)

structure in the world at 67.31 meters. The main body of the tower is made up of tens of thousands of wooden components and has been standing for more than 900 years despite many earthquakes, thanks in large part to the mortise and tenon construction.

Displacement, or leaving a slight gap, is the main advantage of mortise and tenon construction. The components are flexibly joined. There is a minute gap between the tenon and the mortise, leaving room for expansion and contraction of the wood during different weathers, thereby improving the building's ability to withstand earthquakes.

The joining technique using mortise and tenon has deep cultural connotation besides efficiency as a cultural, scientific and innovative characteristic of one of China's traditional crafts.

## Photo News

# World Conference of Classics Explores Ancient Wisdom



The first World Conference of Classics was held in Beijing from November 6 to 8, 2024. The event was co-organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Ministry of Education of China, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China, the Ministry of Culture of Greece, and the Academy of Athens. Scholars from around the globe engaged in a cross-cultural exploration of ancient wisdom.

A foreign visitor converses with his Chinese counterpart during a relevant exhibition at the Chinese Archaeological Museum on November 6. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

# Sustainable Agriculture Across the Pacific Blossoms

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After sailing for more than one month from the Brazilian port of Barcarena, the cargo ship loaded with "zero deforestation" Brazilian soybeans imported by COFCO arrived at the Chinese port of Tianjin in October. The export of Brazil's "zero deforestation" soybeans to China is a prime example of the practice

of strengthening cooperation in sustainable agriculture to a global market.

The sustainable consumption and high-quality development of the food and agriculture industry is the trend of the times, and this "zero deforestation" Brazilian soybean order will further stimulate the demand for sustainable products in the Chinese market, Hurd said.

# Duke Int'l Forum Focuses on Climate Policy, Green Finance

## Expats Activity

By CHEN Chen

The 2024 Duke International Forum brought together representatives from the academia, scholars, policymakers, entrepreneurs and investors to focus on "Renovating Climate Policy and Green Finance for Future Sustainability."

Held in Kunshan in east China on November 1, it was hosted by Duke Kunshan University (DKU), founded by North Carolina-based Duke University and China's Wuhan University.

DKU's executive vice chancellor Dr. John Quelch stressed the forum's role in knowledge exchange and innovation to solve climate issues.

Quelch added that DKU has collaborated with its founders to launch projects on renewable energy, climate finance,

and environmental policy. It has also integrated sustainability into its curriculum and campus life, including launching a campus-wide course called "Let's Talk About Climate Change."

The university's campus was the first in China to achieve LEED certification, a standard for environmentally responsible building design.

DKU chancellor Dr. Liu Yaolin highlighted climate policy and green finance as essential for balancing environmental and economic priorities, and encouraged global collaboration to tackle the complexities of sustainable development. Liu said DKU's partnerships with Duke and Wuhan universities are essential for interdisciplinary research to create actionable solutions in green technology, policy development, and environmental education.

Addressing the forum via video, Duke University's vice provost for climate and sustainability Dr. Toddi Steelman

said both Duke and DKU "recognize that the intersection of innovative policy and strategic finance is critical for unlocking the full potential of the energy transition and more sustainable development."

Steelman underscored the power of building cross-country ties: "We must find ways to humanize the connections that bind us together as people and as part of the world community."

"I firmly believe that today's event will contribute to building even stronger ties, inspiring new ideas, and fostering the collaboration necessary to tackle these great global challenges," she said.

Senior representatives from Wuhan University, Kunshan city government, and China's National Development and Reform Commission echoed these sentiments and highlighted the importance of collaborations and DKU's role as a bridge between China and the world in addressing shared climate challenges.

The forum featured keynote speeches from experts across sectors and roundtable discussions with industry leaders in banking, finance, and law. The participants exchanged insights on pressing environmental issues, sustainable finance, and regulatory policies, aiming to build a collective path forward.

DKU also launched the Future17 SDG Challenge Project, an initiative to help students develop skills for tackling 21st-century global challenges. They will work with industry and academic mentors as well as peers from around the world to create innovative solutions for real-world issues associated with one or more of the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Established in 2015, the Duke International Forum facilitates intellectual exchange and builds frameworks for collaboration and innovation.

This article was contributed by DKU.

# Does Vegetarian Diet Result in Nutrient Deficiency?

## Science Outreach

By Staff Reporters

Vegetarian restaurants in China have become increasingly popular, with diverse business models emerging, such as vegetarian hotpot, vegetarian medicinal cuisine and vegetarian pastries. What exactly is vegetarianism and is it healthy to eat only vegetarian food?

A vegetarian diet primarily consists of refined white rice, coarse cereals, soybeans and vegetables. Chen Tong, a nutritionist at Beijing Anzhen Hospital, Capital Medical University, explained that vegetarianism can be categorized into veganism, ovo-vegetarianism, lacto-vegetarianism, and ovo-lacto vegetarianism.

Each type of vegetarianism has its unique characteristics. For instance, vegans avoid all animal-derived foods and consume only plant-based products like grains, vegetables, fruits, nuts and beans. Ovo-vegetarians, lacto-vegetarians, and ovo-lacto vegetarians ex-

clude meat but include eggs, dairy or both.

"If the diet is properly balanced, vegetarianism can satisfy most of the energy needs for human activities," said Chen. Carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are the three major nutrients that provide energy to the body, and all of them can be obtained from a vegetarian diet.

Recently, researchers from Stanford University published a paper in the journal *BMC Medicine*, stating that a vegan diet for just two months may lead to a reduction in biological age, including improvements in the heart,

liver, and metabolic system, as well as weight loss. This suggests that short-term veganism can contribute to anti-aging. However, the researchers emphasized that long-term veganism may result in a lack of essential nutrients in the body.

Previous studies have shown that long-term vegetarianism can cause imbalances in vital vitamins and certain nutrients, such as n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids, iron, zinc, vitamin B2 and B12, which are primarily sourced from meat. These nutrients, though not energy-producing, play crucial roles in maintaining human health.